



ST. THOMAS MORE PARISH

2018  
PARISH FORUM  
SUMMARY

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## **STM PARISH**

### **What we will preserve**

- Community/ministries
  - Strong lay participation and fellowship
  - Response of community in times of need—large and small
  - Diversity
  - Working, active committees that report to Pastoral Council
  - Multiple ministries for various age groups and coordination of those ministries
  - Community activities (e.g., Parish Festival—great “friendraiser” and fundraiser)
  - Long-term, dedicated, faith-filled, parishioners
  - Groups to promote relationships among parishioners and community members
  - Focus on gaining future parishioners through the school
  - Importance to and support of Broadmoor/Sherwood Forest area
  - Open and receptive to change
- Education
  - Schools’ excellence
  - ELC—PreSchool—K-8 School (Blue Ribbon School)—Special Education class—cooperation with other ministries; excellence and high standards
  - Catechesis for all ages
- Facilities
  - Well-maintained, beautiful campus, including Activity Center and Adoration Chapel
- Finances
  - Improving financial position
- Spiritual
  - Access to worship (weekends, mornings, evenings)
  - Support for premises of Catholicity and Catholic education
  - Strong prayerful community and liturgy (including music and choir)
  - Strong clergy and effective transition from one pastor to the next
  - Strong faith formation and liturgies
  - Opportunities for spiritual growth
  - Adoration Chapel

### What we will improve

- Branding/marketing
  - Spread truth about STM through a marketing campaign; collaborate with civic community
  - Exploit goodness of STM community
- Catechesis
  - Examine current structure of PSR and consider other organizational approaches
  - Evaluate Vacation Bible School times
  - Consider ACTS retreats
- Communication
  - Positive communication (e.g., promote use of Adoration Chapel) and feedback (e.g., more pictures in *Tower*; follow up on Town Hall meetings; regular *Tower* updates from pastor)
  - Consistent, transparent communication and dialog throughout campus
  - Emphasize vibrancy of parish
- Community/ministries
  - Systematically review all ministries to ensure that we are reaching all demographics (e.g., age, new/veteran parishioners, ethnicities, school parents, SLKF/STM) and that we are not duplicating efforts
  - Consider reinstatement of Fellowship Sunday and Resurrection Choir
  - Initiate talent identification for parishioners
  - Provide Speaker Forums for information and fellowship
  - Provide additional training for Eucharistic ministry
  - More parental participation in church and school (increase number of parishioners from school parent families)
  - Offer nursery during at least one of the weekend Masses
  - Examine “traditions lost” (e.g., Holy Thursday gumbo) and consider appropriate replacements (e.g., St. Thomas More’s feast day)
- Facilities/maintenance
  - Drainage
  - Original school building centrally heated and cooled
  - Availability of Adoration Chapel
  - Facilities more available after sacramental events (e.g., funerals); coordination of physical facilities’ utilization
  - Balance air flow in Church
  - Engagement of parishioners in planning and oversight of renovation and/or new construction projects as well as ongoing maintenance

- Financial
  - More lay involvement in business and facilities management, and more transparency regarding parish finances (e.g., include percentage of participants in weekly offertory; use of money from sale of SLKF; provide festival financial report)
  - IRS end-of-the-year letters formatted correctly
  - Expand program for need-based financial assistance for STM students
- Parking and handicapped access
  - Parking is only a problem at 10 a.m. Mass; consider Masses at 9 a.m. and 11 a.m. instead of 8 a.m. and 10 a.m. to see if that would help divide Mass attendance more evenly
  - Determine if more handicapped seating in Church and more handicapped parking are needed
- Personnel
  - Funeral and wedding coordinator and youth minister needed
  - Keep focus on securing quality personnel
  - Consider technical person to oversee parish maintenance
- Spiritual
  - Youth and family formation (designed for different age groups; collaborate by forming catechists)
- Strategic plan
  - Developed and implemented

### **Partnership**

- Branding/marketing
  - Establish STM's position beyond Sherwood Forest/Broadmoor and communicate with larger community
- Communication
  - Hire parish Communications Director
  - Basis of communication established (where we are and where we want to be) with progress reports provided
  - Utilize parish website to coordinate facility reservations
- Community/ministries
  - Ministries actively recruit to build teams; active participation of all parishioners in one or more parish ministries
  - Extend welcome to various ethnicities (including use of translators)
  - Place cards in pews for new parishioners who are then contacted by members of the Welcoming Committee
  - Improve participation in all activities for engaging SLKF in parish

- Increase grandparent engagement in the school
- Produce a parish pictorial directory
- Identifying parishioner talent pool
- Consider developing “RENEW”-type groups
- Explore possible involvement with Louisiana Marathon
- Form missionary disciples
- Finances
  - Financial transparency (as much as possible); explain utilization of resources from fundraisers and sharing of annual financial statement; provide details on maintenance costs
  - Develop an endowment fund to provide need-based tuition assistance for STM Schools
  - Complete evaluation of all fundraising activities with emphasis on reducing frequency of “asks” and improving rates of return on contributions
- Leadership
  - Revitalize an elected and empowered Parish Council with a more active role in parish leadership
- Schools
  - Anything we can do to support and improve K-8 school, PreSchool, ELC (e.g., technology, facilities, sports, salaries) will improve the parish
- Strategic plan developed for 3-5 years
  - Involve various ministries in implementation of strategic plan
  - Assign areas of improvement to specific groups for planning purposes
  - Prioritize suggestions from forums; identify “Top 5”; determine some method for getting input from other parishioners and parents; then, communicate results/plans to STM community
  - Develop mechanism for engaging more parishioners in decision making
  - Include a comprehensive campus master plan and parish-wide organizational chart in this process

## **STM SCHOOLS**

### **What we will preserve**

- Academics
  - High standards and cohesive, coordinated curriculum (no Common Core)
  - Blue Ribbon School
  - Leveling of classes (offers a “competitive advantage”)
  - Class size
  - Strong standardized test results
  - Preparation for high school
- Athletics/extracurriculars
  - Growth of soccer and cross country
  - Expansion of extracurricular program
- Communication
  - New use of text messages is effective
- Community/school culture
  - Tradition and legacy
  - Loving faith community of invested parents, students, faculty and staff members that includes STM legacies (parents, grandparents)
  - Open communication among faculty, staff, parents
  - Level of discipline throughout school
  - Trust and safety
  - Holistic education (extracurriculars are emphasized, too)
  - Strong compassion for children
  - Commitment to improving quality of service
  - Sense of purpose in achievement and accountability of all members of STM community
  - Respect and trust—characteristics of a school community that encourages growth
  - Quality of relationships
  - Increasing enthusiasm and energy throughout school
  - STM pride is still strong
  - Addition of Early Learning Center (ELC) and new emphasis on collaboration among ELC, PreSchool and K-8 School
  - Diversity of student body
- Facilities
  - Improving quality and care of buildings and grounds
  - New playground and its location

- Green spaces on campus (including athletic field)
- Personnel
  - Quality of instruction, faculty and staff, leadership
  - Recruitment and retention of teachers, including STM grads
  - Good mix of veteran and newer faculty
  - School nurse and reading specialist are assets
- Spirituality
  - Catholicity of school
  - Contemporary, faith-based school (religion is a “real subject” at STM) with faith integrated into the curriculum
  - Student Masses
  - Leaders’ spirituality is authentic, sincere and inspirational
- Technology
  - Increased emphasis
  - Expanding utilization of Google classroom

### **What we will improve**

- Academics
  - More fine arts options within school day
  - Consider offering foreign language options for younger students and providing opportunity for more foreign language study
  - Homework quantity vs. quality
  - Need more physical activity/PE and more recess time
  - Standardized test preparation
  - Improve support for different learning styles and behavioral needs
  - Provide additional support for new teachers
  - Use rewards other than candy
  - Consider starting Accelerated Reader in 1<sup>st</sup> Grade
- Athletics
  - Communication
  - Increased emphasis for girls’ sports
  - Acknowledgement of student participation—some recognition activity in front of entire school
  - Intramurals for K-2 as a parish activity
  - Examine impact of apparent declining interest in football participation on other existing and new possible sports (e.g., lacrosse, golf, tennis, swimming)
  - Consider accommodations to allow students to participate in non-STM athletics and continue with STM sports as well

- Evaluate current academic and behavioral standards necessary for athletic participation
- Branding/marketing
  - Outreach to tell the STM story (e.g., Blue Ribbon School; class sizes)
- Communication
  - Promote transparency among all STM constituents (especially among members of our diverse population)
  - Encourage all members of STM community to communicate positive messages on any and all media and to communicate areas of concern with appropriate decision-makers
- Community
  - Build connections among students and enhance student formation
  - Volunteer involvement (consider required service hours for parents)
  - Include fellowship building activities without fundraising
  - Provide more opportunities for interaction among older and younger students
  - Reconnect with young adult alums
  - Consider community service for all students
  - Equity in treatment of parents and students
  - Increase outreach efforts to all members of school community
  - Consider additional ways to integrate REACH students into school community
- Discipline/dress and grooming
  - Evaluate conduct charts
  - Evaluate consequences for students with repeated misbehavior
  - Consider PE uniforms for K-8 students
  - Develop strategies for dealing more effectively with disruptive students
  - Evaluate school and sports teams' uniforms
  - Create such positive relationships with students that they “do the right thing” without excessive consequences (great schools, like great gardens, thrive with attention, devotion and love, and respond to our care)
  - Improve management of extended day students (possibly consider a change in schedule to assist in transition from school day to extended day activities)
- Enrollment management
  - Increase enrollment through active recruitment and retention



- Expand concept of “one STM”
  - Build bridges among K-8 school, PreSchool, Early Learning Center and Church office
  - Utilize same uniforms for PreSchool and K-8 School
- Extracurriculars
  - Promote parish-wide Youth Ministry
  - Possibly offer theater, art, music, chess, Lego Club, scouting and other activities as after-school activities
- Facilities and maintenance
  - Improvements need to continue
  - For K-4 building, consider possibilities for:
    - Adding central air and heat
    - Putting all sections of a particular grade level on the same floor
  - Continue renovation of gym with an emphasis on bleachers
  - Consider other options for parking that would preserve athletic field
  - Enclose maintenance and custodial storage area and explore its heating/cooling options
  - Teach all stakeholders the importance of maintaining cleanliness of campus
  - Examine cleaning schedule for Gym
  - Consider use of Activity Center for PE if Gym is in use
  - Remove “drop wires” in 7-8 building
- Faculty and staff
  - Increase diversity
  - Provide opportunities for shared activity among ELC, PreSchool, K-8 and church office personnel
  - Consider increasing rate of pay for substitute teachers to improve competitive position
  - Provide faculty members with input regarding committee assignments
  - Provide recognition for longevity of faculty and staff at STM
  - Examine salary scales and study methods to increase compensation without commensurate increases in tuition
  - Increase number of faculty and staff who are Google certified in order for them to use Google Classroom and Chrome books
  - Explore opportunities to utilize gifts and strengths of all faculty and staff
- Finances
  - Consolidate billing (avoid frequent billing) with more detailed info provided

- Streamline fundraising efforts while preserving “fun” raising events provided for students
- Safety and security
  - Perhaps use swipe cards on lanyards for students who are allowed to leave classroom buildings rather than codes that may not remain confidential
- Spirituality
  - Increase amount of sacramental preparation in classes and coordinate closely with parish-wide efforts and PSR
  - Increase engagement of youth minister in school life
  - Increase involvement of younger children in school-wide liturgies (e.g., readers and cantors)
- Technology
  - Integrate technology thoughtfully into assignments to prepare students adequately for 1-1 high schools
  - Consider 1-1 for 5-8 grades
  - Increase STEM opportunities
  - Improve Plus Portals with access to resources
  - More technology professional development for faculty and staff
  - Provide “parent inservice” for technology
  - Consider technology upgrades across campus
  - Replace computers used for Robotics

### **Partnership**

- Advancement
  - Seek outside grants
  - Pursue corporate sponsorships/involvement in school (e.g., prospective partners for technology)
- Branding/marketing
  - Need to promote understanding that you can’t rest on your laurels while still using our positive legacy
  - Demonstrate benefits of STM education and communicate sense of community and welcoming
  - Reconnect with former students and get their testimony
  - Re-establish STM credibility
- Communication
  - Develop one calendar for all parish activities

- Community
  - Provide “activity” time for faculty and staff and encourage more shared activities (perhaps discuss at faculty and staff meeting and/or send out a questionnaire)
  - Provide more opportunities for older students to collaborate with younger students
  - Provide support for the pastor as he strengthens his relationships with parishioners
  - Help build understanding that we all collaborate in building the Church – the people of God
- Curriculum
  - Maintain “continuous improvement” approach
  - Increase efforts to incorporate health into PE
- Enrollment management (both recruitment and retention)
  - Utilize “parent ambassadors” to encourage other parents to consider STM
  - Get people on campus for any number of activities
  - Discuss what will continue to draw parents of graduates back to STM
  - Engage faculty and staff members in recruitment and retention efforts
- Personnel
  - Hire additional personnel for enrichment activities (both curricular and extracurricular)
  - Hire a parish communication director
  - Establish team to provide maintenance and custodial work for all areas of campus
  - Everyone has to be on the same team!
- Service
  - Develop a “parent talent pool”
  - Utilize an active directory for volunteerism that allows for advance planning
  - Consider requiring service hours for parents
  - Consider additional service activities for students that could be achieved through more Prayer Partner engagement of older students with younger students
  - Tap into retirement community for additional school service
- Strategic plan
  - Develop with clearly defined goals and objectives