

DRAFT

Strategic Plan



St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Parish
Holmen, WI

March 2024



Table of Contents

I. LETTER FROM PASTOR.....	1
II. INTRODUCTION	2
III. VISION AND PRIORITIES.....	4
A. Vision for the Future.....	4
B. Priorities	4
IV. OVERVIEW OF THE STRATEGIC PLAN	5
V. PROPOSED RECOMMENDATIONS	7
A. Priority 1: Increase Participation in Weekend Masses, Involvement in Parish Ministries and Activities, and Communication Efforts.....	7
B. Priority 2: Enhance and Expand Faith Formation for All Ages.....	8
C. Priority 3: Expand Outreach Activities to Care for the Vulnerable and Those in Need.....	9
D. Priority 4: Develop a Master Building Plan, Financial Resources, and Staffing to Support Parish Growth	9
VI. UNDERSTANDINGS ABOUT IMPLEMENTATION	10
VII. APPENDIX.....	11



I. LETTER FROM PASTOR

Dear St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Parishioners,

September 2023 marked the beginning of the process of updating the pastoral plan for the future of our parish. St. Elizabeth's has done 2 previous studies, with the last one being completed in 2011. Working with the finance council and pastoral council, considering the remarkable growth in the Holmen area, we decided to bring these studies up to date. The conclusions of the previous studies were used as the basis for the new study from which a ministry plan has been developed as a roadmap for parish growth and vibrancy.

The founders of St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Parish were dedicated and committed to the development of a parish in the greater Holmen area. The first pastoral plans concluded St. Elizabeth's was in need of additional facilities in order to serve the People of God beyond Mass, as well as additional space for staff. This conclusion was reinforced with this study. The remarkable population growth in the Holmen area is projected to continue for the next 5 to 10 years. This places St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Parish in a unique situation within the Diocese of La Crosse, presenting both a challenge and an opportunity. To address this, over the years, there were several attempts to construct the facilities we need to grow but these did not materialize due to circumstances beyond the control of the parish. Seeing this plan through honors the vision of the founders of our parish.

One of the primary concerns of the parish continues to be how we best serve the needs of the community in the future. The planning goes far beyond the number of seats that are filled on any given Sunday at the Masses, and considers expanding current ministries and exploration of new ministries that could be offered if we had the space to accommodate them. Currently, rarely a week goes by without conflicting space issues among various groups and ministries. The capacity of our parish hall is limited, and using the small meeting room isolates those in that space from the larger community, which takes away from the priority of being a more welcoming parish. The outreach for the food pantry is limited due to space and at times is even cancelled due to a lack of available space. We also discussed such things as the current Faith Formation program and new catechetical initiatives we would like to offer. The plan offers something for everyone from founding members to our newest parishioners with growing families.

Every generation strives to build up the Church in new ways and directions and the success of any pastoral plan takes into consideration the variety of circumstances our families are immersed in. Now is the opportunity for our generation to step forward and prepare for a vibrant future as we move forward. The proposed plan has brought our past studies up to date, taking into account the incredible growth and new dynamics in the Holmen community. I hope you will discover where and how you might increase your involvement in one or more ministries. The success of the implementation of the pastoral plan will depend on this.

May God bless you in all that you do and may He guide St. Elizabeth Ann Seton into a new, vibrant future!

In Christ,

Fr. Jim Weighner, Your Pastor

II. INTRODUCTION

St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Parish in Holmen, Wisconsin, is a parish of over 800 families and approximately 1,900 parishioners. It is one of the largest parishes in the diocese. There are parish staff members who serve the essential ministries of the parish. The facilities are adequate for Masses, but the gathering space/hall is very small, and the parish office space is limited. There is not enough space for meetings, storage, or classrooms. The parish's ability to grow is limited by its lack of space for ministries which could attract and engage new parishioners. In addition to addressing these building needs, the parish looks to the future to increase Mass attendance and involvement in the parish, enhance faith formation ministries for all ages, and better serve the vulnerable and those in need.

Background to the Study

When St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Parish was established in 1985, only part of the original building plan for the parish was completed. The full plan called for a new church to be constructed, the original church redesigned as a hall, a school built, and a multi-purpose center/gym constructed. Because the parish was growing so rapidly then, more land was purchased on Highway 35 for it to be relocated. Building efforts were reintroduced in 2002, 2004, and 2008 and, for various reasons, each initiative was never completed. After nearly 40 years, the parish is on the brink of undertaking a construction project.

At the request of the parish, Meitler, which is a national Catholic school and parish consulting team based in the Milwaukee area, was contracted to facilitate a strategic planning process. One consultant and a project coordinator were involved with the project. The project schedule suggested that a final plan be completed by mid-March of 2024.

The study of St. Elizabeth Ann Seton began in September of 2023. Interviews with parish leaders were conducted. Tours of all the church facilities and properties were arranged. Community demographics and parish data were compiled and analyzed. The highlights of the visits and research were compiled in a document titled **Key Findings and Observations Report**. This was followed by multiple drafts of a **Strategic Plan**. In late January and early February of 2024, a parish survey was conducted with 369 respondents or over one-fourth of the adult parish population. The survey provided important information about a preferred building option, ministry preferences, and support for a new capital campaign.

Throughout the process, a Planning Committee comprised of parish staff and leaders in the parish community guided each step. This committee worked with the consultant to revise and complete a final draft of the plan. A final plan will be approved by the pastoral and finance councils of the parish.

Further Analysis of the Survey and Other Developments

The survey results told the committee what the 369 respondents preferred in terms of building and ministry priority areas. In the survey, however, the views of older parishioners were represented to a larger percentage than in the overall parish census. The opposite was true for younger parishioners – a lower percentage of younger parishioners participated in the survey than are found in the parish census. As a result, the preferences for a parish location and ministry priorities may require further evaluation. When a building committee is appointed and begins to meet, they will review the survey results and weigh the responses. In addition to gaining a fuller understanding of the significance of the survey, the building committee will need to monitor any relevant developments with Aquinas Catholic Schools regarding a St. Elizabeth Ann Seton location. It is possible that an evaluation of the survey results and a development in the potential for a Catholic school site may result in adjustments to the location of the parish and to ministry priorities.

Hope for the Future

The hope for the parish is that the implementation of this strategic plan will bring St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Parish community closer to becoming like the early Christian community in the Acts of the Apostles - ***“Every day they devoted themselves to meeting together in the temple area and to breaking bread in their homes, praising God, and enjoying favor with all the people. And every day the Lord added to their number those who were being saved.”*** (Acts 2:46-47)



III. VISION AND PRIORITIES

A. Vision for the Future

“We must restore hope to young people, help the old, be open to the future, spread love. Be poor among the poor. We need to include the excluded and preach peace.” - Pope Francis

As frequently as Pope Francis has spoken of what the Church should be, these three sentences may be some of his most profound. The vision for St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Parish includes many of these ideals.

A vision for the future typically contains two main elements: a **vision phrase**, which summarizes the priorities and plan into a few words, and **the priorities**, which guide the development of specific goals and outcomes. After several months of discussion and input from the survey, the planning committee suggests this vision phrase to the parishioners as a synthesis of the phrases which were supported in the survey.

- ***Developing a Vibrant Future as Partners in Christ***

B. Priorities

At the first parish planning meeting, parishioners were invited to review, discuss, and select preferences from a list of ministry possibilities for the future. The possibilities came from interviews with parish and school leaders and the analysis of community and parish data. By reflecting upon those “future possibilities” which parishioners most preferred at the parish meeting, the following future priorities emerged.

- 1. Increase participation in weekend Masses, involvement in parish ministries and activities, and communication efforts.**

While there will be population growth in the Holmen area, the parish needs to increase its efforts to reach out to, engage, and communicate with more Catholics and those who may wish to become members of the Catholic community.

- 2. Enhance and expand faith formation ministries for all ages, e.g., early childhood, elementary, satellite campus for Aquinas Catholic School, junior high and high school, young adults, adults, and seniors.**

The future of the Church relies on all who grow in their love of God and continue to live a life of faith. Parishioners believe that a greater emphasis must be placed on developing a high level of faith formation opportunities and experiences for all parishioners, young and old.

- 3. Expand outreach activities to care for the vulnerable and those in need.**

In the Gospels, the importance of helping others, especially the poor, is a hallmark of Jesus’ ministry and central to his formation of the disciples. The parishioners further realize that poverty and other corporal/spiritual needs exist, and the parish should address more.

- 4. Develop a master building plan, financial resources, and staffing to support parish growth.**

The Church is a human institution, needing places to gather, funding, and both professional and volunteer ministers. Parishioners understand that growth will require careful consideration about how best to steward the resources the parish has and will need for the future.

IV. OVERVIEW OF THE STRATEGIC PLAN

Goal	Oversight/Responsibility	Timeline
Priority 1: Increase Participation in Weekend Masses, Involvement in Parish Ministries and Activities, and Communication Efforts	Parish Council	
A. Increase participation, preparation, and sense of welcome at weekend Masses	<i>Pastor/Christi Wengel/Nate Herr</i>	<i>Fall of 2024</i>
B. Contact everyone on the parish roster and former members to listen to and invite them to engage in the parish, as part of a capital campaign effort. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Invite them to share their time, talent, and treasure with the parish 2) Develop a communications strategy using new and old technologies to reach everyone in the parish and the area it serves. 	<i>Capital Campaign Team</i>	<i>Winter of 2025</i>

Goal	Oversight/Responsibility	Timeline
Priority 2: Enhance and Expand Faith Formation for All Ages	Parish Council	
A. Consider the potential for St. Elizabeth Ann Seton as another site for the Aquinas Catholic School System	<i>Pastor/Aquinas School System</i>	<i>Spring of 2024</i>
B. Study the needs of young families and make recommendations. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Study early childhood program needs. 2) Reintroduce a Mom’s Group. 3) Develop a young adult ministry (ages 20’s & 30’s) 4) Introduce Catechesis of the Good Shepherd for preschool and elementary students. 	<i>Study Group</i> <i>Mary Luebke</i>	<i>Spring of 2024</i>
C. Expand middle school and high school ministries.	<i>Heide Harron</i>	<i>Spring of 2024</i>
D. Develop small faith sharing groups, parish-based retreats for adults, and involve other parishes in the RCIA process.	<i>Study Group</i>	<i>Fall of 2024</i>

Goal	Oversight/Responsibility	Timeline
Priority 3: Expand Outreach Activities to Care for the Vulnerable and Those in Need	Parish Council	
<p>A. Increase activity to care for the vulnerable and those in need.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Study the needs and make recommendations for any new initiatives. 2) Expand the Young at Heart Senior ministry 	<i>Theresa Frana and others</i>	<i>Fall of 2024</i>
<p>B. Study the potential to introduce a Stephen ministry for caregivers and for those who have experienced a loss.</p>	<i>Heide Harron</i>	<i>Fall of 2024</i>

Goal	Oversight/Responsibility	Timeline
Priority 4: Develop a Master Building Plan, Financial Resources, and Staffing to Support Parish Growth	Finance Council	
<p>A. Establish a Building Committee to guide the development of a master site plan and oversee the development of a construction plan.</p> <p>B. Develop a master site plan which emphasizes multi-use space, create storage, and can accommodate an expansion of ministries.</p> <p>C. Determine any interim changes which may be needed to the current facilities.</p> <p>D. Study the potential of conducting a capital campaign to fund future construction.</p>	<i>Building Committee</i>	<i>Spring of 2024</i>

V. PROPOSED RECOMMENDATIONS

The recommendations are discussed in greater detail in this section to help parishioners better understand the goals under each priority. These recommendations will also help the implementers to carry out their tasks of bringing these priority areas into reality over a reasonable time.

A. Priority 1: Increase Participation in Weekend Masses, Involvement in Parish Ministries and Activities, and Communication Efforts

1. Increase participation, preparation, and sense of welcome at weekend Masses.

a) Increase the sense of welcome.

- Have parish members personally invite other parishioners, before and after Mass, to encourage them to join in our socials or other activities.
- Help to create personal encounters with parishioners after Mass and during parish socials. (Place discussion topics on the tables for people to explore/create a deeper encounter with other parishioners and Jesus.)
- Re-engage in missionary outreach. (Have a movie night for the community.)

b) Increase parishioner participation.

- Explore the possibilities for and interest in new choirs, such as a middle school/youth choir and/or a family choir.
- Expand the use of other modes of communication to reach all parishioners in various forms including social media platforms, tv screens in the gathering space, website and bulletin.
- Inspire a love for Jesus in the Eucharist by advertising song and summit and expanding current adoration opportunities.

c) Increase participation in liturgical ministries.

- Send letters to encourage further participation to those currently involved, including information on their ministry.
- Establish regular annual training for all liturgical ministries. (Possibly include a discernment process for those interested in serving the church.)
- Conduct a parish survey at least every other year to update and re-engage parishioners with the Stewardship of time and talent.
- Establish an annual server training to be done during religious education classes at the end of the school year for all in-coming fourth (4th) graders.
- Provide spiritual formation/growth opportunities specific to each liturgical ministry (guest speakers, lecturers, retreats and/or workshops).
- Offer to provide access and/or resources for various faith formation opportunities to all parishioners. (Consider the following: keeping the church library up to date; promoting online resources; investigate other online applications which may be available.)

2. Contact everyone on the parish roster and former members to listen to and invite them to engage in the parish, as part of the capital campaign effort. (This can be done in conjunction with the capital campaign effort.)
 - a) Invite parishioners to share their time, talent, and treasure with the parish.
 - b) Discuss with people their preferred way or ways for the parish to keep in contact with them.
 - c) Develop a communication strategy using new and old technologies to reach everyone in the parish and to publicize to people in the area.

B. Priority 2: Enhance and Expand Faith Formation for All Ages

1. Consider the potential for St. Elizabeth Ann Seton as another site for the Aquinas Catholic School System. (This goal will be explored by the pastor with the Diocesan Superintendent of Schools, the Superintendent of the Aquinas Catholic School System, and the Aquinas Catholic School Board. Other parish leaders may become involved at the invitation of the pastor.)
2. Study the needs of young families and make recommendations. Create a study group comprised of young adults and study the needs and interests in the first three areas below.
 - a) Study the need for early childhood programs. The group is asked to consider the potential for a day care program and other opportunities for families with young children. They will study various possibilities and present a report with recommendations to the parish council.
 - b) Develop a young adult ministry for the 20's and 30's age groups. Identify young adults interested in developing a ministry to, for, with, and by young adults. From those interested, select a core team, and provide training for a ministry at the parish.
 - c) Reintroduce a Mom's Group. Explore the potential for a regular gathering of young mothers, their children, and possible fathers. A group did exist in the parish in previous years.
 - d) Introduce Catechesis of the Good Shepherd (also known as CGS) for preschool and elementary students. Catechesis of the Good Shepherd is a Montessori-based approach to faith formation for 3 – 6- year-olds, 6 to 9-year-olds, and 9 to 12-year-olds. The atriums allow children and adults to listen to and experience Jesus in the Eucharistic celebration.
 - Acquire atrium spaces for 3 possible levels dedicated exclusively to CGS.
 - Prepare the atriums and curriculum materials for the three levels which correspond to pre-K through 5th grade.
 - Conduct catechist training
3. Expand middle school and high school ministries.
 - a) Offer an opportunity to participate in a service project annually.
 - b) Establish a youth Mass where students can be the liturgical ministers on at least a once-a-month basis.
 - c) Develop leadership teams of youth and parents to assist with initial and ongoing planning for youth ministry.

4. Form a study group to develop small faith sharing groups, parish-based retreats for adults, involve other parishes in the RCIA process, and explore other opportunities such as Bible study. This group will study various possibilities for adult faith formation and present the results of their study and recommendations for action to the parish council.

C. Priority 3: Expand Outreach Activities to Care for the Vulnerable and Those in Need

1. Increase activity to care for the vulnerable in the area by first assessing the needs and then determining any new efforts which may be necessary.
 - a) Improve building accessibility for those with limited mobility. (By August of 2024)
 - Provide parking spaces near the rear entrance to the church.
 - Add a handicapped door to the rear entrance.
 - b) Establish a ministry for the homebound. (By May of 2025)
 - Visit the homebound and identify their needs.
 - Identify visitors for the homebound, provide training, and develop an ongoing visit schedule.
 - c) Streamline operations for the food pantry. (By May of 2026)
 - d) Create a unified storage location for perishable and non-perishable food.
 - e) Provide a loading zone and handicapped parking near the pantry.
 - f) Consider flexible hours for the pantry to be accessed.
2. Start a Stephen ministry for caregivers and for those who have experienced a loss. (Stephen ministry is a support ministry for caregivers, those who have experienced the death of a loved one, those suffering from a chronic illness, job loss, onset of a disability or spiritual crisis. It is a caring ministry for those who are experiencing hurt in any way.)
 - a) Present the ministry to the parish council and gain their approval and support.
 - b) Enroll the parish in the ministry to access training materials, resources, and ongoing support.
 - c) Train parish leaders and staff about the ministry so that they understand the ministry and can refer people to the ministry.
 - d) Recruit parishioners to serve in the ministry.
 - e) Train the first group of ministers (there are 20 training sessions).
 - f) Identify parishioners who may be seeking the help which the ministry can provide.
 - g) Provide support and ongoing supervision for those who are ministering.

D. Priority 4: Develop a Master Building Plan, Financial Resources, and Staffing to Support Parish Growth

1. Create a building committee to guide the development of a master site plan and oversee a construction project.
 - a) Develop a master site plan which emphasizes multi-purpose space to increase usage, create storage space, and accommodate an expansion of ministries.
 - b) Determine any interim changes which may be needed to the current facilities.
 - c) Study the feasibility of conducting a capital campaign to fund future construction.

VI. UNDERSTANDINGS ABOUT IMPLEMENTATION

The implementation of the plan will begin after its approval in March of 2024. The parish staff, parish pastoral council, and finance council will share in the implementation of the recommendations by overseeing the recommendations. The following understandings about the plan's implementation should be reviewed and followed by those implementing the plan.

1. The terms and role of the Planning Committee members who have guided the planning process will end in March of 2024.
2. The specific implementation of each recommended goal in the plan will be passed to the person or group with the designated responsibility. The pastor, parish staff, parish council, and finance council will play key roles. Responsibility and accountability for the implementation of the goals will be essential.
3. The parish council will oversee the implementation of the pastoral part of the plan. They will work with parish staff and other parish groups involved with putting the goals into place.
4. The finance council oversees the budgeting and expenditures involved with the implementation of the plan initiatives and the funding campaigns for facility changes and increased maintenance costs.
5. Timelines and action steps will be necessary for each recommendation. Parishes usually are not able to implement each goal at the same time. The greatest amount of energy, enthusiasm, and activity is typically evident in the first year of implementation. It is helpful to view the action steps in a sequence where one action step builds on another or where preparation needs to take place before a goal can be fully realized.
6. The implementation is a chance to build relationships and invite parishioners to greater involvement and engagement in the parish. There are parishioners who will be inspired to become more active in new or expanded ministries. The implementation process can and should be a time for increased vitality and spirit within the parish community.
7. The full implementation of this plan will likely be realized in a timeframe of 5 to 7 years.

VII. APPENDIX

APPENDIX A SURVEY RESULTS

