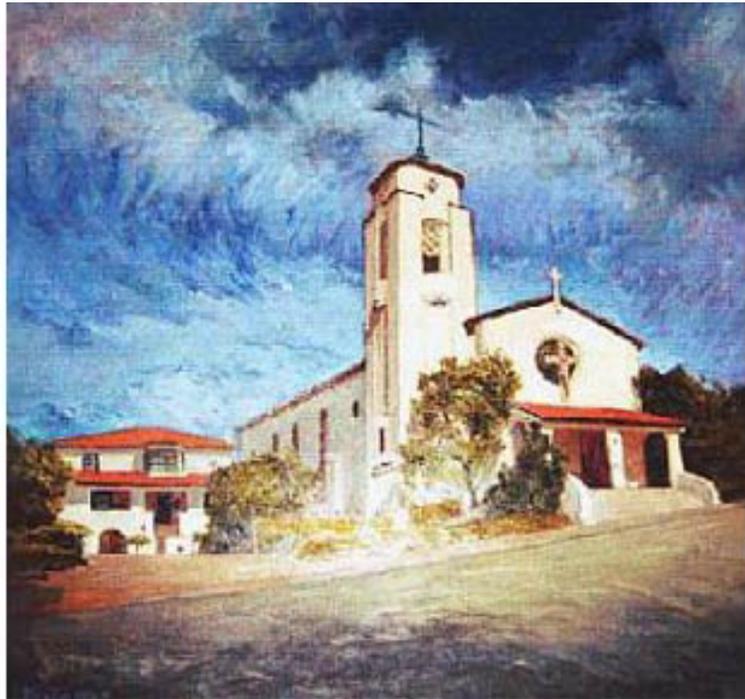
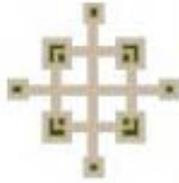


**St. Jerome Catholic Church
El Cerrito, CA**

**Strategic Plan
2015-2021**



**St. Jerome Catholic Church Succession of
Pastors**

Rev. Msgr. James J. Rohan	1941-1973
Rev. Msgr. Parnell J. McCarthy	1973-1980
Rev. John J. Kennedy	1980-1984
Rev. John J. Manning	1984-1990
Rev. E. Donald Osuna	1990-2001
Rev. Paul D. Minnihan	2001-2004
Rev. Jerry Kennedy	2004-2007
Rev. Dante B. Tamayo	2008 - 2012
Rev. Fernando J. Cortez	2012

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Pastor's Message - 2015

Dear Parishioners,

This coming December we observe the fiftieth anniversary of the conclusion of the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965). I was in sixth grade (1962), and a freshman in high school by the conclusion of the council (1965). I probably was one of the last catechism classes to receive Confirmation in Latin! My age group still entered high school seminaries throughout the nation. I would not join them until 1973, for better or worse. Countless witnesses to the past fifty years of Church history are no longer with us. Some yet survive – Bishop John S. Cummins – then a priest *peritus* (expert) who attended the Vatican Council with then Bishop Floyd L. Begin.

The steady, hope-filled leadership of Bishop Begin (15 years), and Bishop Cummins' long tenure (26 years) provided the Diocese of Oakland with the necessary stability to inaugurate and implement the Council reforms. Most people experienced "the changes" through the liturgy, the celebration of the Eucharist (Mass) and the other sacraments in English. The sudden exodus of priests and religious during the initial period placed a burden of responsibility upon the laity. Encouragement came from our enlightened bishops, priests, deacons, the renewed religious orders and laity who stepped forward to take on the work of the Kingdom of God in the Church's evolving mission. The latter half of the twentieth century saw the rise of the "People of God" to describe the Church's renewed identity in the world. None of the above proved easy for clergy, religious or laity. Yet, here we are, fifty years later, truly better prepared for the future envisioned by our new Holy Father, Pope Francis.

Ecclesia semper reforma! Saint Jerome Parish has been an integral part of this history of reform and fidelity. I want to thank past pastors for their commitment to the post-Conciliar Church and its missionary zeal. I thank past and present parishioners' for their faithful incarnation as "The People of God" on pilgrimage toward the Kingdom of God.

The Strategic Plan (2003-2006) is the collaboration of the Parish Pastoral Council and Fr. Paul Minnihan. It was revised once under Fr. Dante Tamayo (2011-2014), and now enters its third revision for the 2015-2021. Its goals (visions), objectives (missions), and implementation strategies (pastoral projects) reflect the desire to keep the parish alive and relevant in the twenty-first century.

Collegiality, collaboration, and subsidiarity of responsibilities throughout the Mystical Body of Christ, the Church, have been the guiding values to implement our Plan and the call of the Vatican Council to renew the Church in our times.

Blessings,
Fr. Fernando J. Cortez
Pastor

PARISH PASTORAL COUNCIL

2014 - 2015

- Stephanie Andrade
- Dave Concepcion
- Mary Ghidella
- Israel Lawrence
- Monica Olivares
- Diego Parada
- Tom Troy
- Carol Valladao
- Teresa Viebrock
- John Ward
- Margo Watson
- Alison Wilkie
- Rich Wolfman

MISSION STATEMENT

St. Jerome Catholic Church is a diverse family of faith in Jesus Christ in the Catholic tradition. We gather for worship and faith formation. Our mission is to serve the needs and development of our faith family and build solidarity with our neighbors as a community of welcome and outreach.

PARISH HISTORY

St Jerome parish is one of five parishes established in what was the Archdiocese of San Francisco in 1941 at the end of the Great Depression. Located near the county line, its boundaries rest in Alameda and Contra Costa Counties. Five years after its founding, with the close of World War II, the area experienced a boom period of growth. The church building was completed in June 1942. From 1945 to 1950 the parish population increased by thirty percent, ultimately reaching approximately 3,000 people in 1970.

In the fifties, the parish bustled with activity. It planned, financed and built its elementary school which opened in 1955. That same year, the parish constructed a convent to house the Sisters of the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary who began to teach and administrate the school in 1956. In 1962 St. Jerome became part of the newly formed Diocese of Oakland.

In the sixties and seventies, St Jerome experienced the nation-wide issues of social unrest and Vatican II reforms. At the same time, the surrounding housing stock was fully built out and the baby boomer generation moved. The parish population reached a plateau and then dropped by fifty percent between 1970 and 1985. Mass attendance fell. First Communion and Confirmations decreased. New parish activities evolved as many traditional organizations disappeared and memberships declined. During this time the importance of lay ministry emerged giving focus to ministry in virtue of our common baptism.

In the eighties and nineties, St. Jerome stabilized as a smaller parish. The baby boom generation disappeared for the most part. The school, though full, drew over half its

students from outside the parish neighborhood. In early eighties the parish planned and completed a major renovation which included a redesign and dedication of Rohan Hall and the patio outside its doors. In 1991 the parish celebrated its golden anniversary and renovated the worship space.

Since the turn of the century the parish community has witnessed many changes. The Sisters of the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary returned to Ireland and England in 2013. Saint Jerome School enrollment has declined and eighty-five percent of the students are non-Catholic. The parish is demographically divided between older Catholics many of whom are single and young families. The active lay ministries continue to support the needs of our faith community and to contribute outreach to the wider community.

Despite current challenges, Saint Jerome Parish and School continue to shine as beacons of Christian faith in our community. The school celebrates its sixtieth anniversary during the 2015-2016 academic year. Saint Jerome Parish enters its seventy-fifth year in 2016. We look forward to both jubilees! Our faith community is blessed and hopes for a renewed future under the new leadership of Bishop Michael C. Barber, S.J., Pope Francis, our current pastor, Fr. Fernando Cortez, and school principal, Ms. Alison Wilkie.

DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

The following data* covers those five US Postal ZIP code areas which are partially within the St. Jerome Parish boundary. We also recognize that many from beyond these boundaries find a welcome at our parish and call St. Jerome home.

Faith Involvement

- 51.4% of the residents have **no faith involvement**
- 23.4% have **moderate faith involvement**
- 26.5% have **strong faith involvement.**

The overall church program preference is "recreation."

Average Age is 43.8.

- 2.6% born before 1924
- 11.8% born between 1925 and 1942
- 27.5% born between 1943 and 1960
- 31.1% born between 1961 and 1981
- 19.2% born between 1982 and 2001
- 7.8% born after 2002

This data indicates that there are a large number of people who are not affiliated with any church and many who have a very low to extremely low faith receptivity level. In one sense, this could be seen as a negative; yet, it could suggest that there is an opportunity to attract some of these people to our church through a well planned and executed evangelization and outreach program. The fact that the overall church program preference from the census indicates "recreation" suggests that a way of initially attracting new membership is to offer attractive recreational and social programs in addition to the parish's spiritual programs.

Conclusion

Our strategic plan is the result of looking back into our parish history and gazing at the current demographic data. The plan provides a blueprint for the direction of the parish into 2014. A vision has been crafted; it is our collective responsibility as the Catholic community to make this vision real.

**The demographic data was abstracted and compiled from the Ministry Area Profile 2010 Compass Report, 1990-2010 Percept Group (Sources: Percept, Claritas, U.S. Census Bureau)*

**We Invite All Parishioners to Join in to
Support Our Ministries in Implementation of
St. Jerome's Strategic Plan**

1. Goal One - **Worship**
 - a. Objectives
 - b. Implementation Strategies
2. Goal Two - **Education**
 - a. Objectives
 - b. Implementation Strategies
3. Goal Three - **Parish/School Community**
 - a. Objectives
 - b. Implementation Strategies
4. Goal Four - **Leadership**
 - a. Objectives
 - b. Implementation Strategies
5. Goal Five - **Stewardship**
 - a. Objectives
 - b. Implementation Strategies
6. Goal Six - **Social Justice**
 - a. Goals
 - b. Implementation Strategies
7. Goal Seven - **Communications**
 - a. Goals
 - b. Implementation Strategies

Goal One - Worship

Worship at St. Jerome Church affirms our Catholic faith and engages parishioners in a meaningful encounter with the living Jesus Christ.

Objectives

1. Liturgies invite the active and joyful participation of the parishioners.
2. Worship challenges parishioners to understand and live their faith.
3. Parishioners gain a deeper appreciation of scripture through worship.
4. Liturgical ministries visibly represent the membership of the parish.
5. Liturgical education strengthens and supports the liturgical ministries.

Implementation Strategies

1. Provide preaching that actively encourages parishioners to prayer and action.
2. Make parishioners aware of contemporary moral and social issues in light of Catholic teaching and invites them to act on those teachings.
3. Provide preaching that relates the scriptures to the life of the community.
4. Encourage and advertise prayer and worship opportunities that supplement Sunday liturgies.
5. Encourage parishioners of all ages to participate in the ministries that are part of the Eucharistic celebration.
6. Enhance liturgies with multicultural traditions.
7. Include traditional and contemporary music in liturgical celebrations.
8. Engage the liturgy committee to oversee the vision for the liturgical life of the parish and evaluate the various liturgical ministries.

Goal Two - Education

Opportunities for religious education and spiritual development are provided for all members of St. Jerome Church and those interested in joining the Catholic Church.

Objectives

1. Parishioners are knowledgeable about Catholic teaching and tradition, scripture and liturgy.
2. The parish continues to offer activities and resources to help parishioners experience, understand, and live their faith.
3. Conduct outreach to non-practicing Catholics to encourage Mass attendance.
4. People interested in becoming members of the Catholic Church have opportunities to explore our faith.

Implementation Strategies

1. Offer a baptism ministry to parents of infants to be jointly conducted by clergy and laity.
2. Offer ongoing faith formation and education opportunities for all parishioners, including children and teenagers, to fully prepare them and their sponsors for the sacraments.
3. Communicate opportunities offered by the diocese, other parishes, and local retreat centers for religious education and spiritual development.
4. Provide information and direction for vocations to Holy Orders and the religious life.
5. Implement ministry to estranged and returning Catholics.
6. Provide RCIA instruction for people of other faith traditions to prepare them for the sacraments of initiation.

Goal Three – Parish/School Community

St. Jerome Parish and St. Jerome School act together to vitalize our Catholic community.

Objectives

1. Dialogue between the pastor and the principal leads to effective integration of parish and school. The pastor is a member of the school board, and the principal is a member of the Parish Pastoral Council.
2. The school administration and the second grade teacher collaborate with the family faith formation director in planning for sacramental preparation.
3. Religious outreach and recreational activities are available for parish and school families.
4. Develop programs to retain school graduates' involvement in the parish beyond eighth grade.

Implementation Strategies

1. Strengthen communication and understanding between the parish and the school.
2. Continue to integrate school and parish families in preparation for the sacraments.
3. Invite parish families to participate in school liturgical celebrations.
4. Support the CYO sports program to encourage participation by school, parish, and neighborhood children.
5. Invite alumni currently in high school for yearly reunion Masses.
6. Encourage "retired" altar servers to become lectors, Eucharistic ministers, choir members, or other ministry members.

Goal Four - Leadership

St. Jerome Parish leadership is responsible for supporting the pastor, reviewing the activities of the lay ministries, monitoring the parish's finances, maintaining the physical premises, and planning for the future.

Objectives

1. Responsibility for the parish is shared jointly between parishioners and the pastor.
2. Lay leadership of parish ministries is encouraged and developed.
3. Lay participation in both the Parish and Financial Councils is ongoing, with rotating memberships that fairly represent the parish to provide channels for parishioners' voices to be heard.
4. Parish decision-making processes are transparent.
5. There are external and internal checks on parish lay leadership performance.

Implementation Strategies

1. The pastor's chief advisory bodies – The Pastoral Council and Finance Council – are afforded an active and consultative voice that affects the management and vision of the parish. A consensus model is utilized in decision-making. Diocesan resources may be used to train members of these advisory bodies and lay ministry leaders.
2. The chief advisory bodies use a model of discernment to call forth a diversity of parishioners by name to utilize their gifts and talents in leadership.
3. The Pastoral Council members serve as liaisons to specific parish committees and organizations.
4. The Pastoral Council establishes procedures to safeguard that parish leadership hears parishioners' voices.
5. The Finance Council provides timely advice on parish financial health to the pastor, provides an annual report to the Pastoral Council, and publishes the annual budget to parishioners.
6. The chief advisory bodies make available the minutes of their meetings.

Goal Five - Stewardship

Parishioners have a broad understanding of Christian stewardship and engage in intentional, planned, and proportionate giving of their time, talent, and treasure.

Objectives

1. Parishioners understand stewardship themes of gratitude, accountability, generosity, and returning to the Lord with increase.
2. Parishioners honor their baptismal call to ministry through active involvement in ministries of hospitality, evangelization, and service.
3. Parishioners accept responsibility for the welfare of the parish community and the care of its physical facilities, both now and in the future.
4. Parishioners practice stewardship in word and indeed by joyfully sharing their personal and material resources in ways that are planned, proportionate, and sacrificial.

Implementation Strategies

1. Consider forming a stewardship committee to work with the Pastor and develop parish communications and activities that promote effective stewardship.
2. Educate parishioners in the roles and responsibilities we Catholics share as good stewards of creation, vocations, and the Church.
3. Through communication, recruitment events, and personal outreach, continue to encourage and engage parishioners in generously supporting parish and diocesan ministries and programs with gifts of time, money, prayer, and personal service, according to their circumstances.
4. Use a survey or an ad hoc committee to assess the parish's progress on stewardship.

Goal Six – Social Justice

As heir to a rich history of Catholic social thought and in response to the call of our faith in Jesus Christ, the St. Jerome community promotes building a just society and defending human rights amidst the challenges of modern society.

Objective

1. The parish educates and develops an awareness of Catholic social justice teaching.
2. The parish actively promotes social justice by developing and joining networks with other religious groups and social agencies.
3. The parish discerns and takes action on public issues related to Catholic social thought.
4. The parish upholds and promotes personal and collective respect for the dignity of the human person and the rights and responsibilities that flow from it.

Implementation Strategies

1. Provide educational opportunities for the parish to understand the fundamentals of Catholic social justice and connections between Sunday worship and the real transformation of persons and structures in society.
2. Reactivate the Social Justice Committee working in coordination with the pastor and open to all parishioners to oversee the following:
 - Increase awareness and offer educational opportunities;
 - Coordinate parish participation in social justice projects: examples include bringing back fair trade sales at church, GRIP Walk for Harmony, prayer services and discussion groups on current affairs;
 - The role that the St. Jerome community can play in local community organizations.
3. Explore opportunities for joint activities with local parishes and the community to advocate for justice.
4. Encourage participation in local community events to foster social justice values in the extended community.

Goal Seven - Communications

Effectively communicate St. Jerome Church's activities, values, and ministries, both within and beyond the parish community.

Objectives

1. Communication media is utilized to inform the St. Jerome community of its activities, values, and ministries.
2. Communication media invites the wider community (such as family, friends, local communities, businesses, government, etc.) to share in St. Jerome's activities, values, and ministries.

Implementation Strategies

1. Communicate St. Jerome's activities and special news to other parishes, the diocese, and the broader community through a variety of means:
 - word of mouth, printed bulletin announcements and flyers;
 - notices in the Catholic Voice and local press; and
 - websites, and other media.
2. Use local civic events and the activities of other religious denominations as opportunities to share upcoming events or relevant ministries at St. Jerome Church.
3. Coordinate parish activities with suitable activities of local civic and religious groups.
4. Effectively use our web presence to communicate joint efforts so that parishioners and community members can easily find out about them.

**St. Jerome Catholic Church
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www.stjeromeec.org**