

**Pax Christi Youth Ministry**  
**2020 Vision & Strategic Plan**  
**“Upon this rock I will build my church.” Matthew 16:18**  
**Draft Proposal**  
**March 11, 2015**

*“Verso l’alto”* -Blessed Pier Giorgio Frassati

## Executive Summary

For over ten years, Pax Christi Youth Ministry efforts have been providing students, families, and volunteers countless opportunities to encounter Christ and further enter into relationship with him. Our parish's willingness to be innovative and open to change has enabled youth ministry to adapt to and grow with our students, families, and volunteers. For this reason we have been able to meet people where they are and invite them to become, more perfectly, the people God wants them to be. However, our world rapidly changes. Without a clear vision and plan it can be easy to lose sight of what is most important. Our most recent vision, which has been guiding us for the last three years, expired in the spring of 2014; therefore our update will launch youth ministry efforts into the future while honoring our past and keeping our eyes focused on Christ.

The following pages detail our 2020 Vision, and they are a result of over six months of work accomplished by our youth ministry team. In preparation, team members read the latest research, familiarized themselves with best practices, made professional observations, gathered input from students and adults, and discussed at length the hopes and dreams they have both individually and collectively for the young people of Pax Christi and our greater community. The vision is ready to be presented for input and discussion before being made final later this spring.

Our 2020 Vision builds upon the past by continuing to root itself in the goals of youth ministry offered by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops in the 1996 document Renewing the Vision:

Three interdependent and equally important goals guide the Church's ministry with adolescents. These goals state what it means for the Catholic community to respond to the needs of young people and to involve young people in sharing their unique gifts with the larger community. They express the Church's focus for ministry with adolescents, while encouraging local creativity in developing the programs, activities, and strategies to reach these goals:

1. To empower young people to live as disciples of Jesus Christ in our world today
2. To draw young people to responsible participation in the life, mission, and work of the Catholic faith community
3. To foster the total personal and spiritual growth of each young person.

It also places itself within Pax Christi's youth ministry mission statement, which reads:

We strive to form disciples of Jesus Christ and His Church, through a unified vision for ministry to young people, from early adolescence through young adulthood.

Our 2020 Vision is unique because it offers five areas upon which we will focus in order to achieve the Bishops' goals and our mission. The five focus areas include:

1. Prayer & Worship
2. Formation & Leadership
3. Relational & Small Group Ministry
4. Stewardship & Service
5. Evangelization & Communication

These focus areas, in conjunction with objectives and action items (*outlined later in this proposal*), will launch youth ministry into the future allowing us to continue adapting to the changing social landscape. It will also keep our eyes on Christ who will guide us through it all. Our 2020 Vision embodies our slogan:

*"Upon this rock I will build my church."* -Matthew 16:18

Likewise, it focuses us on a new motto:

*"Verso l'alto"* -Blessed Pier Giorgio Frassati (which when translated reads, "To the heights")

Our slogan and motto remind us of the source and summit of the faith and point us to our mission statement as we seek to form disciples upon a solid foundation and send them out to the ends of the earth.

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## A Call to Action - Mapping the Territory

Beginning in 2001 a team of scholars, led by Notre Dame professor of sociology Christian Smith, launched a research project titled the “*National Study on Youth in Religion*.” Throughout its life, which continues today, the team has released their research in waves. These reports have enhanced our understanding of the religious lives of American youth from adolescence into young adulthood. The project is, without a doubt, the most ambitious and large scale research ever done in this subject area. The results have better defined the territory into which those of us who work with adolescents and families (including the church) must venture. The findings have also given us a language by which we can articulate observations we have collected over a number of years.

Kendra Cressy Dean’s book, *Almost Christian*, is one of the first fruits of the NSYR. In it she states:

*We have successfully convinced teenagers that religious participation is important for moral formation and for making nice people, which may explain why American adolescents harbor no ill will toward religion. Many of them say they will bring their own children to church in the future (a dubious prediction statistically). Yet these young people possess no real commitment to or excitement about religious faith. Teenagers tend to approach religious participation, like music and sports, as an extracurricular activity: a good, well-rounded thing to do, but unnecessary for an integrated life. Religion, the young people in the NSYR concurred, is a “Very Nice Thing.”*

She then goes on to say:

*What we have been less able to convey to young people is faith. In Christian tradition, faith, is a matter of desire, a desire for God and a desire to love others in Christ’s name - which results in a church oriented toward bearing God’s self-giving love to others, embodied in a gospel-shaped way of life... The faith that most American teenagers exhibit is a loveless version that the NSYR calls Christianity’s “misbegotten step cousin,” Moralistic Therapeutic Deism, which is “supplanting Christianity as the dominant religion in American churches.”*

Moralistic Therapeutic Deism is the term we have come to use to describe the general sense of where we are at as a society concerning faith and religion. In essence MTD says God is “other,” he is a power mostly concerned with judging right and wrong actions, and we can call upon him when life isn’t playing out according to our best laid plans. It seems good (because it is, in part, true), however, it isn’t Catholic nor is it even Christian. It is very individualized and self-focused, lacking any social dimension which is so crucial to the Christian tradition. Most disturbingly MTD is void of any mention of Christ at all.

Furthermore, Dean writes:

*What if the blase religiosity of most American teenagers is not the result of poor communication but the result of excellent communication of a watered-down gospel so devoid of God’s self-giving love in Jesus Christ, so immune to the sending love of the Holy Spirit that it might not be Christianity at all? What if the church models a way of life that asks, not passionate surrender but ho-hum assent? What if we are preaching moral affirmation, a feel-better faith, and a hands off God instead of the decisively involved, impossibly loving, radically sending God of Abraham and Mary, who desired us enough to enter creation in Jesus Christ and whose Spirit is active in the church and in the world today? If this is the case - if theological malpractice explains teenagers’ half-hearted religious identities - then perhaps most young people practice Moralistic Therapeutic Deism not because they reject Christianity, but because this is the only “Christianity they know.*

Finally, there is hope. The study brings to light the fact that communities which are able to foster in their young people a consequential faith - faith that grows by confessing a creed, belonging to a community, and pursuing God’s purpose and hope - provide a solid foundation upon which those young people are able to grow and thrive in their relationship with God and are better able to live out the social dimensions and missional aspects of Christianity. We need a vision for youth ministry which can effectively address the underlying causes of Moralistic Therapeutic Deism that have manifest themselves in our collective experience of faith, religion, and life in general. The following pages will lay out that vision and our plan for navigating this new territory.

## **Mission Overview**

It is important for us to communicate our mission and how it fits into that of the universal Church as well as our parish community.

### **Catechism of the Catholic Church**

The Catechism of the Catholic Church offers to us the notion that, *“He [God] calls man to seek him, know him, and love him with all his strength” no. 1.* Ultimately the Church exists to be an instrument in that most fundamental of human searches; so much so that she takes her primary direction from the very last words Jesus spoke before he was raised up into Heaven, *“Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded of you” (Matthew 28:19-20a).* Discipleship, at its root, is understood as the lifelong journey of coming to know, love, and serve God. Thus, the life of a Christian disciple is always missional, always seeking to draw others into knowing, loving, and serving.

### **Pax Christi Catholic Church**

Our Pax Christi Catholic Church’s mission statement flows from that essential action of the Church and reads:

*We are a Eucharistic community united to continue the mission and message of Jesus Christ. We invite and welcome all people to learn and grow with us in living the Good News through:*

1. *Stewardship of God’s gifts*
2. *Love manifested in service*
3. *Peace achieved through justice*

Pax Christi recognizes that love, by virtue of its very nature, overflows, and therefore invites all people to become disciples who are intensely fixated on willing the good of the other.

### **United States Conference of Catholic Bishops**

Furthermore, our United States Conference of Catholic Bishops has given a specific mission for all youth ministry efforts within our national Church. It reads:

*To empower young people to live as disciples of Jesus Christ, draw them into responsible participation into the life, mission, and work of the Catholic faith community, and foster their total personal and spiritual growth.*

Again, because it is all encompassing of the christian life, discipleship is the main focus.

The Bishops also highlight eight components of ministry which include (see Appendix B for more details):

- Community Life
- Justice & Service
- Evangelization
- Leadership Development
- Pastoral Care
- Prayer & Worship
- Advocacy
- Education/Catechesis

### **Pax Christi Youth Ministry**

From all of this Pax Christi Youth Ministry’s mission statement has been crafted in order to keep the above in sight as we grow and develop over time. It reads:

*To form disciples of Jesus Christ and His Church, through a unified vision for ministry to young people, from early adolescence through young adulthood.*

We keep all of these in front of us because we know it is necessary to develop identity as a community of young people and as a parish. With that being said, is also crucial that we stay connected to the the local (diocesan), national, and universal Church.

## **Focus Areas - Overview**

The following focus areas have been defined by the Youth Ministry Team. Together they make up our 2020 vision. They are the fruit of research, observation, brainstorming, individual and communal reflection, and much discussion. In five years our young people should be witnesses to these five areas as each will hopefully shape their lives for years to come. Our objectives and action items (on pages to follow) will flesh out these focus areas and will further articulate our 2020 vision.

In the next five years, youth ministry efforts at Pax Christi will focus intently on the following areas:

- I. Prayer & Scripture**  
Turn to prayer and integrate scripture and scripture study into all of our efforts
- II. Formation & Leadership**  
Sustain an all encompassing process of formation for students, parents, and leaders/volunteers as well as provide opportunities for all to further develop leadership skills
- III. Relational & Small Group Ministry**  
Create an environment where relational and small group ministry can thrive ensuring all efforts include appropriate relationship-building aspects among students and adults
- IV. Stewardship & Service**  
Motivate students to use their time, resources, and gifts responsibly for the common good while we further develop and expand opportunities for them to serve God's people
- V. Evangelization & Communication**  
Instill zeal within students and adults to go out to share the love of Jesus Christ with the community and assist the process by better communicating within the parish and greater community

These focus areas flow from our mission. They also seek to combat Moralistic Therapeutic Deism as they attempt to foster in our young people (and adults) a consequential faith - faith that grows by confessing a creed, belonging to a community, and pursuing God's purpose and hope - and provide a solid foundation upon which our young people are able to grow and thrive in their relationship with God and are better able to live out the social dimensions and missional aspects of Christianity.

In the pages to follow you will find objectives, a tentative timeline, and action items which will flesh out our 2020 Vision and strategic plan.

## **Focus Areas - Objectives**

### **Prayer & Scripture**

1. Make prayer central to all our efforts
2. Ensure scripture is the basis of all our efforts
3. Better understand, and inspire a deeper love of, the Eucharist

### **Formation & Leadership**

1. Provide student and adult leaders/volunteers with an orientation and/or training process while supporting on-going leadership development
2. Offer parent/family outreach
3. Evaluate efforts for effectiveness

### **Relational & Small Group Ministry**

1. Youth Ministers will model and engage in discipleship relationships
2. Develop and provide relational and small group ministry training for adult and student leaders
3. Move all students into small groups

### **Stewardship & Service**

1. Educate about Catholic Social Teaching
2. Students will spend 2-4 hours a week serving others
3. Students will tithe 10% of their money

### **Evangelization & Communication**

1. Increase participation in youth ministry efforts within the surrounding community
2. Participate in various events with the intent to include the parish and greater community
3. Continue to develop Solid Foundations

## Timeline

In order to accomplish our objectives we need SMART goals (specific, measurable, attainable, relevant, and time-bound). For this reason we have taken action items specific to each objective and have moved them into four phases each lasting about eighteen months. Each of the phases builds upon the other. While action items may change phases will stay the same and keep our 2020 vision moving toward serving our mission.

<b>Phase I</b>	<b>Spring 2015-Fall 2016</b>	<b>Preparing the Soil</b>
<b>Phase II</b>	<b>Fall 2016-Spring 2018</b>	<b>Sowing Seeds</b>
<b>Phase III</b>	<b>Spring 2018-Fall 2019</b>	<b>Maturing Growth</b>
<b>Phase IV</b>	<b>Fall 2019-Spring 2020</b>	<b>Reaping the Harvest</b>

## Action Items & Project Management

The attached chart (Appendix A) will provide us with a visual of many of the specific details including action items aimed at meeting our objectives. The chart will also be used to manage time and resources, specifically people who are our most valuable resource. It is important to point out that action items will be fluid and may change as needed in the hopes of most effectively accomplishing our stated objectives.

On the left hand side is a column which lists our focus areas, followed by a column that states our objectives, both of which have been detailed previously in this 2020 Vision. The action and sub-action items in the third column are new and, as stated above, are flexible especially as we engage in regular evaluations of our progress. Furthermore, in the columns immediately to the right of the action items we have indicated the phase in which each item falls and will be targeted. Finally, the last column on the right is meant to assist with project management and will serve to assign a person or persons tasked with executing each action item.

We believe this plan is comprehensive and provides us with a clear roadmap to navigate the territory in which we serve. It honors our past foundations and point us toward the heights of discipleship and life with the Father in heaven for ever.

**Turn to Appendix A (pages 11-14)**



## Budget & Funding Considerations

We do not foresee major budget increases for the completion of our 2020 Vision. However, it is always nice to project possibilities and to dream. Below you will find a few practical budget items as well as some dreams (of which we are only beginning to formulate). A more exact report will be submitted and subject to approval through yearly budgets.

### Expense Considerations:

- Increased curriculum expenses (hopefully offset by increased enrollment numbers)
- Increased training expenses - if we want to train well we need to invest in our adult and student leaders
- Providing Engaging a New Generation for all our adult leaders comes with a \$16/book expense
- Providing Raising Happy, Healthy, and Holy Teenagers, for all our parents comes with a \$10/book expense
- Diversifying and offering a greater variety of events/activities/programs will increase expense
- If numbers increase greatly there could be a very real need to add paid staff (at least 4 years out)
- If numbers increase greatly there could also be a very real need to begin thinking about solving space issues through building expansion (at least 5 years out)

### Income Considerations:

- Increased income from an increase in enrollment in events/activities/programs
- Increased income from the development of the Solid Foundations Campaign
- Possible income increase from grants obtained through work done with evaluating our effectiveness concerning discipleship
  - Leveraging work done in developing training for leaders
  - Partnership with Jeff Kastor concerning discipleship surveys
- Increased income from tithing middle-high school students
  - Ideally this would inspire higher tithing amounts in adult parishioners

## Oversight & Accountability

Ultimately our pastor will oversee our 2020 Vision and our youth ministry team will be accountable to him. We also expect to be held accountable by the Pastoral Council, parish staff, and eventually the Youth Ministry Advisory Committee (YMAC). We will provide regular updates to the pastor, likewise we will make ourselves available to the Pastoral Council yearly or as requested. We will also update the parish staff at staff meetings as necessary. Ultimately we will develop a Youth Ministry Advisory Committee (YMAC) who will hold us accountable as a youth ministry team and will be an advocate for us in the parish and greater community.

## Team Roles

Zach Rawson	Direct the team, assist in implementing the vision and evaluate the progress
Dana Petricka	Assist in directing the team, implementing the vision, and evaluating progress
Jennie Vinski	Maintain familiarity with implementation and assist in evaluating progress
Teresa Farley-Severson	Assist in implementing the vision and evaluating progress
YMAC	Evaluate progress
Adult & Student Leaders	Assist in implementing the vision and provide input for evaluation
Adult & Student Participants	Provide input for evaluation

## Conclusion

While building upon the foundation of the past, our 2020 Vision provides us with a map oriented toward navigating new social landscapes and territory. It points us to the heights of what being a lifelong disciple of Christ offers. We hope we have made it clear that opening up students (and adults) to encounters with Christ and providing opportunities in which they can grow their relationship with him are both central to this vision. We are turned off by the reality of Moralistic Therapeutic Deism and a lukewarm presentation of the Gospel; we want to foster in our students (and adults) a consequential faith - faith that grows by confessing a creed, belonging to a community, and pursuing God's purpose and hope - and provide a solid foundation upon which our young people are able to grow and thrive in their relationship with God and are better able to live out the social dimensions and missional aspects of Christianity. Ultimately we want to raise up saints and martyrs who practice the faith in word and deed; young people who view religion as less of a theory and more of a love affair, an intimate relationship with God which rules our thoughts, actions, and being.

In all we end with a reminder of our mission statement, inspiration from scripture, and the words of a Saint who lived this intimate relationship with God which we seek to inspire through our 2020 Vision:

*Pax Christi Youth Ministry seeks to form disciples of Jesus Christ and His Church, through a unified vision for ministry to young people, from early adolescence through young adulthood.*

*"Upon this rock I will build my church." -Matthew 16:18*

*"Verso l'alto!" - Blessed Pier Giorgio Frassati*

