



## Church of the Incarnation Feasibility Study Executive Summary of the Findings & Recommendations

### INTRODUCTION & METHODOLOGY

*Greater Mission, LLC* conducted a Feasibility Study for a proposed Capital Campaign for the parish. A Gift Analysis/Constituent Study was conducted in conjunction with *DonorSearch*. A case statement, study questionnaire and interview list was produced with the assistance of the pastor and parish staff. The study consisted of input from parishioners through individual interviews, a Town Hall meeting and an Online survey. A total of 22 individual interviews of 40 parishioners were conducted representing 22 households. Parishioners were selected for the interviews to represent various constituencies of the parish. Sixty -(60) parishioners attended the Town Hall meeting on November 18th and 54 parishioners responded to the Online survey, with each response counted as a household. This total represents 12% of the registered households in the parish. Our goal is to reach 8% to 10%. *The case tested was to raise \$4 million to conduct a renovation program for the church, parish hall, offices, the PAC building and to support a new initiative at the Townwood community.*

### KEY FINDINGS

#### Appreciation of Parish and Challenges Facing the Parish

Parishioners most often mentioned the parish community itself, the friendliness and the welcoming nature of the parish community; “it’s home” was often said. The parish commitment to social justice was mentioned often and strong support for Msgr. Keeney, “We’re blessed to have him”.

#### The most frequently cited challenges were:

- The integration of the Hispanic community into the parish, “we are two separate communities and sometimes it shows.”
- The aging of the parish and loss of revenue that occurs with this.
- The need to get youth and younger families more involved
- The cost of maintaining aging buildings
- The need for outreach to young families and to lapsed Catholics.

#### Reaction to Case for Support

Combing all three methods of data collection 56% of the parishioners who responded were in favor of the case as it was presented and 31.5% gave qualified support of the case with some specific reservations or concerns. (A combined 87.5%) Only 19% expressed total disfavor for the case. The combined total of those in favor of the entire case and

those with qualified support indicates that there is sufficient support for a campaign. Some parishioners commented on specific aspects of the case, such as “the needs for the HVAC upgrades and the parish hall are very real” – “All of the needs noted are important” – “there are needs and wants in the case” – the projects inside the church are important” - “we need to keep our church simple, no fluff” – “the renovations to the church are not needed”-“the kneelers and center aisle are fine, but do we need to change the whole church.”

#### Parish’s Capacity to Raise \$4 Million

The combined responses of all participants indicated that 35% felt the parish could raise \$4 million. As is typical in most parish feasibility studies, many parishioners were unsure if this amount could be raised. (52%)

#### Indication of Financial Support to the Campaign

Seventy-five (75%) of those responded indicated they would make a gift. Only 9% parishioners who responded said they would not give, and the remainder, were unsure based on a variety of reasons; the most common being from people who were older and on fixed incomes.

#### Level of Giving

Seventy-nine (79) parishioners indicated they would make a gift to the campaign in ranges as high as \$100,000 (3) to below \$1,000. The amount of these gifts totaled over \$896,000 from 12% of the total parish community and 20% of the regular contributors. This is an average gift of \$11,341. There was ample support at mid-tier levels, but more lead gift support would be needed to reach \$4million. The number of responses (66%) of those responding is typical.

#### Willingness to Serve in a Volunteer Capacity

The combined responses of participating parishioners indicated that 33% (31) would volunteer to assist with a campaign. Many were willing to open their homes for receptions and serve in other volunteer roles. Many parishioners were unsure about volunteering, but also indicated depending on what was asked of them they would consider it. The current level of volunteers would be sufficient to conduct a successful campaign.

#### Advice Offered to the Pastor and Parish Leadership

Parishioners had many comments and a great deal of advice to share. Over 52 comments were noted. They expressed consistent support for Msgr. Keeney’s leadership. Many indicated that Msgr. Keeney must take an enthusiastic lead in making the case and that there must be a clear communication effort to explain the campaign. There was consensus around the HVAC and parish hall upgrades and varying degrees of support for the other case elements. The following is a synopsis of the comments:

- Msgr. Keeney is doing a great job but can't do this alone, many of us are concerned for his health.
- We need to do this.
- Upkeep of our facilities is a must; we cannot afford not to do these things.
- HVAC and parish hall must be done.
- The projects must be prioritized; this is too much all at once.
- We do not need to renovate the church.
- We have no debt, and it is likely this project will put us in debt and that may affect our ability to continue our social justice efforts.
- Opposed to renovations in the church/Don't like what is planned for the church.
- The case is not being sold properly, people still don't understand the "why".
- Without the support of the Hispanic community this is going to be difficult.

### CONCLUSIONS TO THE FINDINGS

The following is a synopsis of more detailed findings addressed in the full study report.

- Incarnation is a warm and deeply spiritual community with a history and tradition that is deeply part of the parish culture, "It's home".
- Msgr. Keeney is widely respected and has the support of the parish.
- There is strong understanding for the need to upkeep the parish physical plant.
- Parishioners keenly recognize the changing demographics in the parish and are concerned that aging parishioners are among the best donors and unsure of who will step up when they are gone.
- The gift levels indicated by parishioners are broad with some evidence of mid-level gifts and participation level gifts but a broader level of lead gift support will be needed to reach the goal.
- The design of the current church is noted by some as more of a post Vatican II style; and there is concern that the changes being suggested are moving to a more "conservative" view in the church.
- Continued transparency, communication and clarification of the projects will be needed.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

1. The findings of the study indicate that there is mixed support for the parish case further explanation of the major renovations, including a display of the drawing and renderings is needed.
2. The parish leadership should create a specific cost list and prioritization of the projects in the case, especially those for the church renovations and Narthex, and begin an education and communication process that will provide parishioners with information about these projects. A plan for phasing the projects will be important, especially if stronger support for the full case is not forthcoming.

3. After additional work on the case, Greater Mission recommends setting a goal of \$3 million with a challenge goal of \$4 million but only after the effort educate parishioners is conducted.
4. Develop a campaign plan to execute the Leadership Gift, Gathering and Participation phases to be completed in a 6-to-7-month period.
5. Begin the campaign with the solicitation of the top 10 potential lead donors who could immediately affect the potential of reaching \$3 million.
6. Launch a communication effort to inform current parishioners of the results of the feasibility study, letting them know that their concerns and input has been taken into consideration.
7. Building an aggressive but achievable gift table for the campaign will help stimulate broad-based sacrificial generosity. This gift chart must challenge the entire community to support the campaign at levels that will be sufficient to overcome the possible lack of top Lead Tier giving and enhance Base and Mid-Tier pledges to the campaign.
8. Msgr. Keeney will need to take a pivotal role in meeting individually with at least 35-40 major donors.
9. Lay leader involvement will be critical to work closely with Msgr. Keeney in engaging many parishioners in the campaign.
10. The importance of a Campaign Continuation Plan to seek secondary gifts and legacy giving will significantly impact the total funds raised over the intermediate and long term. A list of prospective legacy gift parishioners should be established.

### FINAL THOUGHTS

This is going to be a challenging campaign. There are still some obstacles to overcome. Meeting individually or in small groups with parishioners who need additional information and convincing of the need for the entire plan is going to be essential to the ultimate success of the campaign and the completion of the projects. Incarnation parish has many devoted parishioners who are very generous in spirit and in treasure, the parish has a well-liked and respected pastor who has extremely good communication and fund-raising skills. The staff is highly respected and has been praised for their helpful and supportive efforts on behalf of the parishioners. I have seen this firsthand. The parish also has strong lay leadership and lay involvement. The desire to create a unified parish with the Hispanic community is very positive and will be helpful to integrating the support of this community into the campaign.

Our goal in conducting a feasibility study, is to provide parish leadership the clearest understanding of what the parish feels and thinks about the case and goal. I believe this study provides that information. The ability to conduct a successful campaign and complete as many of these projects as possible is ultimately feasible is by taking the additional steps we recommended. Greater Mission stands ready to assist Incarnation parish in doing so and moving forward.