

the Beacon of Hope: **Light it Up!**

The Vision Planning Process for the parishes of St. Gabriel and St. Bridget

PARISH ANNOUNCEMENT

Dear Parishioners,

Last weekend, Mass congregants were introduced to our two parishes beginning an exciting process of discernment and planning. We are referring to this process as The Beacon of Hope: Light it up!

The vision of our linked parishes is to be a communion of disciples on a journey of growing faith to become the brightest beacon of hope in our counties. Through this vision that was formulated by our Pastoral Council, we all have been challenged to fulfill our potential and our responsibilities to our communities. That challenge has come through your prayers, input, and work already completed in the Connected in the Spirit process.

Our linked parishes have a 160-year heritage filled with successes and adversities. Now we as a Catholic community have the opportunity to write the next chapter of our heritage and become that beacon of hope our two counties need us to be and to which our Lord calls us to be together.

Upon the recommendation of our Pastoral Council as well as with the approval of the Finance Councils of both parishes, a reputable, experienced, and Catholic consultant has been hired to guide us in this effort. Though they are an architectural firm, their primary expertise lies in community building and helping parishes fulfill their vision. The bricks and mortar considerations will be responsive to us finding our direction. Chameleon Architecture will guide and facilitate our linked parishes to identify our needs and wishes with regard to both our churches and school. We will develop a common cause for us all to support and execute such that our own faith will become stronger and our communities will flourish.

WHAT IS ASKED OF YOU????

We are not asking for money!!! Rather, we are asking for your time and talent to coauthor the next chapter of our Catholic identity. There will be many opportunities for you to contribute to this process, the first of which will be an online survey. Do not worry if access to the internet is a problem, we will be providing alternate means for you to participate. Following the initial survey we will have six town hall style meetings at both parishes covering six specific topics. As the process continues there will be additional opportunities for your voice to be heard. As this is an overview of a larger process, there will be more information forthcoming.

A collaboration team has been formed to facilitate this process. The members from St. Gabriel's are Barb White, Marvin Giesting, Josh Marszalek and Doug Biehl and the members from St. Bridget's are Jane Jolliff, Kathy Ramey and Tony Talbert. Our team is very energized and we are looking forward to developing our future with you. Please prayerfully consider your vision of how our parishes can become the beacon of hope in our counties. Please also pray for our team members and the success of our parishes.

Thank you
The Collaboration Team

www.stgabrielconnersville.org/vision

FINANCIAL COST AND PAYMENT INFORMATION

Total Cost of project: \$35,000

Less personal donations made by members of Pastoral Council: \$7,114

Less other donations: \$1,000

Total Cost to be covered by parishes: \$26,886

St. Bridget portion (7% of total): \$1,882.02

St. Gabriel portion (93% of total): \$25,003.98

To cover the remaining portion of the cost, our parishes will first utilize our United Catholic Appeal Rebates:

St. Bridget has \$2,811 in total UCA rebates. This will cover the cost that is owed.

St. Gabriel has \$17,171.41 in total UCA rebates. After spending down the rebate account, St. Gabriel will still be responsible for \$7,832.57. This remaining cost can be covered by parishioner donations or utilizing money from savings.

PRELIMINARY SCHEDULE

The following schedule is presented to illustrate the overall time line of our vision planning process. The dates are subject to change. They show how momentum will be built to establish our common cause in a timely manner. Our parishes can then go about the work we have determined for ourselves.

Collaboration Team Introduction	Week 1	Nov 29
Visioning Online Survey	Week 2 (collect for 4 weeks)	Dec 11-Jan 8
Interviews	Week 2 (interview over 4 weeks)	Dec 1 - Jan 1
Facilities Site Assessments	Week 2- 8 (When available)	Dec 11 - Jan 15
6 Town Hall Meetings	Week 6 (meet over 6-8 weeks)	Jan 8 - Feb 28
Facilities Assessment Report	Week 10	Jan 30
Headlines Report	Week 14	Feb 28
The BIG Online Survey	Week 16 (collect for 3 weeks)	Mar 12 - Apr 3
Goals and Objectives Meetings	Week 19	Apr 3
Goals / Objs Survey (Optional)	Week 21 (collect for 2 weeks)	Apr 17 - May 1
Analysis and Design Work	Week 22 -28	May 1 - June 15
Final Review	Week 28	June 15
Final Parish Presentation	Week 30	July 1

The Survey can be found at this link:

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/StsBG-VisionSurvey>
Surveys will be collected from December 11 thru January 8.

It will be emailed to those for whom we have addresses, and it will be published on our website and web page. Simply click or enter this address into your web browser and take the survey. All members of your household age 15 or older are encouraged to provide their vision for the parish and school.

IF you do not have access to the internet or are unfamiliar with the use of an online survey, a hard copies will be available for you to fill out. It is necessary that the information ultimately be entered into a computer database. As the survey responses are anonymous, the data entry by others should not concern the respondents.

Hard copies are available at St. Gabriel Parish office or at St. Bridget after masses. Please return them in via the collection basket, no names required.

Laptops will be available at the St. Gabriel Parish Office Meeting Room and you may submit your survey there. These are available **Monday thru Thursday 9:30am - 11:30am, December 12-15.** A volunteer will be in attendance to confidentially assist as necessary.

CONTACT INFORMATION

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After our announcement last weekend we have received several questions along with a deeper desire by many parishioners to better understand this process. We have put together a list of answers to questions that we received and hope that this better explains the Vision Planning Process.

What is going on?

We are planning for our future where we exist as the **brightest beacon of hope** in Union and Fayette counties. Our two parishes have recently completed the Connected in the Spirit Process, and now we are embarking on a more detailed process of planning a brighter future and translating that brighter future into broadly defined goals and objectives for our churches and our school. Once the goals and objectives are developed from **YOUR input**, we will define steps to achieve them. Parishioner input will be primarily captured through two surveys and six town hall-styled meetings. The firm that has been hired will be leading the town hall meetings and compiling the information from the surveys. They will also be conducting interviews with various leadership representatives from both parishes and St. Gabriel School.

How did we get here?

In short, the Archdiocese of Indianapolis asked us to begin a process of strategic planning. This was communicated to us as we concluded the process of Connected in the Spirit. We believe that the time has come to begin prayerfully discerning and deciding upon a singular and concrete direction for the linked parishes of St. Gabriel and St. Bridget.

What this is ...

A future planning process derived from **YOUR Input!**

A combined effort of St. Bridget and St. Gabriel parishes

A process to define our parishes' and school's strengths and weaknesses

A window of opportunity to transform parishioner engagement and grow our parishes in more ways than one

An opportunity to grow and increase our hospitality

A means to improve parish life in anyway you can imagine

A means to evaluate what is and isn't working among our parishes and school

An opportunity to truly understand how to become linked parishes that strive for a brighter future

- Consensus will be built around a common cause

A way to more deeply enhance our individual faith formation

An opening for all of us to become better disciples of Christ

A chance to better explore and understand how we can maximize the usage of our facilities for parish enrichment and community outreach

A chance for you to help define what ministries, programs and education works and doesn't work in our parishes

A planning process guided but not dictated by Chameleon Architecture

What this isn't ...

A requirement from the Archdiocese.

Your parish council believes that this process will lead us to a brighter, more enduring future. They believe in it so much that the members personally donated over \$7,000 towards the cost of this project.

A means to eventually merge the parishes and close St. Bridget

A process focused on tearing down old buildings

A process driven by an architect's desires.

We will drive the process that they guide. There is not predetermined outcome regarding the repair, renovation, reuse or construction of buildings

What is the meaning of The Beacon of Hope: Light it up!

This phrase derives from the newly formed Vision statement for our Parishes: To become a communion of disciples on a journey of growing faith to become the brightest beacon of hope in our counties. Our Pastoral Council and Fr. Dustin have discerned that this Vision statement best captures the directional movement where Christ and His Church are calling us forward. This Vision statement is our North Star.

We seek to “light up” the following together:

- 1. Our parish life** – We are surrounded with declining populations in both counties. Our parishes have both suffered greatly over the years from declining membership. In fact, both parishes exist in counties where one of the only growing demographics is that of people who do not claim any faith tradition. This process will look to enhance the life of our parishes together in a way that makes “outsiders” curious and hopefully creates opportunities for them to encounter our Lord. This process seeks to uncover areas where parish life has grown stagnant. People do not just show up to church anymore - we must give them a reason!
- 2. Parishioner engagement** – People want to know that they have a role to play, and an important role at that. There are parishioners in both parishes that believe there is no role for them. There exist parishioners who do not want to be engaged beyond weekly (or less often) Mass attendance. While it cannot solve this problem entirely, this process seeks to help evoke positive change in this regard.
- 3. Our Counties** – There continues to be so much need in our larger communities. We will be looking into ways that our parishes can venture even more into answering specific and larger needs.

What’s preventing our two parishes from being on that same path?

Nothing. Nothing is preventing our two parishes from getting on the same path and building momentum into serving as we are called to serve. We are our brother’s keeper (cf. Genesis 4:9) and the wellbeing of one parish is irrevocably tied to the flourishing and wellbeing of the other. However, our parishes presently do not exist on the same path, and there are a few explanations of why that might be. First, neither parish operates out of a mode of thriving. Rather, St. Gabriel is in a mode of maintaining; there has been much resistance to changes already made, which is natural and expected. However, the resistance seems to surround a dangerous belief - what has worked for us so far will work now and into the future. For St. Bridget’s part, the parish exists largely in survival mode. All throughout the Connected in the Spirit Process, the parishioners of St. Bridget were worried that the parish was going to close. Much of the parish activity, conversation, and disposition was geared toward “surviving.” In other words, fear governed and still governs much of the parish’s life. These two modes of existence place us firmly on two different paths. Both parishes need to be together on one path that leads to fulfilling the vision, namely being the brightest beacon of hope in our counties. That is a path of thriving and true discipleship.

In the past at times our two parishes have not always expressed a spirit of caring for the success of each other. We are certain with this process and the guidance of the Holy Spirit we will all embrace the opportunity to be an asset to each other in order to be that brightest beacon of hope to our counties. Without the full cooperation of both parishes we will not achieve our potential. We ask ALL parishioners to have a spirit of collaboration and be open minded as we journey through our Vision Planning Process.

Who have we hired?

We have hired Chameleon Architecture. This firm is not your typical architecture firm. Chip Williamson, the founder and a thoroughly engaged Catholic, has a unique skill set that focuses on community building and helping clients fulfill their vision. Chameleon architecture will listen to our concerns and questions, study all aspects of our parishes, and guide us in a process to fulfill our vision.

And the architectural piece, what's the deal with that?

As far as St. Bridget's physical campus goes, there's not much that this planning process will address. St. Bridget's Deferred Maintenance Committee made it clear that they have a plan developed to meet their structural needs.

St. Gabriel Parish will receive architectural recommendations from Chameleon Architecture. Whatever sort of recommendations we receive will come in the form of an electronic conceptual design (it will be a short animation of what things could look like). The design will be completely derived from parishioner feedback throughout this process. However, Chameleon Architecture is primarily concerned with helping us plan for a better future as linked parishes and together becoming the brightest beacons of hope in our Counties. Whatever architectural recommendations are made to St. Gabriel's campus will serve and enhance that mission.

At the end of this process, how might things be different?

That chapter in our parish's futures has yet to be written. No one knows what that might be. Some examples are below but use your imagination!

- A more active parish community
- A school that is continually energized and on a pathway for rapid growth
- The development of specific outreach programs to serve the many needs of our counties
- Increasing numbers of parishioners at St. Bridget and St. Gabriel parishes
- Renewed usage of our facilities at both parishes
- Enriched Catholic identities that lead to deeper relationships with Jesus Christ

The future of our parishes may contain so many exciting ministries and activities that you may have a hard time deciding which one to join first! We will have a five year strategic plan that is developed from the input received from all of you involved in the process. The five year plan will contain specific goals and objectives that our parishes and school can rally around and achieve. Emphasis will be placed on the initial two years' objectives to continue the momentum that has begun.

The collaboration team sincerely thanks you for taking the time to understand what we are about to embark upon. All of this cannot be done without your involvement. Your honest, energetic, and open-minded involvement will make this process a true success. We are challenging each and every one of you to stay engaged throughout this planning process and please challenge those around you to do the same.

Thank you!