



Ecumenical Strategic Plan

St. Jerome Catholic Church of the Diocese of Richmond, VA

Goal: Expand the Ecumenical community.

- ❖ *The restoration of unity among all Christians is one of the principle concerns of the Second Vatican Council. Divisions within the Christian Communion openly contradicts the will of Christ, scandalizes the world, and damages the holy cause of preaching the Gospel to every creature. (Second Vatican Council Decree on Ecumenism)*
- ❖ *Everywhere large numbers have felt the impulse, fostered by the grace of the Holy Spirit, for the restoration of unity among all Christians. This movement toward unity is called "ecumenical." (Second Vatican Council Decree on Ecumenism)*
- ❖ *Vatican objectives broadly include: 1) Avoid expressions, judgements and actions which do not represent the condition of our separated brethren with truth and fairness and so make mutual relations with them more difficult, 2) Establish dialogue between competent experts from different Churches and Communities, 3) All Catholics are called to examine their own faithfulness to Christ's will for the Church and accordingly to undertake with vigor the task of renewal and reform. (Second Vatican Council Decree on Ecumenism)*

Objectives

1. Establish an Ecumenical Committee
2. Participate in annual Ecumenical Events
3. Practice Ecumenism in Supporting our Local Community
4. Integrate with Other Parish Ministries

Objective 1: Establish an Ecumenical Committee and Parish Ecumenical Representative (PER)

- ❖ As in all aspects of church life, the collaborative leadership and active involvement of many people are essential to the success of parish ecumenical efforts.
- ❖ In accordance with Richmond Diocese goals, each parish should have a PER to coordinate ecumenical activities across parishes and with the Diocese Ecumenical Affairs Commission.
- ❖ The PER, commissioned by the pastor, should be responsible for (1) coordination of parish activities with annual ecumenical events (2) coordination of parish's efforts to support our local community through ecumenical groups and forums, (3) integration of ecumenical messages and programs in other parish ministries.
- ❖ Objective 1 is the start of the process and therefore the most time sensitive; establish PER

and Ecumenical Committee, pastor introduces ecumenical focus no later than the beginning of Advent, a period of significant ecumenical unity of interest.

Strategies

- Appoint a PER
- Direct the establishment of Ecumenical Committee
- Solicit parishioners to be Ecumenical Committee members
- Develop an ecumenical budget

Objective 2: Participate in annual ecumenical events

- ❖ Catholics must gladly acknowledge and esteem the truly Christian endowments from our common heritage which are to be found among our separated brethren. When such objectives are pursued by the Catholic faithful, with the attentive guidance of their leadership, they promote justice and truth, concord and collaboration, as well as the spirit of brotherly love and unity. This is the way that, when the obstacles to perfect ecclesiastical communion have been gradually overcome, all Christians will at last, in a common celebration of the Eucharist, be gathered into the one and only Church in that unity which Christ bestowed on his Church from the beginning. (Second Vatican Council Decree on Ecumenism)
- ❖ The Week of Prayer for Christian Unity invites the entire Christian Community throughout the world to pray in communion with the prayer of Jesus that “they may be one so that the world may believe” (John 17:21). This week is celebrated between 18-25 January, between the feasts days of Saints Peter and Paul.
- ❖ The World Day of Prayer is a worldwide movement of Christian women who come together to observe a common day of prayer to promote justice and equality for women through prayer, partnerships, service and celebration. This day is observed on the first Friday of March.
- ❖ The LARCUM Covenant was signed in 2006 by Bishop Sullivan and his counterparts in the Lutheran, Anglican and United Methodist Churches. This covenant seeks to foster unity through: an annual statewide conference, participation in the Annual Week of Prayer and encouragement of local parish initiatives. Promoting the LARCUM Covenant is a second goal of the Richmond Diocese.

Strategies

- Celebrate the Annual Week of Prayer for Christian Unity
- Observe the Annual World Day of Prayer
- Participate in the Annual Statewide LARCUM Conference with the Richmond Diocese
- Seek to develop local ecumenical worship activities centered on Lent, Thanksgiving and Advent

Objective 3: Practice Ecumenism in Supporting Our Local Community

- ❖ In these days when cooperation in social matters is so widespread, Christians are called to work together in: a just evaluation of the dignity of the human person, the establishment of the blessing of peace, the application of gospel principles to social life, advancement of the arts and sciences, relief of famine/natural disasters/illiteracy/poverty/housing shortage and unequal distribution of wealth. (Second Vatican Council Decree on Ecumenism)
- ❖ THRIVE Peninsula is a non-profit organization with the vision for a united Peninsula faith community, partnering with community resources, to help those most in need resolve their immediate crises and lead lives of more faithful stewardship.
- ❖ The Circle of Compassion is a network of individuals and organizations committed to empowering youth, young adults and their families in an effort to promote wholeness and reduce violence within our community. The Circle of Compassion vision is to more effectively meet needs within our community by moving away from ministry and service in isolation and competition, and by moving toward ministry and service through shared communication, cooperation, and collaboration.
- ❖ LINK of Hampton Roads was founded in 1990 in Newport News by leaders from the interfaith, civic and business community with a vision to break the cycle of poverty. LINK is a nonprofit volunteer organization which exists to help people help themselves through education, direct services, advocacy and outreach programs.

Strategies

- Partner with THRIVE Peninsula in our community outreach
- Partner with Circle of Compassion in our community outreach
- Partner with LINK of Hampton Roads through, at least, the PORT Emergency Winter Shelter Program
- Seek to establish a closer relationship with our LARCUM partners for specific community outreach efforts

Objective 4: Integrate with Parish Ministries

- ❖ A third ecumenical goal of the Richmond Diocese is to promote partnerships within the parish such that the various parish ministries are in dialogue with the PER.
- ❖ Local ecumenical activities must be coordinated through the appropriate ministry or ministries.
- ❖ Parishioners engaged in activities with either a direct or indirect ecumenical aspect should be educated on Catholic apologetics, our church history and Vatican teachings concerning the respect and affection due to our non-Catholic Christian brethren.

Strategies

- Partner with the Worship Ministries to establish specific goals and implementation plan for participation in the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity and the World Day of Prayer

- Partner with the Christian Formation Ministries to establish goals and implementation plan for education needs for parishioners engaged in ecumenical activities
- Partner with the Spiritual Life and Pastoral Ministries to develop ecumenical goals aligned with their activities as appropriate

Major Annual Tasks ---

1. Week of Prayer for Christian Unity (January)
2. Link of Hampton Roads PORT (January)
3. World Day of Prayer (March)
4. Annual Statewide LARCUM Conference

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