



# ST. CHRISTOPHER SCHOOL

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COMPASSIONATE ♦ ACCOMPLISHED ♦ MOTIVATED

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Attached is a long-term fiscal plan of recognition of responsibility and offered solution.

**We, the people** of St. Christopher Parish and School want to start this process first and foremost with a **"Thank You" to the Archdiocese of Chicago** for all that you have done for us, both spiritually and financially. As God sees all, we are united with you.

**Out of the assembled school parents** and guardians gathering for Sr. Mary Paul's delivered message in regard to the state of our school, a voice cut through the people's immediate sadness and turmoil to most eloquently say "Thank You." Thank you to each and every one of our teachers, principals, present and past, as well as for the tremendous education that her three children have already received.

**Everything that our team has to offer** has been launched, hope-filled with that spirit-filled mindset and wisdom in which echoes this parishioner's clarity of Christ-like action. In continuing together with you, the representation of the Archdiocese, our sustained efforts of heightening a parish family, school and surrounding communities' awareness of the task at hand, we are reservedly filled with hope in reporting to you the response of that "call" to our community.

**We have been successful** in developing a long-term financial plan solution of responsibility; an affirmation of continued development and required enrollment growth, and, in addition, sharing with you evidence of a "birth" taking place towards our journey in faith. The life of our church has taken this news rather than a swallowing-up, a vehicle of awakening toward an understanding of needed sacrifice, commitment and working together with God's love at the helm. This "new birth" combined with our parish and school's rich history is what we are striving for, especially on behalf of those who may be less fortunate. To the family that has already come to St. Christopher after surviving two Catholic school closings with their children, to the people who depend on our site to have Catholic Charities meals and warmth and St. Vincent de Paul's food supply, we have to continue with a mindset of service.

**This is a school and parish that has molded so many active clergy** today in our midst. Priests like Fr. Mike Novick, Fr. Marty Marren, Fr. Paul Guzman, Fr. Michael Enright and Fr. Zachary Hayes, all of whom had their education through St. Christopher School. Others who have found development through our parish include Fr. Jim Presta, Fr. John Sagaya, Fr. Patrick Marshall, Fr. Geoffrey Andama, Fr. Bob Keener, Fr. Mike McGovern and more recent seminarians as Adam Blatt.

Accomplishment and thanks to our Franciscan Sisters as well who have continuously given service to the school and parish for 90 years.

**Our effort is in communion with you and Francis Cardinal George**, as our leader, to do what is required for the mission of the Church. **We have a "pearl of great price" and, together, we know we have a definite purpose in God's plan.** We are hearing the "summons," responding and listening.

In God's Fire of Love,

**The People of St. Christopher Parish and School**

## Proposal to the Office of Catholic Schools (OCS), Archdiocese of Chicago (AoC) To Remove St. Christopher School – Midlothian, Illinois from the closure list.

### Brief Summary

As you know it was announced that the school at St Christopher Parish in Midlothian, (a former AIM school) would be closed at the end of FY14. The closure was due to the fact that, over the past 4 years, the OCS provided financial support in the way of grants, scholarships and loans in excess of one million dollars (\$1,000,000.00). Due to Archdiocesan budget constraints, the OCS would no longer be able to financially contribute.

Discussions have since been had with representatives of St. Christopher Parish and members of the Archdiocese regarding the hope that a solid plan could be put together which would be a Win/Win for both St. Christopher Parish and School and The Archdiocese of Chicago. It has been discussed that such a plan would need to establish a zero based budget reflecting no AoC-OCS grants, loans or unpaid bills, with the focus being a realistic finance plan, supported by documented advancement monies/commitments and showing controls and protocols to control future expenses.

### The PLAN

1. **Zero Based Budget:** Three years (FY 15, FY16, & FY17) of proposed budgets were emailed to Tom McGrath of AoC on Jan 20, 2014. Obviously, not all factors can be accounted for, as it is not possible to predict the future. However, as later described, the protocols and controls that are or will be in place will aid in the containment of rising expenses in the next three years to make the projected budgets a reality for each fiscal year.
2. **Overall Finance Plan:** Pastor Paluch and the Finance Council acknowledge that the school finances are not the only matters to be considered. The success of the school and our parish as a whole hinges on a financial plan for the entire parish. We have discussed cost cutting measures that need to be made immediately on the parish side as well. These decisions are in motion already. However, per Archdiocesan guidelines, any employee cuts are not to be implemented without first contacting the Human Resources department of the Archdiocese. The HR Department has already been contacted; and, in the next coming weeks, those cuts will be implemented. These cuts alone will reduce salaries on the parish side in the amount of \$ ,000.00 and \$ ,000.00 on the school side, not including benefits and other related employee expenses (payroll taxes, etc.).
3. **Advancement Monies/Commitments:** For St. Christopher Parish, this has been and will be a three- phase process. Phase One has been a Pledge Drive (Tab 1), Phase Two is fundraising efforts of various Parish organizations and outside entities (Tab 2); and, Phase Three, will be the

development of additional school programs, such as full daycare facilities and year round school (Tab 3).

4. **Relocation Savings to AoC:** Ultimately, the archdiocese would be relieved of a relocation burden of +/- \$217,000 due to students *not* transferring to other area Catholic schools, per their \$1000/student offer made last week by the AoC. We have already received written commitment letters from parents of 51 existing students that they will be returning, provided the school remains open.
5. **Protocols/Controls:** In order to insure the continued growth of the school and the parish, we must have in place some committees working toward the future to be sure that we do not become stagnant with the operations of the parish and the school. The committees need to be quite diverse in their focuses, in order to not just maintain, but to bring in new and increased enrollment on the school side and parishioners on the parish side. These committees must also be in place to take the steps to secure the financial position of the parish and the school for years to come. Though our parish is blessed with a very experienced Finance Council, additional committees have been established to insure the future of the school and parish (Tab 4).
6. **Ongoing Transparency:** In addition, we are willing to set up a structured, ongoing communication with the AOC as a means of reporting our progress in implementation of this strategic plan for our school. This "report card" will be presented to the AOC in months March-June-Sept-December (every 3 months) after being prepared by the parish Business Manager and approved by the Finance Council. Having this structured system of reporting will give the AOC the assurance that we are staying on task with the plan to be self-supporting and making a concerted effort to keep our parish on a positive course for its future growth.

## Tab 1 - Pledge Drive

A "Gift to St. Chris Education" pledge drive was launched on Wednesday, January 15, 2014. The pledge commitment consists of a specific annual dollar amount per year for a period of 5 years. The amounts will be paid in monthly installments. Monthly installments are significant as they create a constant cash flow for the payment of regular expenses. Monthly bills for utilities, staff and teachers must be paid. In order to do this, we must have cash flow. This program will create cash flow for the education fund to be drawn on in the event that other sources of budgeted income are not readily available.

**The total Annual pledge amount as of 7 pm on Monday, January 20, 2014 was \$362,737.00. Rolling the numbers forward for the length of the 5 year pledge this is \$1,813,685.00 devoted solely to education at St. Christopher Parish and School.**

We have reviewed all pledges and believe them to be solid commitments. Many of the pledges are from active parishioners who give on a regular basis. Under this tab, a schedule is attached of the parishioners and their pledge. Alongside their pledge is a total of their contributions to the parish through the Church Offering envelopes over the past three years. Their constant and regular support to the parish over the years gives us faith that the pledges will be honored.

Another group of pledges is from our Alumni. Though many of our alumni have moved out of the parish, their devotion and loyalties to St. Christopher School are still very strong. Many return year after year for our annual Fiesta, a week-long celebration of the spirit of St. Christopher. The Fiesta is our largest fundraiser and has been in existence for over 60 years. Alumni's attachment to their schools at every level is very great; that alone gives us faith that the pledges will be honored.

The remainder of the pledges is from area businesses, friends and families of our parishioners, and the community. Though these people who made pledges may not be personally involved at St. Christopher, we believe the pledges will be honored because of their relationships to the teachers, staff and parishioners.

With the economy ever changing and not being able to predict exactly what the next five years will hold, we are only relying on 70% of the total pledge amount. This will allow for an automatic buffer.

The total inflows to the parish on a monthly basis will therefore be:

\$362,737 x70%

\$253,915.90 /12 months =

\$21,159.65 monthly inflows solely for Education.

The pledges commence March 1, 2014.

Some who were asked to pledge indicated that they would rather provide a one-time lump sum contribution. To date, we have already collected \$54,280.00, and those funds are allocated to the Education Fund for FY15.

As stated the pledges will begin on March 1, 2014. Being that the school year for FY15 does not start until mid August 2014, we will have collected 6 months of pledges or \$126,957.90. Adding this to the one time cash contributions the Education Fund will have \$181,237.90 prior to the first day of school for the FY15 school year.

As you can see the FY15 budget does not run a deficit, so these funds then become additional surplus which will remain in the Education Fund. However, there is also security built into this plan, so that if the FY15 budget has unexpected expenses or has overruns, there is a large amount already in the Education Fund to cover those same expenses/overruns.

**This is NOT simply a short-term fix.** Based on the amounts pledged so far and the cost cuts already in progress, we will be able to secure the future of the school for 8 + years. Upon future review of the current protocols in place and the implementation of new protocols, the 8 years could likely extend for many more years.

## Tab 2 - Fundraising

There are so many parishioners, businesses and community members that want to help by raising money. We have asked them to coordinate their efforts through the parish fundraising committee as a Phase Two approach, so that we can have a strong focus and strong participation with the Pledges. The Phase Two fundraising suggestions are abundant and across the board. The fundraising committee will be coordinating the efforts and timelines of all future fundraising for the maximum results, without taking away from other efforts.

The committee consists of parents of school children at St. Christopher as well as other members of the parish. The committee will be headed by one member of the Finance Council.

## St. Christopher Parish School Action Plan

Goal	Priority Level	Responsible Parties	Deadline	Progress or Completion	Lessons/Notes
<p><u>1. Increase enrollment</u></p>	<p>High</p> <p>Medium</p> <p>Low</p>	<p>Principal Pastor Marketing Group School Board</p>	<p><b>Ongoing</b></p>	<p>New website is currently being created, so registration forms can be located on site</p> <p>New branding/logo/value statements are being revised</p> <p>Using letters, banners, Caritas Scholarship Funds, speaking at public events and area churches w/out schools we raised our enrollment in August 2013 by 50 students</p>	<p>We will continue to our current efforts and include the marketing team from the Office of Catholic Schools to mentor in our efforts</p>



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<p><b>2. <u>Develop New School Mission and Vision</u></b></p>	<p>High Medium Low</p>	<p>Principal School Board All Stakeholders within St. Christopher Parish School will be given input</p>	<p>July 1, 2014</p>	
<p><b>3. <u>Front Office</u></b> Established protocol is set for visitors/parents Spanish speaking and Polish speaking translators should be onsite All school forms need to be translated into Spanish and Polish.</p>	<p>High Medium Low</p>	<p>Principal and Julie</p>	<p>July 1, 2014</p>	<p>Protocol has been set for visitors Forms need to be translated Parent Ambassador Program is currently being formed Bulletin articles have been translated into Spanish</p>

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<p><b>4. <u>Feel of the School:</u></b></p> <p>St. Christopher School reflects our Catholic faith</p> <p>St. Christopher School works with our Pastoral Associate to make all cultures feel at home within our Catholic school.</p> <p>Culturally responsive imagery needs to be incorporated</p> <p>Culturally responsive dates need to be added to the calendar</p> <p>An LEI Program needs to be established</p>	<p>High</p> <p>Medium</p> <p>Low</p>	<p>Principal, Pastoral Associate, St. Christopher School Board, and faculty</p>	<p>Ongoing and July 1, 2014</p>	<p>Each classroom has an altar, cross, and Christ-centered lesson planning</p>	<p>By working with the University of Notre Dame and the OCS, we can follow precise protocol to create an effective LEI Program</p>
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<p><b>5. <u>School Policies:</u></b></p> <p>St. Christopher School will reexamine parent volunteer time policy to increase parent involvement in order to decrease expenses</p>	<p>High Medium Low</p>	<p>Principal, St. Christopher School Board, and Staff</p>	<p>July 1, 2014</p>	
<p><b>6. <u>School as Community-Center:</u></b></p> <p>St. Chris will develop a community-center focus by opening the school beyond the traditional school day to provide programs and events for the local community</p> <p><u>Phase I:</u> Two, Three, and Four-year-old children will be given the option of year round school beginning July 1, 2014</p> <p><u>Phase II:</u> School hours will be extended to meet the needs of our parents (Before and After Programs) for the 2014-2015 academic school year</p> <p><u>Phase III:</u> St. Chris will function as a year-round school model by the 2015-2016 academic school year</p>	<p>High Medium Low</p>	<p>Principal and St. Christopher School Board</p>	<p>July 1, 2014 and ongoing</p>	<p>St. Chris currently has a before and after school program. This program will begin to experience success with proper marketing and enrichment classes</p>
<p><b>7. <u>The School Leader:</u></b></p> <p>St. Chris leader will begin to use a cultural mentor</p> <p>St. Chris leader will continue to attend community functions</p>	<p>High Medium Low</p>	<p>Principal and mentor</p>	<p>July 1, 2014 and ongoing</p>	

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<p><b>8. <u>Involve the Pastor:</u></b></p> <p>Father Kris has been very active within our school community</p> <p>Father Kris has reached out to families to enroll, volunteer by using time, talent, and finance</p>	<p>High</p> <p>Medium</p> <p>Low</p>	<p>Principal and Pastor</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>	<p>Ongoing.. Father Kris is very supportive in our recruiting efforts</p>	
<p><b>9. <u>Principal, the Primary Recruiter:</u></b></p> <p>I have extended personal invitations to families</p> <p>I have and will continue to speak at mass about the vitality of the school</p>	<p>High</p> <p>Medium</p> <p>Low</p>	<p>Principal and St. Chris families</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>	<p>At the beginning of the 2014 school year, I personally called parents to discuss enrolling at St. Chris School</p>	
<p><b>10. <u>Engage Parents and Connectors</u></b></p> <p>St. Chris will ask parents in our parish and school to share their stories at Mass and school functions</p> <p>We have a very successful Mothers' Club that already reaches out to current school parents</p>	<p>High</p> <p>Medium</p> <p>Low</p>	<p>Entire community and principal</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>		

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<p><b><u>11. Marketing:</u></b></p> <p>St. Chris will make sure all printed and web materials are bi-lingual</p> <p>St. Chris will tailor our marketing materials to our audience</p> <p>Spanish mass</p> <p>Bulletins have been translated in Spanish</p>	<p>High</p> <p>Medium</p> <p>Low</p>	<p>Principal and School Board</p>	<p>School Board will form a focus group aid in marketing efforts</p>	<p>July 1, 2014</p>	<p>Spanish bulletin articles have been a successful marketing tool</p>
<p><b><u>12. Alumni</u></b></p> <p>St. Chris will begin to engage our alumni.</p> <p>Alumni data base</p>	<p>High</p> <p>Medium</p> <p>Low</p>	<p>Principal, School Board, and Lynn Fredrick</p>	<p>Joe Alfano and Principal have begun to look at establishing an up-to-date data base</p>	<p>July 1, 2014 and ongoing</p>	<p>Our new St. Chris Website is connecting all facets of St. Chris to one site. Alum, parents, and parishioners will start on the same landing page.</p>
<p><b><u>13. Relationships with Local Businesses</u></b></p> <p>St. Chris needs to establish better relationships with area businesses</p>	<p>High</p> <p>Medium</p> <p>Low</p>	<p>Principal and School Board</p>		<p>July 1, 2014 and on going</p>	

## St. Christopher Parish School Action Plan

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### 14. Plan for the Future

A good development annual program should allow St. Chris to begin to build an endowment

High  
Medium  
Low

Principal, Lynn  
Fredrick, and  
School Board

July 2015  
and  
ongoing

#### Tab #4- Committees

1. **Fundraising** – Headed by Finance Council Member
2. **Marketing** – Headed by Principal (See Principal M. Wilson's *School Action Plan*-Tab 3)
3. **Volunteers** – Headed by Finance Council Member- Their role will be to reach out to people who offered (through written survey forms on 1/12/2014) their assistance to the school. The Finance Council member will insure that this committee of six members will utilize all volunteers in specific areas of the school and parish.
4. **Diversity** – Headed by Principal- See *School Action Plan*- Tab 3
5. **Outreach** – Headed by Finance Council Member & Principal: This committee will reach out to school parents who are not making timely tuition payments. They will also make an Exclusion Policy to be signed by parents at enrollment time, setting deadlines for tuition payments and consequences for nonpayment by end of grace period, upon recommendation by the AOC. Confidentiality will be upheld. This committee also provides the parish with a greater benefit, which is an awareness of problems to help parishioners spiritually.
6. **Gift Administration** – Headed by Finance Council Members and Business Manager-This committee will determine the payment structure for pledges from Phase One. They will also make person-to-person contact with people who are not keeping up with their pledges to encourage them to meet initial goal or help them reset their goals.