



*Pray. Serve. Spread the Gospel with Joy.*

## FURTHERING OUR MISSION

Dear Parishioners of St. Thomas More,

The Catholic Community of St. Thomas More traces its roots back to the assignment of the first resident priest to Chapel Hill in 1940. Since that time, our community of faith has grown, and today we stand as the second largest institution in Chapel Hill outside of the university. We number some 3,500 registered families and 11,600 individuals. We are a dynamic and active community as we strive each day to live out the four main areas of our parish life: Liturgy, Community, Evangelization and Service.



Here in 2017, an opportunity is being presented to us to **Further our Mission** to “pray, serve and spread the Gospel with joy.” For many years, we have enjoyed the presence of Aldersgate United Methodist Church as our neighbor. This community of faith has discerned that the time has come to relocate into a smaller space that will better meet the needs of the size of their community.

It is the desire of the Aldersgate community for this property to continue as a house of worship, a place where social outreach happens, and as a center of education. St. Thomas More was approached by Aldersgate to gauge our interest in acquiring their property. After consultation with the Pastoral Council, Finance Council, Parish Staff and Diocesan Officials, I made the decision to enter into negotiations with Aldersgate concerning the sale of their property. In mid-August, we reached an agreement to purchase the property, which includes 3.2 acres of land and 11,000 square feet of space. This is an opportunity for us as a parish community to **Further our Mission**. I would see us being able to use the Aldersgate property in the following ways:



The Catholic Community of *St. Thomas More*

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## Pray

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In 2014, Aldersgate completed a new chapel that seats 175 people. The master plan for our campus calls for a chapel to be built in front of the Parish Center. This new opportunity would allow us the chance to soon have a chapel that could be modified for Catholic use. This chapel would be used for daily Mass, along with small weddings and funerals. Daily Mass draws anywhere from 30-100 people, depending on the day of the week, time and Feast Day. Right now, we have to air condition or heat and turn on the lights two to three times per day in the church. Using a smaller space for daily Mass would save money and provide a more intimate setting. Additionally, some funerals and weddings that we celebrate have a very small number of people in attendance. A chapel would afford us the chance to better minister to families in these situations.



## Serve

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### Meals on Wheels

St. Thomas More has extended an invitation to Chapel Hill-Carrboro Meals on Wheels to make their new home at the Aldersgate property free of charge. Meals on Wheels currently operates out of Binkley Baptist Church. The new space would provide an expanded office for the organization, a larger facility for meal distribution to the drivers and additional storage space. Meals on Wheels has accepted this invitation and looks forward to working with St. Thomas More as a community partner organization. Meals on Wheels will assist STM in the fundraising process through outreach to their donor base.



### Food First Program

For many years, St. Thomas More has enjoyed a partnership with the Interfaith Council for Social Service (IFC). We are the largest contributor of food to the IFC Food Pantry. The IFC is launching the “FoodFirst” program, which will involve the construction of a new facility in downtown Carrboro and will provide support, guidance and encouragement to our neighbors in need through the following:

- Community Kitchen – healthy hot meals

- Client Choice Food Pantry – members will self-shop for grocery items to take home and prepare
- Information, network and referral program about other community resources
- Opportunities for FoodFirst members to participate in leadership roles, decision-making and opportunities to give back
- On-site food, nutrition and safety education programs
- Self-help groups through which members share their skills and ideas with one another

As part of the **Furthering Our Mission** initiative, St. Thomas More is committing \$100,000 to the FoodFirst project to better carry out the Corporal Work of Mercy to Feed the Hungry.

## Spread the Gospel with Joy

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St. Thomas More Catholic School is in the process of planning for an expansion of the preschool program to a partial or full-day experience with the option of before and after school care. This is one of the chief needs that we hear from families who choose not to put their child in our preschool program, which right now only operates until 11:30 in the morning. The opportunity to acquire the Aldersgate property adds a new dimension to our plans to launch a new preschool program for the 2018-2019 academic year. In 2008, Aldersgate completed a major renovation of their preschool building, which has five large classrooms and a very large playground. It would be our intention to operate the St. Thomas More Catholic Preschool out of the existing Aldersgate Preschool building beginning in the Fall of 2018. Our master campus plan calls for a free-standing preschool building, however we only have space for a two-classroom building. Moving to the Aldersgate campus would allow us to establish a free-standing preschool with room to grow this program. Over the last couple of years, enrollment in the early grades in our school has declined. Having a large, full-day preschool program would provide the potential for a greater number of students to move into our kindergarten program, and thus boost our overall school enrollment. The establishment of the St. Thomas More Catholic Preschool would also serve as a revenue generator to help with the costs of operations on the new campus.



The other various facilities at Aldersgate, which include a small social hall, parlor, kitchen, and office space, would provide for the continuation of our mission as a parish community. These may include various youth activities, the development of Young Adult Ministry, Adult Formation Opportunities, along with social and spiritual activities such as small receptions, spiritual direction sessions and retreats.



## Is this the right thing to do?

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At this point in the rich history of our parish, we are being asked, albeit rather suddenly, to grow our campus. Whenever I am asked to consider a new group or ministry in the parish, I always ask if the proposal fulfills our mission. If it does, great. If not, then it is best to decline. When I was approached about this opportunity, I had to make sure that it complies with our mission and would help us to live out that mission to a greater extent. I am convinced that this is the right thing to do. We have the chance to grow our campus. In many dioceses in the United States, parishes are closing or merging. Here we are with the chance to grow yet again.

## How much will it cost and how will we pay for it?

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We will purchase the property and facilities for \$1.85 million. With the need to do some renovations of the facilities and address ingress and egress and connectivity issues, we anticipate that the total cost of the project will not exceed \$2.5 million. Our campaign goal is \$1.1 million. The remainder of the costs would be covered by a loan from the diocese. This would be added to our current mortgage of \$1.8 million, and we would extend the loan out to 15 years so that our monthly payments would remain the same or even be lowered. However, I am confident that we can go above and beyond the campaign goal with your support of this important initiative.

We have a tremendous opportunity before us. Please include this project in your daily prayers. I think God is speaking to us now, and we are being challenged to “put out into the deep.” I hope that you will join me in this exciting next chapter in parish life as we Further our Mission to pray, serve, and spread the Gospel with Joy.

In His Love,



Very Rev. Scott E. McCue, V.F.  
*Administrator*

September 2017