



# Feasibility Study Final Report

**Guidance in Giving**

*Catholic Development Consultants*

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Prepared for:  
**Catholic Church of the Nativity**  
Bartlett, Tennessee

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& Nativity Parish Leadership**

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# Catholic Church of the Nativity

Bartlett, Tennessee

## *Feasibility Study Final Report*

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## PREFACE

Guidance in Giving (GIG) wishes to express its gratitude for the assistance provided by the staff and parish leaders of Nativity during this Feasibility Study. Father José Cruz Zapata-Torres, Angie Elsholz and all the parish volunteers were an invaluable source of assistance throughout the study process. Thank you.

Our thanks are also extended to all the parishioners who shared their thoughts and opinions during this Feasibility Study to discuss the development and future of Nativity. These participants took time from their busy schedules to be personally interviewed or to complete a survey questionnaire. The openness, candor and sincerity of their answers demonstrated that the members of the Nativity truly care about the future of their parish home and want to be actively involved in the planning and implementation process.

The gracious participation of these families have made the following report possible, and we at Guidance in Giving are truly grateful.

## INTRODUCTION

Guidance in Giving was retained by Catholic Church of the Nativity to conduct a Feasibility Study to gather the thoughts and opinions of parishioners regarding the previously proposed 11,000 square foot building. In addition, input was requested on the current needs of the parish to include the following projects: a parish kitchen remodel, improving the outdoor patio and grill area, repairing the parking lot, upgrading the portable classrooms and adding a prayer garden and a columbarium to the parish campus.

The Feasibility Study was conducted from July – September 2022, with Sydney Isom and Christine Goodwin of Guidance in Giving organizing study preparations and providing on-site service during the active phase of the study.

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## **OBJECTIVES OF THE FEASIBILITY STUDY**

- To inform parishioners on the status and feasibility of the previously proposed project: an 11,000 square foot building.
- To educate parishioners about five proposed projects:
  - Parish Kitchen Remodel
  - Outdoor Patio and Grill Area Improvements
  - Parking Lot Repairs
  - Portable Classroom Upgrades
  - Installation of a Prayer Garden and/or Columbarium
- To determine whether parishioners feel there are other elements, needs or projects that should be considered by the parish to be included in a potential campaign;
- To identify potential Leadership Gift prospects within the parish and/or local community;
- To determine collective financial support from parishioners/families;
- To identify possible campaign volunteers, including leadership committee members;
- To identify any potential issues, points of concern or conflicts within the community.

## **FEASIBILITY STUDY PREPARATION**

During the preparatory stages of on-site service, Counsel worked closely with Father José Cruz Zapata-Torres and Angie Elsholz to prepare and complete the following:

- Questions for personal interviews and the direct mail/online Study Survey
- An interview request letter and a cover letter for the Study Survey
- All Surveys were prepared in both English and Spanish
- A Master Plan Summary was created with information received from the parish to give an overview of the proposed project
- Identification of seventy five (75) potential personal interview prospects
- Identification of four hundred eighty (480) survey recipients
- Weekly pulpit announcements and bulletin newsletters

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## FEASIBILITY STUDY METHODOLOGY

Three methods were utilized to obtain information during the Feasibility Study: all written surveys were presented in both English and Spanish languages.

**1. Personal Interviews:** A Personal Interview invitation letter was sent to 75 parish households to participate in the interview portion of our Study.

The families selected for interviews represent a cross-section of parishioners who have a history of generous participation of their time, talent and treasure to the parish. They include top parish donors, ministry leaders and participants, and regular Mass attendees. The invited families were asked to set an appointment to be personally and confidentially interviewed by a representative from Guidance in Giving. **A total of 49 personal interviews were conducted.** The names of all those who participated in an interview are recorded as a Confidential Addendum to this report.

**2. Direct-Mail/Online Study Survey:** An invitation letter and language specific survey were sent to 480 registered parishioners via mail. Those receiving the letter were asked to complete the survey online or on a paper questionnaire and return it to the parish office by August 22, 2022. Additionally, email and Flocknote were also utilized to encourage families to participate in the study. All surveys received as of August 30, 2022 are included in this report.

This report includes a total of **52 Household Study Survey** responses. The names of those who responded to the survey are recorded as a Confidential Addendum to this report.

**3. In Pew Survey:** A more concise version of the Survey was designed in both English and Spanish to be utilized at all Masses the weekend of August 27-28th. Parishioners were encouraged to fill the report out before leaving the parish.

**A total of 15 surveys were completed.**

**In summary, a total of 116 households (24% of all registered families) of Nativity participated in the Feasibility Study.** The rate of response is consistent for a parish of Nativity's size as Guidance in Giving will typically see a response rate of ~10-15%+ in parishes of ~500+ families.

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## REPORT FORMAT

In an effort to provide a comprehensive report of findings and suggested actions, this report is presented in the following format:

- I. **RESULTS*** from both the Personal Interviews and the Study Survey are presented statistically and include commentary.
- II. **REVIEW OF KEY POINTS*** of the results of the Study.
- III. **ANALYSIS & RECOMMENDATIONS*** as to how Nativity should consider proceeding based on the results and analysis of the Study findings.

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## I. RESULTS

### *(FROM THE PERSONAL INTERVIEWS & MAIL/ONLINE SURVEYS)*

*(Please note that not every question was answered by every respondent)*

#### **Demographic Information:**

Each interview and survey began with a series of demographics questions, asking parishioners about their involvement in and opinions of the Catholic Church of the Nativity.

#### **1. How long have you been a member of Nativity?**

<i>Membership Ranges</i>	<i>Responses</i>
> 30 years	<b>27%</b>
25 – 29 years	9%
20 – 24 years	8%
15 – 19 years	19%
10 – 14 years	11%
5 – 9 years	12%
1 – 4 years	11%
< 1 year	3%

#### **2. What ministries, programs and/or activities are you involved with?**

Of the 116 households who participated in the Study, 74 (64%) indicated their involvement in a wide array of parish ministries, programs and activities.

The responses from Study respondents provided us with an excellent cross-section of the parish. The ministries, programs and activities that were mentioned include:

<i>Altar Servers</i>	<i>Fishers of Men</i>	<i>PRE</i>
<i>Auction Committee</i>	<i>Fundraisers for Our Lady</i>	<i>Puppet Ministry</i>
<i>Bereavement/Hospitality Ministry</i>	<i>Hispanic Ministry</i>	<i>RCIA</i>
<i>BBQ Team</i>	<i>Knights of Columbus</i>	<i>Sacristan</i>
<i>Choir</i>	<i>Lector</i>	<i>St. Vincent De Paul Society</i>
<i>Cursillo</i>	<i>Mens Club</i>	<i>Ushers</i>
<i>Diaconate</i>	<i>Ministry to the Sick</i>	<i>VBS</i>
<i>Eucharistic Adoration</i>	<i>Money Counter</i>	<i>Women's Guild</i>
<i>Eucharistic Minister</i>	<i>Morning Group</i>	<i>Youth Ministry</i>
<i>Finance Council</i>	<i>Parish Council</i>	
	<i>Prison Ministry</i>	

#### **3. In your opinion, what does the parish do well?**

The most common responses to this question overwhelmingly referred to:

- Welcoming and friendly
- Very close knit community
- Smaller parish
- Pastor is very well received
- Spiritual needs
- Fellowship

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Representative Commentary:

- *The beauty of nativity is the size*
- *The stain glass window drew me here*
- *La misa en español- the Mass in Spanish*
- *We love Father José*
- *I like that it is a smaller church*
- *Strong spirit of community*
- *Nativity has always been good about having meetings about getting things done*
- *Father José greets everyone at the door before Mass, he is so warm and generous*
- *The church is becoming more diverse*
- *People are warm and genuine and it's close knit*
- *Misa- Mass*
- *We knew it was our home as soon as we went to Nativity*
- *Lots of accountability, you can't be a stranger, everyone is very caring*
- *Friendliness of people*
- *Yes, I am glad the Spanish mass was moved up to 2pm*
- *Father José is exactly what our parish needed*
- *There is a tremendous amount of love at Nativity*
- *Feels like a family*
- *Very accommodating*
- *Welcome everyone with open arms*
- *Priest is outstanding*
- *Very good with outreach*
- *La comunidad. Hemos construido una familia de fe muy hermosa. - the community. We have created a beautiful family.*
- *It is a family parish and has always been that way*
- *We work together as a church community*
- *Sacramental programs, social involvement, eucharistic celebrations, St. Vincent de Paul Society*
- *This survey*
- *Todo- everything*
- *Father being approachable; longer confession times*
- *Decorating church for Christmas and Easter*
- *Multiple opportunities to volunteer*
- *Uniting Spanish and English communities*
- *Friendly and caring parish*
- *Nativity is small but creates a strong sense of family and belonging*
- *Embraces new parishioners*
- *Small congregation leads to and enhances a strong feeling of a faith community*
- *Community. Liturgy.*
- *Listed proposed projects are very appropriate*
- *Everything! I love it here!*
- *Great priesthood and worship*
- *Nativity has always been a friendly church that is welcoming and social*



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#### 4. In your opinion, where does the parish need to improve?

The most common responses to this question were:

- Youth Ministry/Young Adult Group
- Music Ministry
- Communication/transparency
- Lack of involvement from parishioners
- Call for more social events and programs

Representative Commentary:

- *I really don't have an opinion on any improvement needed*
- *Need to improve the church sound system. There is an echo*
- *I haven't heard anyone complain about anything*
- *The bulletin really needs help, it doesn't really tell you anything. A list of the head of the Ministries and their contact information would be helpful*
- *Encourage more parishioners to participate at Mass and serve in Church groups, sing more Choir songs that people know, more post-pandemic fun activities to build community spirit, cordon off unused pews to encourage prayer.*
- *The same people do the same things all the time- more people need to get involved*
- *The kitchen needs to be expanded*
- *We had an awesome youth group when we were teens. It would be great to see more youth in our parish again.*
- *Todo esta perfecto- everything is perfect*
- *We need to get rid of the modules and have a real roof over the kids heads*
- *We're lacking meeting room and running out of storage space*
- *We need a youth group and young adult group*
- *Music. I've been a Catholic my whole life, and honestly, I have never heard about half the songs chosen each Sunday. And many of those songs are hard to sing. I think a combination of familiar traditional and contemporary songs would encourage more parishioners to participate musically and would enhance everyone's liturgical participation, and celebration.*
- *I'd love to see the Latino and Anglo barriers broken down especially in the youth*
- *We've had so much turnover in priests!*
- *Better music at Mass*
- *Besides enlarging things, no it's such a sweet sweet parish*
- *Larger kitchen*
- *Creo que esta bien todo pero un poquito en participar en misa- I think everything is fine but there needs to be more participation in Mass*
- *Parking lot needs to be fixed*
- *We need to bring back the potluck and spaghetti dinners*
- *Volunteers are burned out*
- *Actively grow our members. Reach out to former members. We need an active youth group. We have nothing to attract the youth to our parish*
- *We need to institute more programs but need people to run them*
- *More involvement in the parish-it is always the same volunteers doing everything*
- *Two parishes, one church building: we need to bring the Spanish and English communities together*
- *Youth ministry, high school and adult catechism*

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- *Mi marido opina que la gente se fuera aprendiendo cantos litúrgicos más contemporáneos. Yo opino que pronto será tiempo de pensar en solicitar apoyo de un vicario parroquial porque estamos creciendo mucho y se le carga el trabajo al Padre José. - My husband believes that the people should learn liturgical songs that are more contemporary. I think that soon we will need the help of a parochial vicar because we are growing a lot and much is put on Father José*
  - *Need more volunteers*
  - *Financial transparency*
  - *I think we need more people dedicated to all ministries*
  - *Need apologetics from Ambo! Poor attendance and people leaving the faith, often for other denominations is due to a lack of knowledge of why the Church believes what it does.*
  - *PRE is lacking*
  - *We don't get together anymore*
  - *En la comunicación- in communications*
  - *We need to find a way of getting the younger crowd into Holy Mass without sacrificing the traditions of the Catholic Church*
  - *Need to use more current music*
  - *The pandemic hurt us but we need to have more social events to bring back parishioners*
  - *Pews need to be resealed*
  - *A lot of people have left recently, that's always concerning*
  - *Revolving door of priests*
  - *Nope it's getting better*
  - *Communication on our financial status*
  - *We need to get back to our fun socials*
  - *Beyond me; very pleased at this time*
  - *More cheerful traditional hymns*
  - *Most likely a cry room for parents and children*
  - *Better communication*
  - *Lack of membership*
  - *Communication, financial transparency.*

**5. The previous plan called for an 11,000 square foot building. The projected cost for the initial phase is \$5.5M. Is this project one you believe the parish should undertake?**

<i>Project Summary</i>	<i>Interviews</i>	<i>Survey</i>
Positive	<b>1%</b>	<b>12%</b>
Negative	73%	60%
Unsure	26%	26%
No Response	0%	2%

The most common responses to this question were:

- There are not enough active parishioners to afford this building
- Building something of this size would put the parish in debt again
- Parishioners would like to know the financial situation of the parish before making a decision first

Representative Commentary:

- *This time of our life (possibly a recession) is not too good of a time to start a big project*

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- *We have lost a huge financial base since Father Robert left. We have run out of our “big money people”*
  - *We have lost a lot of parishioners because of covid*
  - *No, because of the pandemic and lack of attendance*
  - *My main concern is that we do not have a group of qualified people to advise and help manage a big remodel- also is our parish financially stable?*
  - *No, we have lost several big donors due to retirement*
  - *Not the way things are at this moment*
  - *I don't know the financial situation of Nativity*
  - *Most definitely not*
  - *I don't think our church could pull it off without going into debt and I don't think our church could survive a mountain of debt*
  - *Yes, if we did it in sections*
  - *I hate everything about that design, the layout does not flow, it is not functional, it is too close to the road*
  - *No, we have generous parishioners but not wealthy enough*
  - *I am not sure if we have enough active parishioners*
  - *I am not sure because I don't know the financial status of the Nativity*
  - *We don't want to get back in debt again, I would leave if it happened*
  - *It is impossible, we have never been able to raise more than \$600k*
  - *I did not like it from the beginning*
  - *I do not know the financial situation of the parish*
  - *We need the space*
  - *Not worth it for this parish*
  - *I can't imagine any parish being able to do that*
  - *Only if Father José wins a 5.5 million dollar lottery*
  - *I want to know the financial condition of the parish first*
  - *I don't think we can afford that because of the lack of involvement and attendance*
  - *It would be nice to have but we would need givers*
  - *The Architect's plan is a big dream for people who are not here anymore*
  - *Absolutely no*
  - *Unquestionably no, we're not ready to build that building*
  - *Would like to see plans, can proposed plans be displayed in the narthex?*
  - *That is up to you*
  - *No, fiscal responsibility in these economic times of uncertainty*
  - *Not sure we need a building that large but do need more space*
  - *It doesn't seem smart to put the church in financial hardship and uncertainty, especially in an unstable economy. The church is about its people, not its buildings. It doesn't seem prudent to move forward with that expense*
  - *I do not believe we have enough families to financially commit to this*
  - *No need for it at this time. The parish has not grown to the point where one is needed*
  - *Let's maintain what we have at an affordable cost*
  - *Perhaps wait a little longer till membership increases*
  - *Way too expensive*
  - *It is time for an upgrade so the parish can continue to thrive for many generations*
  - *That seems like a figure much too high for the size parish we have, and unless there are some generous multi-millionaires willing to step up and make some sizeable donations, this would seem to put too much of a financial burden on the parish*

- *Highly doubtful: Because construction costs have dramatically increased in the past 2 years, the \$5.5 million is very much too low. A more realistic estimate is probably well in excess of \$6 - \$6.5 mill. would create an undue burden on a small parish without a lot of “heavy hitters” needed to help fund the building.*
- *Our present Church, dedicated Nov. 1, 2000, is beautiful and very adequate for our current Parish membership. Stelling hall serves our Parish community very well for social functions, PRE classes, meetings and coffee and donut socials after Sunday Masses*

## 6. Would you like to see the parish kitchen remodeled?

<i>Project Summary</i>	<i>Interviews</i>	<i>Survey</i>
Positive	<b>90%</b>	<b>72%</b>
Negative	0%	5%
Unsure	8%	14%
No Response	2%	9%

### The most common responses to this question were:

- There is not enough room in the kitchen for this size parish
- The kitchen remodel would facilitate better opportunities for fellowship
- If you enlarge the kitchen, you also have to enlarge Stelling Hall

### Representative Commentary:

- *Kitchen is a nightmare*
- *There is not enough room, we need a complete upgrade and additional space*
- *I've never been in the kitchen, I don't feel qualified to speak to that*
- *Everyone wants it- it's important*
- *Why?*
- *Yes, and even expand Stelling Hall*
- *It's been needed for a long time*
- *We badly need it, it's a tiny kitchen*
- *The kitchen needs to be updated really badly*
- *Definitely, it would be a plus*
- *I know it's a need, it lends itself to gatherings*
- *Kitchen is the utmost importance*
- *We need to take input from ministries who use the kitchen*
- *It was built as a rectory kitchen, we need more space and a commercial kitchen*
- *It needs to be remodeled but remodeling it without englarging Stelling Hall doesn't make sense*
- *Definitely, it needs double stoves and a dishwasher*
- *We need more work space and more room but not a commercial kitchen. Two side by side stoves, a big fridge and a three compartment sink would be ideal*
- *The kitchen is a must, we need a new stove and fridge. There is not enough counter space. We need cabinets and better pots and pans*
- *Yes, the kitchen is too small*
- *Number one priority*
- *Can't comment, haven't really seen it*
- *Needs to be remodeled to be more functional as long as you don't take away from Stelling Hall*
- *If we enlarge the kitchen we have to enlarge Stelling Hall*
- *St. Francis Kitchen but not on steroids*

- *Very much so, we use the kitchen a lot for fundraisers and funerals*
- *It's very tight and tiny*
- *It's not big enough*
- *A nice kitchen and beautiful hall would also bring money into the church for weddings etc*
- *We also need a gathering space to go with it*
- *I don't know what remodeling entails but all gatherings require food so this is important*
- *Make the kitchen bigger*
- *This is top priority, it is very inadequate*
- *I would love to see the kitchen remodeled there is not enough room*
- *If the storage cabinets behind the kitchen could be cleaned out you could make it bigger*
- *Has had no improvements in forever*
- *The kitchen would be a great start. I believe that more events could held with an updated, possibly commercial kitchen*
- *The kitchen does seem to be used more than other area of the church facility*
- *The kitchen remodel would facilitate better opportunities for social events and fellowship. It would also cut down on catering costs for these type of events*
- *It should be updated an enlarged some*

## 7. Would you like to see improvements to the outdoor patio and grill area?

<i>Project Summary</i>	<i>Interviews</i>	<i>Survey</i>
Positive	49%	34%
Negative	38%	21%
Unsure	13%	34%
No Response	0%	11%

The most common responses to this question were:

- Enclosing the patio area would solve the space problem
- It is not used enough to propose spending money on updating it
- More functional space

Representative Commentary:

- *What do we use that for? it is limited use*
- *We don't use it much anymore*
- *Make it nicer for the picnics, and grilling butts*
- *I would need to see the layout*
- *More umbrellas*
- *A retractable awning*
- *We just need to fix the wall. I have fond memories of playing and enjoying our annual picnics on that patio*
- *It is limited use in terms of the seasons*
- *The spaces are fluid in with each other (in regard to the kitchen and Stelling Hall) therefore it is important to improve this area*
- *Don't really see any need for it*
- *I am indifferent*
- *It could use some improvement*
- *It would be nice to have but it is not a need*

- *It needs to be enclosed, it is too hot and we have a lot of elderly parishioners who don't use it due to the weather*
- *We need more tables for when we have gatherings, there is never enough room when we do*
- *Nice but not a necessity*
- *Built in benches along the wall would be nice. More functional and stable tables would be nice*
- *A temporary or permanent awning to get more use of the area year round*
- *I have never been out there, if people feel the need to for it, then fix it*
- *Does it need to be done? We don't use it that much. I haven't heard a good reason for it, we haven't had any of our bigger parties in years*
- *I don't even know what it looks like but enclosing it would be nice, older people can't stand the heat. Our men do need a good patio to grill, they use it a lot*
- *Enclose the outdoor patio and grill area*
- *Retractable cover*
- *I'd like to see a canopy over it*
- *We need more roof space*
- *We need a covered patio*
- *It is not even ground, it is not conducive to people with walkers and canes*
- *kitchen and classrooms are more important than this*
- *Cover the pavilion for more room, add portable heaters*
- *When we have certain functions, we don't have enough room. Adding tables with umbrellas and better grills would be a start*
- *As long as there is no tripping hazards*
- *Need to expand with the kitchen*
- *We don't use it that much*
- *Why?*
- *Incorporating it with Stelling Hall or expand Stelling Hall*
- *Why would we do this, how would this help the people in the parish?*
- *It is beautiful area and needs outdoor pavilions and awnings*
- *I have not used this area so I do not know what is really needed*
- *Could use some stone work repair*
- *Don't think this is needed*
- *A permanent awning would help to extend the gathering space, especially since a kitchen remodel would take up some of the current area*
- *This too would help fellowship/social events-however, we don't feel like it should be as high of a priority as the indoor kitchen*
- *Enclosing the patio would give us much needed space*
- *depends on how well it will integrate with our proposed new building and/or kitchen upgrade. Would the new building include a new kitchen?*
- *Some cover, umbrellas etc*

## 8. Would you like to see improvements and repairs to the parking lot?

<i><b>Project Summary</b></i>	<i><b>Interviews</b></i>	<i><b>Survey</b></i>
Positive	<b>49%</b>	<b>31%</b>
Negative	38%	36%
Unsure	13%	24%
No Response	0%	9%

The most common responses to this question were:



- 
- This not a priority at the moment
  - There is no visible problem
  - It needs to be fixed especially because of the drainage issues

Representative Commentary:

- *Not at this time*
- *Need more handicap parking spaces*
- *Have you ever been out there when it rains?*
- *Don't see a lot wrong with current parking lot*
- *Why?*
- *Needs some improvement because of the drainage*
- *The parking lot at this time is sustainable*
- *What's the problem?*
- *The parking lot could be repaved, but on this initial phase, I do not think it should take precedence*
- *I think it should be repaved*
- *It's the first thing people see when they come to Nativity, it shouldn't look yucky*
- *Not necessary at this time*
- *Improvements would make it safer*
- *The parking lot is fine*
- *I do not know what improvements and repairs are needed, I need more specifics*
- *It doesn't need to change configuration, it does have cracks though- I guess it needs to be fixed*
- *If it needs it, then definitely . We need to be able to park to come to church*
- *I don't know enough details*
- *It's not really a priority*
- *I've never had any problems with the parking lot*
- *We just paved it, we don't need to waste money on it right now*
- *It's been an eyesore since 1994*
- *It becomes a river when it rains*
- *It does need to be maintained but putting a bunch of money into it first doesn't seem necessary*
- *Seems okay*
- *What's wrong with the parking lot?*
- *On a scale of 1-10, 10 being the worst it is a 5*
- *The parking lot is a hazard, it is very uneven*
- *I don't think a new parking lot will bring new attendance*
- *If it needs fixing, fix it*
- *Repair it now before it gets in worse shape*
- *I haven't had any problems*
- *5 on handicap areas, other than that it seems fine. It could use some landscaping though*
- *We need more handicap parking and flood lights*
- *It's okay for now*
- *The drainage is really bad, you need a canoe to get to the church door*
- *No issue with the parking lot*
- *The parking lot does not give a nice impression to visitors*
- *The parking lot is uneven, it holds a lot of water*
- *This could be done in our current budget fund, not a capital campaign*
- *I don't see any reason, we have enough parking, it is not a priority*
- *maybe at a later date, not a high priority*
- *We can still park in the parking lot, but we need repairs*

- *It needs to be gutted and completely redone. It has been patched for so many years but never fixed*

## 9. Would you like to see upgrades to the portable classrooms?

<i>Project Summary</i>	<i>Interviews</i>	<i>Survey</i>
Positive	45%	35%
Negative	23%	28%
Unsure	32%	20%
No Response	0%	17%

The most common responses to this question were:

- Many could not comment on the condition on the portable because they had never been inside
- They do not see a need for making any financial upgrades to a building the church doesn't own
- Would like to know the number of children enrolled in PRE

### Representative Commentary:

- *I don't know the condition*
- *depends on the growth of the parish*
- *I've never used it, it doesn't apply to me, but if it helps the youth of the parish then sure*
- *This doesn't need to be apart of a capital campaign*
- *Investing money in classrooms that have fewer kids doesn't make sense*
- *We don't have any use it for it personally*
- *I am embarrassed of the building inside. Young people need a clean learning environment*
- *I'd love to see it go away*
- *Upgrade it for multipurpose use*
- *I am not sure how many children are enrolled in PRE, but the better the classroom the better they will pay attention*
- *I'd like to see them go away*
- *How much use are they even getting?*
- *Buy it and move it somewhere else or build something of our own*
- *Spending a lot of money on a building we don't even own doesn't make sense*
- *As a retired teacher, if it needed to be upgraded then okay, but how many kids are enrolled in PRE?*
- *If there is a need, might as well do it*
- *I haven't been in it, how many kids are even in PRE? Families and children are a key to making a parish grow*
- *Yes, we need more space*
- *Does it even have AC and heat? I do not have enough information. Is there anything wrong with the building? A report with what has been updated would be nice*
- *We don't really need the portable anymore*
- *I've never liked them, they aren't aesthetically pleasing*
- *We need room, it would be great if there was more room*
- *The roof needs to be resealed- do the owners of the building pay for this? The portable needs more maintenance than improvement*
- *Get rid of the portable and building a metal classroom*
- *I'd like to get rid of that eyesore*



- *A lot of it has to do with the growth of the church, how many kids are in PRE depends on a great deal of our growth*
- *Have not needed this for our family so not really in a position to comment. However, anything that makes a safe learning environment for our youth is a good thing!*
- *Yes, it involves the kids*
- *If the goal is to give us more meeting space, I like the sound of that*
- *Remove that sucker, we don't even have that many children coming*
- *I haven't even been inside*
- *Only because we don't have another building*
- *Do they want new furniture ?*
- *Can a new building include classrooms?*
- *Do we own them or rent them ?*
- *I don't know much about the portable classrooms*
- *classroom if kept, should be bought and paid for, not rented*
- *kids need a good clean learning environment*
- *These buildings are leased. Make repairs as necessary but putting upgrades on something that can potentially leave, does not make logical sense*
- *Do we own it? I think we are renting those*
- *Do we have enough youth in the parish for this to be beneficial*
- *we believe that upgrading the classrooms would enhance our youth's participation in the parish as well as create a nice place for them to continue on their faith journey*

**10. Would you like to see a prayer garden and/or columbarium added to the parish campus?**

<i><b>Project Summary</b></i>	<i><b>Interviews</b></i>	<i><b>Survey</b></i>
Positive	<b>25%</b>	<b>19%</b>
Negative	15%	49%
Unsure	60%	19%
No Response	0%	13%

The most common responses to this question were:

- The question of who will maintain the prayer garden
- Many do not see a need for a columbarium here at Nativity
- It would be a great addition but it is not a priority

Representative Commentary:

- *I'm not sure*
- *I think a prayer garden can be created by parishioners at a low cost*
- *No money for it*
- *Columbarium is a high priority*
- *Our current "prayer garden" is small, but inviting. We have good areas for prayer and for meditation. A columbarium is least on the list for things we favor*
- *If it can be done it would be nice to have a quiet place to reflect and pray*
- *We think this would be a great addition but not a priority. If the space is available after the expansion. It could be something parishioners could build later*
- *Why what's wrong with what we have ?*
- *I would choose a prayer garden over the columbarium. It would be a nice addition, but hardly necessary*

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- *We have a prayer garden- it's hard to maintain. Let's fix the one we already have*
  - *A prayer garden would be lovely. Columbarium?*
  - *There is already a prayer garden down the hill*
  - *Do not know how much this would get used, need more specifics*
  - *A simple prayer garden yes, no to a columbarium*
  - *If we have a garden, we need to use native plants. It should also benefit the environment. No to a columbarium*
  - *This could be specifically donated by someone, this is a want not a need*
  - *No, i've never seen anyone go to the prayer garden we already have*
  - *Unless someone explains it to me, I don't see the need for a columbarium on our campus. We have two catholic cemeteries already. Volunteers could put together a prayer garden*
  - *I really don't care about that.*
  - *I've never seen anyone, but the deer use the prayer garden*
  - *Yes to a prayer garden, maybe a small columbarium*
  - *Great thing but would many people use it?*
  - *Why should we pay for a prayer garden when we have people who can do it themselves with some elbow grease? a columbarium would be beautiful down there*
  - *A prayer garden hasn't worked since '94, there has been no follow through*
  - *Yes, we've gotten away from that. A prayer garden builds pride and glorification to God. However, we need to build one that is easy to maintain*
  - *No to a columbarium*
  - *Yes, more people want to be cremated*
  - *I think we can do a prayer garden on our own, it is not necessary right now*
  - *Maintaining prayer gardens at Nativity has always been a problem*
  - *No*
  - *Yes it is important*
  - *A columbarium would be a money maker for the parish and we already have the land*
  - *Would be nice but would never use it*
  - *The church is too small for a columbarium*
  - *A grotto would be a great evangelization tool*
  - *This is not a priority right now*
  - *Move the stations of the cross*
  - *I am looking forward to having a columbarium*
  - *If we did have a columbarium, they can just donate like they did for the bell tower*
  - *I don't care one way or the other if we have a prayer garden*
  - *No, they're are other needs to spend our money on*
  - *I would love to see a columbarium*
  - *Yes, I'd like to see a prayer garden in conjunction with a columbarium*
  - *A prayer garden would be great. Definitely no to a columbarium. It is not a need and doesn't draw growth which should be our top priority*
  - *I don't know if people would go for a columbarium, I may be wrong. A prayer garden would be great*
  - *Nice to have but not a need. Who is going to maintain it?*
  - *I am perfectly fine praying in church. A columbarium is a want not a need*
  - *There used to be a great prayer garden down the hill. I would love to see it revived, and actually have an idea about a fundraiser involving this.*

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## 11. Are there any other items you think should be included in this project?

### Representative Commentary:

- *No, not at this time*
- *Sports fields*
- *I would like an updated choir area with better microphones so they can be better heard. It would also be great if there was a better sound mixer setup and a cry room.*
- *Add a light outside the confessional to indicate Father is 'in' and available*
- *Since the church has been paid for to the best of our knowledge, where do the existing church contributions go??*
- *Altar backlight*
- *I can't think of anything right now*
- *It's perfect, this is the best parish I have ever lived in*
- *Refinish the large wooden doors*
- *Gymnasium*
- *The nursery should be reinstated at 10:30 Mass*
- *No the inside of the church is really nice*
- *We need visible improvement like remodeling the kitchen*
- *A building space for adult and youth catechesis, we need to make intentional disciples of the church*
- *No, because we don't have everything we work harder to use what we have*
- *Knights of Columbus office space*
- *Expand Stelling Hall*
- *The kneelers need to be redone*
- *Move the stations of the cross*
- *Add a metal building*
- *We don't have the room to do what we want to do*
- *A family life center*
- *The plan they proposed but on a smaller scale*
- *Expand stelling hall, we have a lot of good functions but not enough room*
- *More room & more storage space*
- *Relocating the stations of the cross*
- *Adding a firepit*
- *Office space*
- *A family life center would be nice*
- *A taller "Church of the Nativity" sign*
- *We need office space and classrooms, the inside needs to be done first before the outside*
- *Doors that fold back so stelling hall is feasible*
- *The pews need to be resealed*
- *The kneelers don't support well*
- *New doors in the women's restrooms*
- *Not that I can think of, these are feasible good ideas*
- *No, this is probably going to cost enough*
- *I think this is a good start*
- *Unfortunately, cameras and related security improvements. Sad commentary that prompts us to mention these safety measures.*
- *Address the earth wall*
- *Need funds for youth ministry program*
- *Memorial Plaques in honor of deceased Nativity Parish leaders along the parking lot perimeter or prayer garden walkway. Install a small tree or shrub behind each Plaque*

**12. Do you think that parishioners will volunteer their time, talents and treasure in support of a capital campaign to support these projects?**

<i>Project Summary</i>	<i>Interviews</i>	<i>Survey</i>
Positive	<b>86%</b>	<b>58%</b>
Negative	3%	0%
Unsure	11%	42%
No Response	0%	0%

**13. Would you be willing to volunteer your time for the campaign?**

<i>Project Summary</i>	<i>Interviews</i>	<i>Survey</i>
Positive	<b>67%</b>	<b>36%</b>
Negative	33%	31%
Unsure	0%	26%
No Response	0%	7%

**14. What would you estimate your family contribution to be over a 3-year period?**

26 of the 49 (53%) Personal Interviewees responded, and 47 of 67 (70%) of the Study Survey participants responded. **Overall, 73 (63%) families indicated potential financial support towards the project.** In our experience, the majority of those who responded “unsure” became supporters upon receiving more information regarding the campaign.

It is also the experience of Guidance in Giving that families who participate in a Study may not be prepared to give an answer to this question; however, that does not mean that they will not contribute when the parish enters into a capital campaign. The firm has also found that once a complete case is presented and families are challenged to make a pledge that is sacrificial, many are likely to contribute more than the amount they originally stated in the Study.

**PLEDGE RANGE: Gift-by-Gift Breakdown (Low estimate)**

<i>Gift Breakdown</i>	<i># of Gifts</i>	<i>Total Pledges</i>
\$25,000 - \$49,999	1	\$25,000
\$20,000 - \$24,999	0	\$0
\$15,000 - \$19,999	3	\$45,000
\$10,000 - \$14,999	8	\$82,000
\$7,500 - \$9,999	6	\$47,200
\$5,000 – \$7,499	28	\$140,000
\$4,000 - \$4,999	5	\$22,300
\$3,000 - \$3,999	15	\$49,800
\$2,000 - \$2,999	1	\$2,000
\$1,000 - \$1,999	3	\$4800
\$1 - \$999	3	\$1500
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>73</b>	<b>\$414,800</b>

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**15. Is it reasonable to ask the parishioners of Nativity to consider pledging \$125 per month (a \$5,000 pledge) payable over 36 months?**

<i>Project Summary</i>	<i>Interviews</i>	<i>Survey</i>
Positive	<b>73%</b>	<b>32%</b>
Negative	1%	21%
Unsure	26%	42%
No Response	0%	5%

**16. If the campaign proceeds, will you support the parish to the best of your ability to help ensure that the campaign is successful?**

<i>Project Summary</i>	<i>Interviews</i>	<i>Survey</i>
Positive	<b>73%</b>	<b>76%</b>
Negative	1%	5%
Unsure	26%	13%
No Response	0%	6%

**17. Is there anything in the local or parish community that you believe would hinder the success of the proposed project?**

<i>Response</i>	<i>Interviews</i>	<i>Survey</i>
Yes	<b>58%</b>	<b>27%</b>
No	36%	29%
Unsure	6%	24%
No Response	0%	20%

The most common, perceived hindrances to the campaign includes:

- State of the economy
- Demographics of parishioners
- Enrollment and growth of the parish
- Lack of transparency and communication

Representative Commentary:

- *We had previously raised quite a bit of money that was supposed to be used for the AC & “Cameras in the parking lot” which was then wasted on an overdone security system. There could be some broken trust there*
- *Turnover in priests*
- *If we lost Father José people would stop paying*
- *Too many parishioners on fixed incomes and inflation costs*
- *No, everybody has always been supportive in the past*
- *Financial strain on everyone*
- *Yes, if Father José get assigned somewhere else*
- *Not enough people attending Mass*
- *Lack of information*
- *A lot of people are on fixed incomes*
- *It may hinder weekly donations which we need. Many of our bigger contributors have moved out of town or changed parishes, sad to say. Groceries are up 33% so be realistic!*

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- *I just think people are wary of the rising cost of everything right now. It may not be the best time to embark on such a project*
  - *If we focus on the wants and not the needs, this campaign will not work*
  - *This campaign needs to be communicated clearly and involve the community in discernment in what the parish needs*
  - *It appears that we're not meeting the budget we had, correct me if i'm wrong*
  - *Current economy-unless people go back to work and inflation goes down then possibly*
  - *Unsure, a lot can happen in a 3 year span- COVID taught me that!*
  - *Current economic trends and the number of people in the parish*
  - *There are currently not enough people in the parish*
  - *No, lots of prayers and good workers on all concerned*
  - *Gather than proceed with big ticket items up front, do a 5 year plan to accumulate the needed funding*
  - *They need to keep our priests. Father José is the key to this*
  - *Money is tough for most everyone. now is not the time to spend large amounts of money for anything*
  - *We have to have a clear objective. It cannot be vague like the St. Joseph fund and it must have a finite end and it should be realistic*
  - *If the campaign is explained in detail and it has to come from the pulpit*
  - *the reluctance of people to give due to the pandemic, some people will just pray*
  - *If they are willing and can contribute it will happen*
  - *most or a lot of our parishioners are retirees and are on fixed incomes and with inflation as it is right now, I am not sure the timing is best for a new campaign*
  - *If they snatch father José here and put him at another parish*
  - *Everyone will do what they can*
  - *These projects would really and improve and enhance the church*

**18. Are there any other topics or advice you would like to mention that have not been addressed in this interview/questionnaire?**

Representative commentary:

- *Families with children in college or private schools may not be able to contribute, what percentage of families does the Guidance in Giving company think is going to participate?*
- *Only if everyone can contribute in some way, will it work. God bless this Holy Place!!*
- *Mold should be cleaned up on all the pews in the parish*
- *I think permanent classrooms are the greatest need*
- *There is not much information in the bulletin or on facebook*
- *Nativity doesn't need to be a different church, we're nativity because we're a small parish. Even if we received a \$5.5 million donation I wouldn't support the plan. The bulletin can improve also*
- *We're losing church members because people follow priests when they leave. There is no reason for an expansion. I don't know the state of the parish*
- *I like the idea of our St. Joseph fund, we need to keep that going*
- *Get the little kids involved. Make outside events more handicap accessible, especially stations of the cross*
- *Spend some more money on the music program and play songs people actually know. It will be worth it*
- *Attract the youth-make it a priority*



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- *I'd like to know the state of the parish. Father José has to start talking about money more- it is so important when it comes from the mouth of the pastor*
  - *How do we reach out to parishioners that have left Nativity? What is our financial status? How can we get 30-40 year olds back that have run off? We need more social events*
  - *I would like to see the gourmet club started back up again*
  - *The parish has been through a lot but has always stuck together. Our latino community is growing and that's great.*
  - *It is encouraging to think we can do some of these things, we've never had a campaign where we haven't been successful*
  - *Communion rails*
  - *Father José is so concerned about the spiritual welfare that he doesn't worry about the money*
  - *By the second time Father José met me, he greeted me by name, he was the first priest to ever do that*
  - *A club for 55+*
  - *We need to include and integrate hispanic and anglo families*
  - *Have the chapel be a chapel again. I would love to see Father José stay here forever*
  - *We need the kitchen and we need more involvement. I'd also like to hear results from other fundraisers*
  - *Are we ever going to take care of the berm?*
  - *Necesidad de grupo juvenil y programa de evangelización continua para adultos- need a youth group and evangelization program for adults*
  - *What are we doing with the other acre across the creek- it is a capital liability if we don't sell it*
  - *The Anglo and Hispanic communities are not together*
  - *Nativity needs a strategic plan!!*
  - *Let people be leaders in the parish*
  - *CLEAR COMMUNICATION*
  - *Before we begin a capital campaign we need to know our finances*
  - *Father José is absolutely WONDERFUL... I have so enjoyed his addition to our flock and Thank GOD for bringing him to shepherd us through good and bad times in life..*

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## *II.*      **REVIEW OF KEY POINTS**

### **A. POSITIVES/SUPPORT**

The idea of moving forward with a campaign to remodel the Stelling Hall kitchen as well as potentially upgrade the outdoor area and repair the parking lot received strong support throughout the Feasibility Study to include the following findings:

- 73% of interviewees and 76% of survey participants indicated they would support Father José the parish leadership in the decision **to move forward with a Capital Campaign.**
- Those who gave an estimated contribution amount (**73 households**) projected that they would be able to **pledge \$414,800.** This is an **average gift of approximately \$5,700** from those who responded. These 73 families represent 6% of the registered parish families.

### **B. CONCERNS/NEGATIVES**

During the Study, some participants expressed concerns. When negative or concerned comments were offered, they were focused primarily in the following areas:

- The need for improved communication and transparency in all aspects of the parish
- The need to grow the parish through evangelization of youth and young adults as well as increased ministry involvement and volunteers in the parish
- The uncertainty of the national economic environment



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## ANALYSIS & RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the results and analysis of the 116 responses received during the Feasibility Study, Guidance In Giving, offers the following to the leadership of Catholic Church of the Nativity:

### A. Campaign Case

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To reiterate the results from **Questions #6, 7 & 8**:

#### **6. Would you like to see the parish kitchen remodeled?**

<i>Project Summary</i>	<i>Interviews</i>	<i>Survey</i>
Positive	<b>90%</b>	<b>72%</b>
Negative	0%	5%
Unsure	8%	14%
No Response	2%	9%

#### **7. Would you like to see improvements to the outdoor patio and grill area?**

<i>Project Summary</i>	<i>Interviews</i>	<i>Survey</i>
Positive	<b>49%</b>	<b>34%</b>
Negative	38%	21%
Unsure	13%	34%
No Response	0%	11%

#### **8. Would you like to see improvements and repairs to the parking lot?**

<i>Project Summary</i>	<i>Interviews</i>	<i>Survey</i>
Positive	<b>49%</b>	<b>31%</b>
Negative	38%	36%
Unsure	13%	24%
No Response	0%	9%

The majority of parishioners at Nativity understand the need for and support the renovation of a new Parish Kitchen and if funds allow for it a second project of either the patio or repairs to the parking lot. However, there are three (3) issues that need to be addressed as we proceed. First, many of the study participants wish to see a much greater path of communication and transparency on all parish levels. There must be a clear plan developed and shared with the parish prior to beginning a campaign, not only for this campaign, but all future parish communications. Secondly, a number of parishioners have expressed their worries about going back into debt. The reality is that the Diocese of Memphis will not allow the parish to undertake the proposed projects without the cash in hand to fully fund the renovations. This policy will alleviate the hesitation on the part of the parishioners to enter into a parish debt. Finally, the fear of losing space from Stelling Hall is a real concern for many. It is our recommendation that when meeting with the architect, careful consideration is taken to upgrade the

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kitchen within its present footprint or by expanding away from Stelling Hall (towards the Ladies room hallway), thereby preserving the maximum square footage in Stelling Hall.

A successful campaign would need to address these concerns and others with sensitivity, clarity, and transparency. It will be vitally important for parish leadership to continue to be vigilant in developing and communicating the needs to all parishioners, showing financial transparency and an overall sense of good stewardship. They are entrusted with the gifts of the people and have the responsibility of utilizing these gifts in the most efficient and effective manner to achieve both the mission of the parish and the goals of the campaign.

## **B. Conduct a Capital Campaign**

**September – December 2022**

In order to conduct a successful campaign, the parish must be in the best position to succeed. This will also include providing the most up to date renderings, elevations, floor plans, site plans, cost estimates, construction timelines and an understanding of the various approval processes with the City of Bartlett and the Diocese of Memphis, with all of the challenges facing construction today (availability of materials, labor and costs), communicating how the project is progressing is crucial. In addition to the numerous questions posed by parishioners, some general questions that will need to be addressed in a campaign are:

- What is the actual total cost of the project?
- Will it take any space away from Stelling Hall?
- What is the timeline for the construction?
- What is needed to begin the project (how much money in hand, how much in pledges, will we need to take out a loan)?
- What are the costs associated with other projects that the parish needs to consider?

Parish leadership must be prepared to answer these and similar questions when they arise during the planning phases and ultimately, a campaign. If numerous questions are left unanswered, the entire effort will appear as poorly planned, uncertain and lacking realism in achieving the project success, particularly during the active portion of the campaign. This would undermine the credibility of the case and the confidence of the parishioners, resulting in a diminished level of support.

In reviewing the parish offertory records combined with the results of the Feasibility Study, which indicated that 6% of the parish intends to make a sacrificial gift totaling \$400,000+, Guidance in Giving believes that the Catholic Church of the Nativity has the ability to raise upwards of \$1,000,000 (or more) in a successful campaign, once a case has been finalized and many of the questions posed by

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parishioners have been addressed. This \$1,000,000 represents approximately 2x the Annual General Offertory.

### **C. Further Leadership Gifts Identification and Cultivation**

As part of the Leadership Gifts Phase of the campaign plan, Guidance in Giving will utilize the information obtained during the Feasibility Study, the parish offertory, past giving records and input from parish leadership in order to quantify current potential Leadership Gift (LG) prospects as well as identify additional Leadership Gift prospects. Working hand in hand with Father José and the Capital Campaign Committee, we will look to further expand our base of potential LG prospects and, through significant Prospect Review, determine a Solicitation Plan for each of the individual families identified in the LG phase.

An important part of the Guidance in Giving Campaign Plan is the composition and performance of the Leadership Gifts Team. In addition to Father José, this team should be composed of six to eight knowledgeable and highly regarded parishioners/couples who will serve as a sub-committee of the Campaign Committee (see Item D below). The role of the Leadership Gifts Team will be to identify and solicit all parishioners and friends of Nativity with the potential to give at a level of \$50,000, \$25,000, 15,000 or more to the campaign.

It is imperative to the success of the campaign that personal outreach for Leadership Gifts be seriously pursued in the early weeks of the Campaign (utilizing a variety of fundraising strategies in order to educate and engage each family in this phase of the campaign).

### **D. Lay Campaign Committee**

As a firm, Guidance in Giving believes strongly in the role of the laity of the Catholic Church, both in the campaigns it conducts as well as in the general life of the parish. The firm regards the participation of lay leaders as essential for the success of any endeavor, for it is truly the parishioners who make up the Church. Creating the sense of ownership among the laity, as a whole, is crucial. Emphasizing the role of lay leadership in the development of the project, from its inception, will further strengthen how parishioners will view the overall plan. In addition, lay leadership can provide parishioners perspective on why the project is important to them, how this project will make a difference to their family and our parish as a whole and why they are involved in making it a reality.

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Guidance in Giving will provide a detailed Campaign Committee Flowchart, including a description of Duties & Responsibilities and will assist Father José and parish leadership in selecting the appropriate individuals to represent a cross section of parish life. By empowering a strong Campaign Committee, educating them on the details of the Feasibility Study and Campaign, and giving them a voice in the decision-making process, we will be able to show that the project is driven by parishioners who want to secure the future of their parish.

#### **E. Promotion of Study Findings**

Copies of this Feasibility Study Findings Report should be provided to all Pastoral Council, Finance Council, and parish staff members, as well as other parishioners/groups as Father José deems appropriate.

***A Feasibility Study Executive Summary has been prepared by Guidance in Giving and should be made available to every member of the parish. Counsel strongly recommends that Father José present the Feasibility Study Findings Summary at each of the Masses in the coming weeks and that the full study report should also be posted on the parish website for all to read.***

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## CONCLUSION

This completes the Parish Feasibility Study conducted by Guidance in Giving for the Catholic Church of the Nativity. Guidance in Giving hopes that these recommendations will be helpful in charting the course for a successful capital campaign, and we thank you for allowing us the opportunity to serve as counsel.

Guidance in Giving has found that there is support, excitement and financial potential for a capital campaign at Nativity. To achieve the full potential in a capital campaign, it will take a concerted effort on the part of all; including a strong collaborative relationship between the parish leadership and parishioners, strong and consistent communication, detailed case information; dedicated and committed leadership and a generous response from parishioners all within a spirit of enthusiasm, optimism and true Christian Stewardship.

We consider it a privilege to have conducted this Feasibility Study for Catholic Church of the Nativity. The parishioners we encountered were receptive to our inquiries, candid in their responses, and interested in providing meaningful commentary and direction. It has been a pleasure for Guidance in Giving to have met and worked with the parish staff, volunteers and parishioners.

**Thank you once again for allowing us the opportunity to serve your community. We are available to you at any time to answer questions, provide additional information or counsel, attend important meetings, etc. We look forward to working with Nativity on a successful capital campaign.**