

SACRED HEART CHURCH - EAGLE GROVE PARENT FAMILY ENDOWMENT



Foundation Case Study



BACKGROUND

“There’s quite a bit that goes along with parish or cluster operations. It really begins with bringing Jesus to people, bringing the sacraments to people and bringing the Word of God to them,” says Pastor Jerry Blake of Sacred Heart Church in Eagle Grove. “There’s a lot that goes on behind the scenes that people don’t see as far as taking care of the needs of the parishioners and accomplishing the goals. Our parish, our people, are so involved with the community.”

Fr. Blake sees the vibrancy at the parish through peoples’ connection and service to each other in their faith journeys. He notes, “They really want to be close to the Church, to make their parish a success and to help others in the community also enjoy that. What they have experienced in their church in growing close to Christ together, it’s been great to be a part of that activity in helping them to experience Christ and to bring Christ to others around them.”

This experience of the Sacred Heart faith community stayed with certain members who had moved away. “There were two sisters who grew up in Sacred Heart Parish that were now living most of their life in California,” Fr. Blake explains. Upon their deaths, they both left estate gifts to Sacred Heart. One of the sisters, Marilyn Parent and her husband Richard, had set up annuities for different charities, and Sacred Heart was one of them. “It was really a sizeable donation to the parish from that couple that grew up here in the parish, had moved away, but still would come back every year,” explains Fr. Blake.

CHALLENGE

“When I was made aware of the amount that was coming, I began to think about what might be the best thing to do with this bequest that we were receiving,” Fr. Blake says. The couple didn’t put any parameters on how they wanted the bequest to be used. Fr. Blake talked with family members of the couple who still lived in the area. “At the time they gave it, we didn’t have something specific that was quite large, and we didn’t want to just keep it on hand for withdrawing when we needed, and then eventually have nothing left because that can be kind of hard on a parish that begins to depend on it, and then it’s not there.”



Fr. Blake gathered the church finance council. Sacred Heart is part of the Holy Family Cluster with St. Francis Xavier in Belmond and St. John in Clarion. Fr. Blake asked the cluster council to the gathering, too, along with CFAD. “I contacted CFAD to help show some different options of what we could do with the money for the long-term good of the Sacred Heart Parish,” says Fr. Blake.

SOLUTION

“We decided the best thing we could do, rather than use the money right up front, would be to put it into an endowment so that we could continue to have it for the years going ahead and we could count on that for long-term growth,” explains Fr. Blake. Through CFAD, the church created the Sacred Heart Church – Eagle Grove Parent Family Endowment, which helps with operations at the parish through annual distributions from the fund. “It really amounts to about five percent of our budget [annually]. One year, for example, we used it when we needed a new lawn mower. Another year, we didn’t need it for a couple years, but yet we foresaw an expense coming up in doing renovations in the church. So, we did keep those yearly funds in savings, separate from the endowment, when we received them. That was able to help us for three years’ worth for this renovation for the inside of the church that we were having.”



The annual distributions each year from the invested endowment fund help the parish thrive today and will continue to help for generations to come. “The greatest happiness a person can receive is to do what God has in mind for them that would bring them the greatest fulfillment,” notes Fr. Blake. “And so that’s keeping them connected to the parish, keeping the parish vibrant, both with funds and in bringing the sacraments and the faith to people. This family that gave, it was a one-time gift, but the way we’ve invested it, they’re continually giving to us year after year.”

