St. Alexius Hospital, St. Louis, Missouri
An Expression of Its Catholic Identity, 2012 Update

- Preface -

St. Alexius Hospital was founded by an order of Catholic lay religious men, the Alexian Brothers, in 1869. The hospital has maintained its Catholic identity since its inception, through several changes in sponsorship/ownership. Its current owner, Success Healthcare LLC continues to honor this Catholic heritage through a) adherence to the Ethical and Religious Directives for Catholic Healthcare Services (ERDs) particularly in areas of patient care (b) through nurturing the faith-based culture present in the hospital; and c) through the support of leadership in achieving these goals. A Catholic identity tool developed by the Catholic Health Association for Catholic healthcare providers was used as the basis of this report in determining St. Alexius Hospital’s expression of its Catholic identity.

- Findings -

1. Adherence to the Ethical and Religious Directives for Catholic Health Care Services

Upon purchase of St. Alexius Hospital, in negotiating to continue using the name “St. Alexius Hospital,” its original for-profit owners, Tenet Healthcare, signed a contractual agreement with the Congregation of Alexian Brothers to follow the Ethical and Religious Directives for Catholic Health Care Services. All of the hospital’s subsequent owners, including Success Healthcare LLC, have assumed this agreement. During an unprecedented pastoral visit by the Most Reverend Robert J. Carlson, Archbishop of St. Louis, to St. Alexius Hospital in March 2012, the CEO of St. Alexius Hospital confirmed the Hospital’s allegiance to the Catholic identity and the ERDs.

A summary of the Directives follows this report.

The facility educates physicians and all employees about the Directives and integrates the Directives into the facility’s policies

- Physicians, leadership and management receive education on the Ethical and Religious Directives
  - New physicians receive a letter from the President of the Medical Staff informing them of the hospital policy to comply with ERDs as well as the summary attached to this report.
  - The governing board is knowledgeable of our Catholic identity and the Directives
  - New Employee Orientation includes training on the Catholic Identity and ERDs.

- Policies and procedures are in accord with the Directives honoring the Catholic perspective particularly concerning:
  - The inalienable dignity and sanctity of life including:
    - Prohibiting abortion and medically assisted suicide
    - Following an ED rape protocol that does not violate Catholic teachings,
    - Upholding the obligation, in principle, to provide food and hydration, including medically assisted if needed, as an ordinary means of preserving life. This extends to patients in chronic and presumably irreversible conditions such as “the persistent vegetative state.”
  - The sanctity of the marriage act between husband and wife as unitive and procreative and an example of the mystical and fruitful ongoing love of the Trinity
    - Artificial contraception and direct sterilization are prohibited.

- Policies and practices with patients and families honor the importance of spiritual and emotional reconciliation as a component of healing and at the time of death.

- Particular attention must be paid to care of the poor and marginalized (see below)

- A Medical Ethics Committee provides groundwork for education and utilization of ERDs in decision-making in patient care.

- The Archdiocese of St. Louis and approved moral theologians are consulted when moral implications are in question related to patient care business endeavors.

- Facility employment policies are under the umbrella of its secular ownership which does not at this time make distinction for faith based standards in certain areas such as insurance benefit coverage.
2. A Mission and Values-based Organizational Culture
The delivery of healthcare reflects the Mission and Values of the organization as seen by the following:

- Decision making tools, such as the Mission Statement and Values Statement, specify the Gospel values among its criteria:
  * Christian love is the animating principle of health care.
  * Healing and compassion are a continuation of Christ's mission.
  * Suffering can be a participation in the redemptive power of Christ's passion, death and resurrection, so that pain and fear, while still present would not overwhelm.
  * Death, which has been transformed by the resurrection, is an opportunity for a final act of communion with Christ (ERDs, p.3).

- The Mission and Values are made visible:
  - Alexian Spirit Committee serves as a mission integration team – hosting activities which remind employees of the mission, serve the poor and/or enliven the spirits of caregivers.
  - Annual employee training includes the meaning and implementation of our Mission.
  - Hospital website and literature for marketing and promotional activities clearly reflect the Mission Statement.
  - Artistic and symbolic expressions that reflect the Mission and Catholic tradition are visible throughout the facility including a crucifix in patient rooms.
  - The hospital is sensitive to the cultural diversity in meeting the needs of its community, and it participates with the community to ensure services and programs are culturally appropriate. The hospital held its first Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. service in January 2012.
  - The Administration and the Spirit Committee sponsor a celebration on the Feast of St. Alexius to foster the founding Mission and Values.

- Relationships among caregivers are mutually respectful:
  - Mutual respect among employees and between physicians and employees is articulated in its standards of behavior and standards of conduct
  - Orientation and employee education programs uphold the dignity of all persons and include expectations of mutual respect among employees
  - Employee assistance is offered through the Caring and Sharing/Employee Crisis fund
  - Employees regularly initiate charity collections for co-workers in crisis situations.
  - Job openings are advertised in media that reach ethnically diverse populations

- Leadership fosters employee participation:
  - Employee satisfaction surveys are conducted periodically
  - Staff meetings and other practices ensure that employees have regular and frequent opportunities to have a voice in their work
  - Administration and Human Resources sponsor Employee of the Month gatherings to recognize outstanding service and to provide a forum for delivering news and important information to employees directly.
  - Leadership receives training regarding labor relations law and rights of employees

3. The Faith-Based Culture is Nurtured by the Hospital’s Holistic approach to Care
- Prayer is regular component of hospital activity for all who wish to participate.
  - Prayer is recited twice daily using overhead paging; before management and medical executive meetings, to initiate hospital feasts, celebrations or commemorations, and by requests for patients families and employees at any time.
  - An employee-organized prayer group gathers monthly to pray for the needs of the Hospital.
  - Prayer cards and leaflets are available for patients and employees through Spiritual Care and the Volunteer Office
  - Bibles and New Testaments are donated for distribution to patients, staff as requested.
  - A prayer basket is provided for all to place prayer petitions that are offered during each Mass celebration, and these intentions are also prayed for by Spiritual Care staff.
• The Hospital Chapel is open twenty-four hours each day to people of all faiths or no faith for prayer and quiet reflection.
  o Rites, rituals, and services offered as worship or celebration reflect hospital respect for religious diversity of patients and staff.
  o Chapel services can be viewed by patients and employees via closed circuit television.
  o Employees have donated a garden area outside the chapel to offer a visually and spiritually pleasing transition into chapel and a peaceful respite for employees and visitors.

• The Spiritual Care staff employed by the facility is professionally prepared.
  o The hospital employs one full-time chaplain, and contracts with three on-call chaplains, representing different faiths, all who have received Clinical –Pastoral Education training.
  o Catholic Priests from neighboring communities are scheduled six days per week to celebrate Mass, to anoint Catholic patients with the Sacrament of the Sick and to respond to requests for the Sacrament of Reconciliation.
  o The Spiritual Care staff is sensitive to all religious backgrounds served by the hospital and understands and can apply the Ethical and Religious Directives of Catholic Health Care to clinical issues.

• The facility provides Spiritual/Pastoral Care services throughout the continuum of health and wellness for patients and family members experiencing illness, crisis, change, near death, death, discovery, conversion and other issues:
  • Pastoral care services are available 24 hrs a day, 7 days a week.
  • Patients are screened for spiritual needs using a standardized assessment tool.
  • Clinical staff make referrals to Spiritual Care staff when cultural, psychosocial and spiritual needs are identified through their assessment, or when patients specifically request spiritual care or counsel.
  • Chaplains are contacted for emergency needs such as cardiac or respiratory arrest and upon the death of a patient, for patient and family support.
  • Chaplains assist patients and families in contacting their faith community when requested.
  • Chaplains and Social Service educate and assist patients and families in completion of Health-care Advance Directives.
  • Chaplains serve to coordinate the care team for patients who have special or critical issues, and/or who lack family or social support systems.
  • The Spiritual Care staff documents interventions in the patient chart.
  • Under the supervision of the Lead Chaplain volunteer Ministers of Holy Communion offer Holy Communion to Catholic patients 6 days a week.
  • Lead Chaplain has a central role on the ethics committee – as the primary consult coordinator, and in the delivery of agendas items and case presentations.
  • Spiritual Care staff serves as liaison with brothers and priests in arranging chapel availability and service requirements.
  • Spiritual Care staff also ministers to the spiritual needs of employees as available.

4. Care for Poor and Vulnerable Persons
Compassionate care for the poor and marginalized is an identifying component of the Alexian Brother’s heritage and a hallmark in the hospital Mission and ERDs, particularly:

The uninsured, underinsured, children, the unborn, single parents; the elderly, those with incurable diseases and chemical dependencies, racial minorities; immigrants and refugees. In particular, persons with mental or physical disabilities regardless of the cause or severity must be treated as a unique person of incomparable worth, with the same right to life and to adequate health care as all other persons (ERDs, p.8, 9)
The facility's service to the community reflects the organization's commitment to service for poor and vulnerable persons:

- Established protocols ensure access to care for marginalized and vulnerable persons, including an established charity care policy and sound fiscal policies.
- It collaborates with other organizations to address federal and state legislative issues regarding healthcare and health-related issues.
- Non-reimbursed charity care for the hospital and community benefit provided by the facility are tracked and reported on an annual basis.
- The hospital provides free transportation service to patients in need from their homes or facilities for Senior Care Clinic visits, or any out-patient or surgical services.
- Out of town family members are provided a list of affordable lodging in the area.
  - Family members of patients in certain private rooms are given the opportunity to overnight in the patient room.
- The Alexian Spirit Committee sponsors events that benefit the poor in the community including area food pantries, and hospital-wide family adoption program for Christmas.
- Caring and Sharing Fund assists individuals in the community who demonstrate a medical need.
- The facility participates in recycling efforts the materials and proceeds of which are donated to the Alexian Brothers' and other Philippine Missions.
- For over 60 years the Alexian Auxiliary has hosted fund raising events in the hospital for the benefit of the greater Alexian community and in the name of St. Alexius Hospital.
  - Donation as much as approximately $8,000 per quarter are distributed to a variety of hospital and local charities including a patient “comfort closet”, Nurses for Newborns, Lutheran School of Nursing Scholarships, food pantries and other hospital drives.
  - The recently updated Gift Shop and vending areas are generating increased revenues toward the Auxiliary charity efforts.

5. Care of the Dying

Dying patients have the opportunity to discuss their condition with family and care providers through family conferences arranged by Spiritual Care or Social Services. The Spiritual Care staff ministers to families in crisis following an unexpected death, life-threatening illness or other emergent event.

Patients in danger of death receive supportive services, such as palliative care, hospice and pastoral care. Education is provided for nursing staff on supportive services. Spiritual Care intervention is offered in the care plan when death is imminent or an arrest has occurred. Sacraments administered by a priest are offered routinely six days per week and in emergency situations as available. Chaplains also work with local parishes for emergency administration of sacraments or other personal ministry needs.

Patient's pain is monitored and managed well through an interdisciplinary approach. Adjuncts and alternatives to pharmaceuticals, such as prayer and music are available to patients as well as pastoral visits to offer companionship or explore the meaning of suffering and mutuality of care.

Administration and Spiritual Care prayerfully acknowledge the death of employees and employee family members as informed.

A “Book of Remembrance” is provided in the Chapel throughout the month of November for all to enter the names of deceased loved ones, for whom prayers are offered daily.
6. **Relationship to the Church**

As previously mentioned the hospital hosted its first Apostolic visit of the diocesan bishop Archbishop Robert Carlson in March of 2012 in recognition of his pastoral leadership in the area of Catholic Health Care locally; to affirm and illuminate the hospital commitment to its Catholic identity; and gather for worship, blessing and fellowship.

The facility seeks the consultation of the archdiocesan bishop in decisions that have consequences for Catholic identity. The Manager of Spiritual Care serves as the liaison, should this need occur.

Feast days significant to the Catholic Church in this diocese, and/or significant to the history of the hospital, are remembered with overhead prayer or artistic expressions or prayer vigils in the Chapel - viewable for patients and families.

Leadership communicates with the Congregation of Alexian Brothers on a regular basis.

- **Conclusion** -

Success Healthcare LLC, and the management and staff of St. Alexius Hospital continue to honor their commitment to the Catholic identity in these numerous ways.