

# In+Formation

RENEWING PARISHES

*News for Pastoral Planners and Those Making the Plan a Reality*

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## The Purposes of Staff Meetings

**The staff meeting** is one of the most important disciplines a parish staff team can practice. As Catholic parishes become more likely to be larger and to have only one priest (the Pastor) present, it may become more necessary for Catholic parishes to have staff meetings so that both the parish lay leaders and the staff can identify where they are going and for what they are to be held accountable. The staff meeting is a primary place to provide a place as a clearing-house for information and a point of alignment for the efforts of all staff members. It is the place where the parish and inter-parish (cluster) plans are operationalized and the place to have conversations about vision, mission, purpose, and how the pieces fit together.

Following is a list of purposes that are addressed in staff meetings that may be useful to parishes. Every staff meeting may not intentionally touch all of these areas, but these purposes rest at the heart of forming a healthy team of called and employed staff for ministry.

**Mission Alignment** - The staff meeting is the place where the pastor can rehearse and remind others of the larger ministry of the parish. It is the visioning task of the pastor in consultation with the Parish Pastoral Council to bring clarity to the picture of the parish's mission or purpose. One of the central purposes of the staff meeting is to remember and rehearse the vision for the parish so that each staff person can find the way in which his or her part supports and deepens the mission of the whole. The staff meeting provides the platform for this visioning work of the pastor because it is one of the few times when staff are all gathered together.

**Developing Community**- Staff members in a large parish are not commonly gathered in one place because their work is scattered over different areas in the parish facility and community, over different days and hours, and among different parishioners and community constituencies. The fact that so much of the work of each individual staff member is done without significant overlap in place, time, or constituency lends to the temptation and perception of working alone. Staff members need a reminder that they are part of a community called to a shared purpose and that the mission of the parish will not and cannot move ahead just with their own skills and efforts. Seeing people's faces and remembering their presence—even if our work does not frequently cross paths with theirs—is a powerful reminder of team and community.

**Information Sharing: "No Surprises"**- Staff meetings are principle times of sharing information. Every staff member does not

need to, and should not expect to, know everything that all other staff are doing. Staff teams are not responsible for strategizing and shaping the work of each of the individual people who make up the team. Staff teams are not themselves accountable for the full ministry of the parish. That is the task of the Pastor and the Parish Pastoral Council.

The basic principle of information sharing that needs to be practiced is "no surprises." Everyone on staff does not need to know everything that others are doing. No one on staff, however, should be surprised to hear, generally, what is being done in the parish and, specifically, what has been decided or planned that will have a direct impact on their own work and responsibility. The "no-surprise" criteria can be a helpful measure of what needs to be shared as information at a staff meeting. Some who have worked for years with Church congregations around issues of conflict have concluded that, "Surprised people behave badly." From an even more important perspective, "surprises" among or between staff team members may be evidence of the absence of alignment and coordination.

**Supervision of Group Work**- The staff meeting is an opportunity to invite the team to do group formative evaluation. While a formative conversation may not be on the agenda every time the team meets, the staff meeting nonetheless is an opportune—and often rare—moment to do the reflective work of formative evaluation.

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Info to go!

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These suggestions are encouraged and welcomed



## When Will Boomers Retire?

By Dr. Robert Miller Director for Research & Planning Archdiocese of Philadelphia

In 2008, the oldest baby boomers, born in 1946, turn 62 and become eligible for (reduced) Social Security benefits. But the latest set of labor force projections from the Bureau of Labor Statistics shows the baby-boom generation retiring much more slowly than its parents did. The labor force participation rate is projected to rise substantially among older men as boomers adapt to a declining standard of living relative to today's retirees. The BLS lists five reasons, some of them troubling, for the rising labor force participation rate among older Americans:

Longer, healthier lives. The BLS is right about living longer, but the assumption that we will also be healthier is dubious. Studies show that middle-aged boomers are not as healthy as preceding generations at the same age.

Better educated. The more educated the person, the higher his or her labor force participation. Because boomers are well educated, they should remain on the job longer than their parents did.

The substitution of defined-contribution savings plans for defined-benefit pensions. This shift has reduced the potential retirement income of individual boomers by thousands of dollars a year. Many will work well into old age to make up the difference.

The age at which older Americans can receive full Social Security benefits is rising from 65 to 67, forcing many to stay on the job.

Health insurance. With fewer employers offering health insurance for their early retirees, most boomers will have to wait for Medicare.

If boomers were to retire at the same age as their parents did, by 2016 the nation would have 61 million retirees aged 55 or older looking for something to do. Because boomers will work much longer than their parents, the retirement market will be smaller than was once anticipated, with only 50 million retirees aged 55 or older in 2016. For parishes eagerly awaiting the expansion of the retirees who have the time, talent and treasure to share with the Church there is good news-the number of retirees will grow because of the large size of the baby-boom generation. But the increase will be smaller than what was once projected, and many retirees will be struggling to make ends meet.

Source: Cheryl Russell, editorial director, New Strategist Publications



## Prayer for a Meeting



Dear Lord,

We gather as family and stand firm in the promise "where two or more gather in the name of Jesus. That he is present".

Lord, please remove the burdens of our daily lives and fill us with your Holy Spirit.

Open our minds, ears, and hearts as we endeavor to do your will.

Please guide us by your Spirit as we participate in this meeting.

Grant us your Spirit of discernment. Help us to truly listen as others speak.

Grant us your Spirit of wisdom as we try to move in the direction your leading us.

We pray in the name of Jesus our savior.

Amen



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Has your parish or Cluster entered into a Planning Process?

Do you need a professional Facilitator? The office of Research and Planning maintains a list of trained and experienced Resource people.

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## Trivia Box

How many parishes in the U.S. have a school?

How many Parishes in Philadelphia have a school?

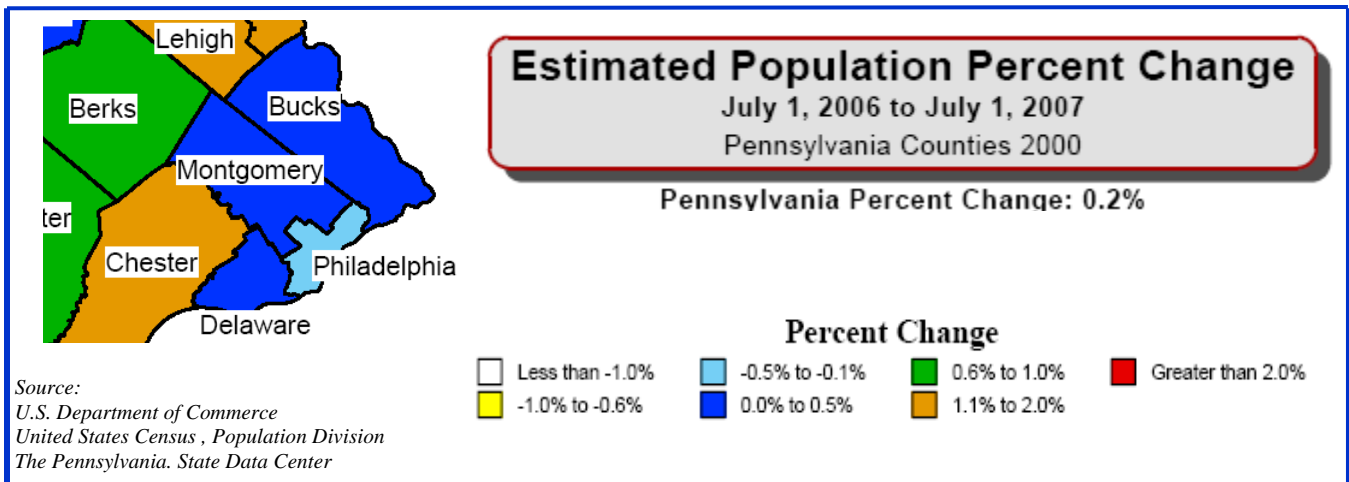
Answer on Page 5

# If I understand your motivation we can accomplish a great deal!



## Decade Orientations in the Life Cycle

Age	Sense of Purpose	Human Systems	Core Values	Life Tasks
<b>Twentysomething</b>	Breaking out of family or origin and staking out adult territory	Personal, couple, peers, work and career, leisure	Intimacy, achievement, creativity and play, sense of self	Experimenting: making tentative attachments, working; gaining comfort and competence with money, love and sex; establishing habits of self-responsible behavior; maintaining a leisure life
<b>Thirtysomething</b>	Making it; achieving success in career, coupling, family (if chosen), recognition, and acquisitions	Couple, family, work and career, leisure, social	Intimacy, achievement, sociability, creativity and play, sense of self; search for meaning, compassion, and contribution	Reaching the top of a career: creating a home; parenting (if chosen); managing financial obligations; sustaining a social life; participating in children's (or one's own continued) schooling; maintaining a leisure life; caring for parents; facing possible losses such as divorce, loss of partner, or loss of career; postponed ego development
<b>Fortysomething</b>	Individuation, being in charge of one's own life, developing a spiritual awareness; (some people move from individuation to interdependence, while others reverse this order)	Personal, couple, family, work and career, friendships, leisure, social environmental	Sense of self achievement, intimacy, play and creativity, compassion and contribution, search for meaning	Reevaluating one's life, establishing clear ego boundaries; cultivating the self; becoming one person in all roles; clarifying career and marriage; examining roads not taken; measuring decisions by time left; facing the possibilities of divorce, career change, geographical moves, and addictions
<b>Fiftysomething</b>	Enjoying life through interdependence, feeling most oneself in the presence of nature, coworkers, spiritual awareness	Couple, family, leisure, personal, work and career, friendships, environmental, social	Intimacy, play and creativity, search for meaning, compassion and contribution	Enjoying being with others, traveling and indulging in leisure activities; deepening intimacy; favoring passive master at work; assuming new leadership roles; displaying increased social caring; preparing for increased losses







# APRIL IS NATIONAL CHILD ABUSE PREVENTION MONTH!

## Fostering a Network of Protection and Prevention

By Evelyn Tarpey Coordinator, Safe Environment Program.

April is National Child Abuse Prevention month, Sexual Assault Awareness month and Volunteer Appreciation month. From a Safe Environment perspective, these issues are interwoven. The 2007 Safe Environment audit of parishes indicates that the majority of the adults serving children in our parishes are volunteers. In Articles 12 and 13 of the *Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People*, the Safe Environment initiative is defined and the promise to protect the faithful in the future is made. All adults in ministry and service to children must obtain and submit background checks, receive a written code of conduct, and attend training that addresses the dynamics of child molesters and the prevention of child abuse. These requirements and this pledge have changed the nature of serving children in our parishes.

Change can be challenging in any organization. It is not easy to change the habits and practices that have developed over time in our parish programs serving children. When planning or supervising programs that serve children, our actions need to be both thoughtful and deliberate. Awareness, education and vigilance are key to the prevention of child sexual abuse.

Since September, 2003 the Office for Child and Youth Protection has trained 53, 000 adults through the Safe Environment program to identify the ways that child molesters violate the physical, emotional and behavioral boundaries of children.

As a result of the Safe Environment training, adults are more aware of the behaviors of child molesters and how molesters use their power to abuse children and keep them silent about what is happening to them. Parishes are responsible for the local implementation and oversight of the Safe Environment Program. Over the past five years hundreds of individuals in the parishes within the Archdiocese of Philadelphia have incorporated the goal of full implementation of the Safe Environment program into their daily work. The maintenance of a file for each parish staff member and volunteer who serves children demands attention to detail, persistence in obtaining all required documents and a heartfelt commitment to systemic change.

Children need adults to protect them, model for them healthy and respectful relationships, and raise their voices in order to remove them from abusive situations. Adults have the knowledge and power to create a network of protection and prevention in each parish community.

## Other online resources for parishes:

USCCB website – 5 years out of Dallas, a series of articles addressing many of the issues involved in the protection of children <http://www.usccb.org/ocyp/5yearsfromdallas.shtml>

Virtus website: [www.virtus.org](http://www.virtus.org). resources for parents and those serving children <http://www.virtus.org/virtus/parentHandbook.pdf>

Archdiocesan website also has resources for parents concerning child safety issues. [http://www.archdiocese-phl.org/protection/Resources/res\\_main.htm](http://www.archdiocese-phl.org/protection/Resources/res_main.htm)



We would like to thank Evelyn for this article and her relentless pursuit of a safe environment for our children  
*Editor*

## Info to go!

The average size of a parish has increased from 1,881 in 1950 to 3,097 in 2000. Parishes vary in size with 25% being mega (1200+households;>3000 individual, 25% being large (500-1200 households) 25% medium size (200-499 households; 450-1199 individuals) and 25% being small (<200 households;<450 individuals). Larger parishes are experiencing more growth than smaller parishes. (a)

In Philadelphia in 2005, 156 parishes (56%) are mega; 82 (30%) are large ; 29 (11%) medium and 7 (3%) small



## The Purpose of Staff Meetings

### Supervision of Group Work

The pastor can introduce group supervision at staff meetings by putting formative questions on the agenda, for example:

- What have we been doing?
- What are we learning about our work and our mission?
- With whom do we need to build new or better relationships and coalitions to advance our work?
- What should we be giving ourselves to with priority in the next week, month, and quarter? Continued

**Role Renegotiation** -As work moves ahead, we all find that our job descriptions and assigned roles are necessarily malleable and need to be held loosely. Ministry in large, complex parishes demands great interplay and flexibility. Corporations have long discovered that departments and workers that operate in “silos”—stand-alone units without connections to other departments or functions—reduce productivity and results. Organizations need clear but fluid boundaries so that departments, programs, and staff can function appropriately across silos to support the mission of the parish. The staff meeting is a forum for discovering where boundaries need to be porous and where work must be collaborative rather than siloed.

On a similar but less formal level, work patterns can be negotiated at staff meetings. Staff members can be invited to state their needs during staff meetings and thus clue others as to how they might appropriately offer support or reduce distractions. Staff meetings are appropriate clearinghouses for such statements of need. “I need all parish bulletin information by Wednesday” or “I need to know who is in the building” or even “I need people to close their office doors in our cramped office suite when they are going to be on the telephone for an extended period of time.”

**Developing Staff (and Parish) Culture**-Every parish has its own unique personality and culture.. Formal or informal, introverted or extroverted, valuing give-and-take as a team or deferring to the authority of the leader, valuing seriousness and insight or valuing play and creativity, expecting polite harmony or expecting statements of directness—every parish is both guided and constrained by a silent and tacit set of norms that can either support or suppress ministry. The staff meeting is a place, a platform, where norms can be tested and changed as the pastor works with the staff.

**Strengthening Prayer Lives**– Prayer is an essential part of every staff meeting. The work of the parish staff is the work of God in the lives of the parishioners and community who are being served. The Pastor, parish staff and parishioner leaders present need to be open to the will of the Spirit in their individual and group life through prayer. Modeling prayer in this group also enables these leaders to carry out their ministries with others in a prayerful context.

Health comes from the center of an organization—by the healthy practices of the staff and parishioners who sit in the central positions of leaders. Staff and parishioner leaders actually model and mentor the rest of the parishioners in relating to God through prayer and, in appropriate ways, in relating to one another, talking with one another, making decisions with each other, and a host of other critical but hidden norms that guide the life of the parish. The staff meeting is a dominant and public place of gathering for a key group of parish leaders. It is a platform from which healthy practices of community prayer, honesty and trust can be introduced into the larger body of the parish.

This article was adapted for Catholic parishes from what was written by Gil Rendle , Susan Beaumont, who in turn, *adapted* from [When Moses Meets Aaron: Staffing and Supervision in Large Congregations](#), copyright © 2007 by the Alban Institute. All rights reserved.

## Trivia Answer

**Nationally** about one third of all parishes have schools.

In **Philadelphia**, of the 270 parishes, 167 parishes have their own (K-8) school (about two thirds). There are 46 other parishes that participate in sponsoring 17 regional schools cooperatively. The remaining 57 parishes send children to neighboring parish schools.

Source: Davidson, James and Suzanne Fournier. 2006 “Recent Research on Catholic Parishes: A Research Note”. *Review of Religious Research* Vol. 48 (1): 72-81 \* Information on Philadelphia provided by The Office of Research & Planning