

InFormation

RENEWING PARISHES

News for Pastoral Planners and Those Making the Plan a Reality

Assessment: An Essential in Pastoral Planning

Parish Pastoral Council's Annual Assessment of the Parish Pastoral Plan

Between 1994 and 1998 every parish in the Archdiocese conducted a self study and prepared a parish pastoral plan based on it to direct the efforts of the parish to accomplish goals in the areas of worship, teaching, evangelization, providing service, building community, developing leadership and stewardship. The pastor, working with his parish pastoral council, developed the plan.

Ongoing pastoral planning requires prayerful reflection, willingness to participate in open discussion, and an openness to the Spirit on the part of many willing and dedicated people. One part of this ongoing activity is for the Parish Pastoral Council to assess

on an annual basis the specific objectives to accomplish the parish plan by considering what was called for during the year in review, what was accomplished, and what needs to be changed.

In the self assessment each year, meaningful, realistic and measurable objectives to accomplish the plan goals need to be clearly identified, and the specific actions required to accomplish these objectives need to be outlined for the coming year. Without this attention, the hard work of staff and parishioners involved in implementation efforts may result in frustration and disappointment because the envisioned results were either not realized or not recognized when they were realized.

Consistent with the functions of the Parish Pastoral Council contained in *Rationale Principles and Guidelines for Parish Pastoral Councils*, it is recommended that the Parish Pastoral Council schedule one of its meetings annually to review the Parish Pastoral Plan. This review can take place at the first meeting after the summer break or whenever the council felt that this meeting would be most productive. This meeting also presents an opportunity for new members of the council to become familiar with the parish mission statement and the pastoral plan.

The primary purpose of this annual assessment is to help the pastor, parish staff, pastoral council and others to make a clear connection be-

tween the work being carried out in the parish and the formal pastoral plan developed by the parish pastoral council some time ago. Sometimes, that connection is not obvious. Changes in the priorities or the circumstances of the parish (sometimes brought about by cluster planning), distractions brought about by unforeseen events (fires, major bequests, etc.), changes in personnel (new parish staff or appointment of a new Pastor), goals found to be more easily accomplished than originally thought, or simply the passage of time, may make it difficult to make the connection between what the parish is doing and what was originally in the plan. But these circumstances are all legitimate findings in the annual assessment and give the pastoral council an opportunity to get back on track or to make modifications to their original goals.

In one way or another, every parish is already involved in a process of ongoing pastoral planning. The Pastor, parish staff, and those parishioners who are involved in implementation efforts, take actions as part of the ongoing

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Resources on the Internet

Internet based resources are tools that can assist parishes in their on-going planning. The Internet provides access to information as it is needed. The Pastoral Planning pages of the Archdiocesan web site now offer information and support for those involved in pastoral planning at the parish and cluster level.

Now available:

- **The Annual Assessment of the Parish Pastoral Plan**
- **Support for Conducting the Annual Assessment**
 - Preparation of the Parish Pastoral Council
 - Parish Pastoral Plan Implementation Report
 - Sample agenda for the Parish Pastoral Council's Meeting to Conduct the Annual Assessment
- **Statistical Information:**
 - Report by subject (U.S. Census data)
 - Report by geography (archdiocesan, vicariate, cluster)
- **Educational Resources**
 - theological foundations of pastoral planning
 - group process issues
- **The Rationale, Principles and Guidelines for Parish Pastoral Councils**

If you do not have access to the Internet and are interested in reviewing any of these resources, contact the Office for Research and Planning.

VOLUME 2, NUMBER 2

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4 THE IMPORTANCE OF PRAYER AT ALL PARISH MEETINGS

Where are the kids?

It's ten P.M. do you know where your kids are? A few years back, this was a public service announcement repeated frequently on the network television stations. One of the important jobs of a parish community is to know the children of the parish. Parents and godparents of children are obliged to form their children in the faith and practice of a Christian life by word and example. By virtue of his office, the pastor is obliged to provide for the catechetical formation of adults, young people, and children. (Canons 774, 776) A first step to providing support for parents and education for the children is to account for the children living in the parish.

U.S. Census report 4B, distributed to the Pastors in July, 2002, accounts for all the children under 18 living in the parish at the time of the 2000 census and the living arrangements that they were in. This includes those living with both parents, just their father or mother, a grandparent, other relative or non relative, or in a group home.

The part of the Annual Pastoral Report entitled Report on Catholic Education asks parishes to account for all Catholic children in public schools, non-Catholic private schools, or Catholic schools other than

the parish school. When these numbers are added to the parish school enrollment, they comprise all of the children that the parish knows about and is able to count.

The number of parish children in public and non Catholic private schools can be compared to the number enrolled in the parish religious education program. The difference represents an opportunity for different or better parish programs to attract the missing children and their parents to religious education programs.

This number of parish children known to be enrolled in some school can also be compared with the number of babies baptized at the time the children were born. For example, children in elementary school (K-6) in 2000 were born between 1989 and 1995. Taking into consideration the number of children who may move in and out of the parish before starting school, this can give the parish a very rough estimate of the number of children to be accounted for. In the Archdiocese of Philadelphia, we estimate that parishes are able to identify the enrollment status of about 88% of children in the elementary grade levels (K-8) and 61.8% of the high school age children. At any point in time, about 75% of the elementary age children are enrolled in Catholic schools or some type of Catholic religious instruction--only 40.4 % of the estimated number of high school children are enrolled. How does your parish compare?

Finally, by looking at the total number of children living in the parish on U.S. Census Report 4B, the parish can consider the share of all school age children who are known by the parish. This may provide opportunities for evangelization by addressing the needs of the children and, through them, their parents.

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Take a Closer Look

In addition to the viewing U.S. Census reports on the Archdiocesan web site, you can create your own reports by accessing the American Factfinder section of the Census Bureau's site. Go to <http://factfinder.census.gov> and click on "Enter a Street Address." After you enter the requested information and click the "Go" button, you are prompted to select a geographic area and click "Go." This action returns a screen showing all of the census information that is available for the area you selected. Click on one of the links to explore the different maps and data elements that are available.

Upon viewing a data table, you can modify your request to choose a different table, data set or geography. Click on the "Change Selections" menu item and choose the element you want to change.

Some of the data sets that may prove valuable are:

- **Census 2000 Summary File 1 (SF1)** - contains basic demographic information asked of all respondents
- **1990 Summary Tape File 3 (STF3)** - basic demographic information asked of all respondents in the 1990 Census
- **Census 2000 Summary File 3 (SF3)** - detailed demographic information asked of a sample of the population [scheduled for release by the end of September 2002]

By using American Factfinder, you can obtain more detailed demographic breakdowns and locate demographic data for smaller communities within your parish.

If you have questions concerning the data or how to access it, contact Robert Parfet, Assistant Director of the Office for Research and Planning at 215-587-3545 or resplan@adphila.org

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Same mission, many approaches

Pastoral planning is the work of disciples who are committed to the renewal of themselves and the Church, and open to the guidance and movement of the Holy Spirit.

Pastoral planning is taking place in many dioceses throughout the world and resources on the web may offer new ways of looking at pastoral issues. Different perspectives can help pastoral planners to approach their cyclical work with energy and freshness.

Other Websites with support for pastoral planning:

www.usccb.org United States Conference of Catholic Bishops
www.georgetown.edu/research/cara .. Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate
www.cppcd.org Conference for Pastoral Planning and Council Development
www.cppcd.org/crf Catholic Research Forum (sponsored by CPPCD)
www.west.net/fischer Parish Pastoral Councils
www.pepparish.org Parish Evaluation Project
www.ncls.org National Church Life Survey

■ Mailing list

The Office for Research and Planning has a mailing list for those who wish to receive notice of new pastoral planning resources and statistical information, either by electronic or regular mail. ■ Please pass this information on to parish staff, members of Parish Pastoral Council and leaders of parish organizations. They can contact the Office for Research and Planning at 215-587-3545 or resplan@adphila.org to request that their name be added to our mailing list.

Volume 2, Number 2 • FALL 2002

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Published by the
Office for Research & Planning
Archdiocese of Philadelphia

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Transitions:

When parish groups reconvene after a summer break, there has usually been some change in the membership. How are new members oriented to their role and to the on-going work of the group? How can the experiences of members who are leaving a parish group be used to improve and strengthen it?

As parish organizations begin their meetings, members may feel a bit unsettled and not have a sense of why. It may be beneficial for the leader of the parish organization to remind them that any change in membership affects the dynamics of a group. Adjustments will need to be made. How will the group compensate for the loss of the talents of the outgoing member? How will the group utilize the gifts of the new member?

Orienting New Members

In some parishes, a member of the parish staff and/or the leader of the parish organization meet with new members to explain their new role as well as the structure and responsibilities of this parish organization. They review how this organization helps the parish to live out its mission. During this orientation session, they also discuss how the organization tends to operate (the frequency, length, location and focus of meetings), give a summary of the issues addressed and the decisions made during the previous year (perhaps by sharing minutes from last year's

"The Lord will guard your coming and going both now and forever." Psalm 121:8

meetings) and briefly go over the issues that will be important in the coming year. This meeting also provides an opportunity for new members to ask questions, clarify their understanding of their role and learn how this parish group fits into the overall organization of the parish.

In some parishes, all of the members of a parish organization welcome and orient new members. By sharing responsibility for the orientation of new members, each member of the group can reflect on their experiences of the past year and their hopes for the coming year. All present have a chance to hear, as a group, a review of the past year and their expectations for their current work.

New members may find it beneficial to have a written outline of their new roles and responsibilities. This could also include the expectations of the leader concerning their performance in this service to the parish.

In some parishes, orientation takes place on a more informal basis or it is assumed that the new members are bright and will soon understand what it is all about.

Farewell... but not yet

Most parishes groups find wonderful ways to express their gratitude to those who are completing their service in a particular role. Outgoing members receive gifts, plaques or

other symbols of appreciation for the time and talent that they have shared with their parish. An additional way of honoring their contribution to the parish may be to ask them to give just a little more time. This request may sound pushy, and you may wonder: haven't they given enough? In reality, there is something else that the parish still needs from them. It is feedback on their experience of being a member of a parish organization.

Exit interviews can help to strengthen parish organizations. Outgoing members can share their experiences, both positive and negative. They can also be asked about their personal growth and reflect on what they learned about themselves, the organization and their parish as a result of their service on a parish board or their participation in a parish ministry. Those who are leaving a parish group seldom cease to be involved in service to the parish, therefore this new understanding may soon be carried to another activity within the parish.

Outgoing members could also be asked to assist with the orientation of new members. They can be a wonderful resource for answering the questions that new members may have about their role and responsibilities. They may just be waiting to be asked!

the date

Training to Support Pastoral Planning

FALL SESSION

Developing Facilitation Skills for Parish Meetings

Facilitators can help parish groups to share ideas, test assumptions, set criteria, resolve conflicts, develop plans and make quality decisions.

Sessions will provide instruction concerning the dynamics of working groups and group decision making as well as training in intervention strategies and helping groups to reach consensus.

Saturdays,
Oct. 5,

Oct. 26 & Nov. 9

Archdiocesan Office Center
222 North 17th Street
in Philadelphia

Each session begins at
9:30 am and concludes at
12:30 pm.

Free Parking is available.

**FEE IS \$25.00
REGISTRATION IS
REQUIRED
To Register,
Call the Office for
Research & Planning
(215) 587-3545**

For consideration:

How are the "comings and goings" of members handled by organizations in your parish?
What have been the results?



Parish Pastoral Council's Annual Assessment (Continued from page 1)

development of the parish community. To continue the work that has gone before is good stewardship and it respects the work of these dedicated people. As a part of this ongoing process, Parish Pastoral Councils need routinely to:

- ① review what is being done,
- ② consider whether what is being done is moving the parish to-

ward its stated goals,

③ develop objectives for the next year to continue to accomplish their goals.

Those implementing the pastoral plan (staff and parishioners) will need to understand why they are being asked to assess their efforts. Many implementers are not members of the Parish Pastoral Council

and may need some education/training in order to place their implementation efforts in the context of pastoral planning. They will need to understand the purpose of this assessment that it is a steering mechanism for the ongoing renewal of the parish and a means to help the parish pastoral council stay aware of what is happening in the parish.

Help for parishes that want to engage in the annual review of the parish pastoral plan include Mary Gindhart, Coordinator of Parish Pastoral Councils Program (215-587-3694), Evelyn Brannan Tarpey in the Office for Research and Planning (215-587-3545) and the Archdiocesan web site at www.archphila.org.



The Importance of Prayer at all Parish Meetings

As the Summer ends, many parish groups resume their meetings. In planning for the coming year, many groups ask themselves "what elements of our meetings do we wish to improve?" One essential part of meetings that might get overlooked is the prayer.

"Again, (amen,) I say to you, if two of you agree on earth about anything for which they are to pray, it shall be granted to them by my heavenly Father. For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them." *Matt 18:19-20*

The Lord promises His presence in a gathering of His People. Prayer is a reminder of this assurance. Prayer unites human efforts with divine guidance. It also strengthens the unity of those praying together. Prayer opens people's minds and hearts to God's will for them, both as individuals and as a parish community.

Sharing prayer helps to remind people of what they hold in common: their faith, baptism and call to holiness. It is important that parish groups pray together.

Prayer at the start of a meeting helps to quiet the mind and spirit. Participants have a chance to put aside the cares and worries of the day and to focus on their reason for com-

ing together.

It is good to acknowledge that everyone has put something else aside to be present at the meeting. Ask God to bless all that has been put aside and all that will take place at the meeting.

Sharing Responsibility

By sharing the responsibility to prepare the prayer for meetings, some members are given the opportunity to try something new. This arrangement also lightens the responsibilities of those who are most often asked to prepare the prayer. Hopefully, sharing responsibility for prayer will expose all of the members of the group to different styles of prayer.

Inviting a Group to Prayer:

As a group comes together to work and plan, it is important to remember that people will need to quiet their minds from the concerns and demands of the day. They may need to have some time to remind themselves of God's presence and center themselves.

A gentle invitation can help to quiet people and prepare them for prayer.

Trust in the Lord

Above all, trust in the slow work of God
We are quite naturally impatient in everything
to reach the end without delay.
We should like to skip the intermediate stages.
We are impatient of being on the way to something
unknown, something new.
And yet it is the law of all progress
that it is made by passing through
some stages of instability -
and that it may take a very long time.

And so I think it is with you,
your ideas mature gradually - let them grow.
Let them shape themselves, without undue haste.

Don't try to force them on,
as though you could be today what time
(that is to say, grace and circumstances
acting on your own good will)
will make of you tomorrow.

Only God could say what this new spirit
gradually forming within you will be.
Give Our Lord the benefit of believing
that His hand is leading you,
and accept the anxiety of feeling yourself
in suspense and incomplete.

Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, SJ

Phrases like: "Let's take a moment to quiet ourselves and ...
...remember that we are always in God's presence."
...recall that what we are about is the work of God."
...ask for the grace to be open to God's will in our lives."

Prayer at Difficult Moments

There may be times in meetings when people will be experiencing a great deal of tension, are unable to reach consensus or express reluctance to make a difficult decision. At times like these, it is often beneficial to pause and pray together. The prayer may ask for peace of mind, courage to continue or the wisdom to know God's will for the parish community. Sharing prayer at difficult moments

helps to relieve negative feelings that may be in the room and to remind those gathered of God's presence with them. Prayer can also help that group to remember all that they hold in common.

Prayer at the End of Meetings

It is important to end a meeting with prayer. The members can thank God for the grace present at this meeting and in all of the other aspects of life, and ask His continued blessing on the parish. The members may also wish to pray for the courage and strength to accomplish the work that they have been given to do. "**Entrust your works to the Lord, and your plans will succeed.**"

Proverbs 16:3

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Take A Broader Look: Worldwide Catholic Statistics

Worldwide Catholic population reached 1.45 billion by the end of 2000, up 12 million over the previous year, excluding places like China where Catholics cannot be accurately counted and where there may be up to 5 million more.

■ Despite the increase, the percentage of Catholics in the global population dropped from 17.8 percent in 1978, at the beginning of the pontificate of Pope John Paul II, to just under 17.3 percent in 2000.

■ The fastest church growth continues to occur in Africa, which has seen its Catholic population jump nearly 5 percent during the

single year of 2000, from 124 million to 130 million. But the total number of Catholic in Europe dropped 1.5 million last year, even as the continent's population grew by 18 million. Europe is the only area of the world where the Catholic population is declining.

■ The number of diocesan priests worldwide went up slightly in 2000, to 265,781. The number of permanent deacons has enjoyed a steady increase to nearly 28,000 in 2000. There are continuing and significant declines in the worldwide number of religious priests, brothers and sisters.

Source: The CARA Report +