# Table of Contents

[ROLE OF THE PARISH CORE TEAM 2](#_Toc431461404)

[WAYS TO INVOLVE PARISHIONERS IN FAITH IN OUR FUTURE 4](#_Toc431461405)

[SAMPLE A: A PARISH SURVEY 6](#_Toc431461406)

[SAMPLE B: A PARISH SURVEY 8](#_Toc431461407)

[PARISH EVALUATION FORMS 13](#_Toc431461408)

[Sacramental Life 14](#_Toc431461409)

[Prayerful Reflection 15](#_Toc431461410)

[Criteria 16](#_Toc431461411)

[Evangelization, Catechesis and Catholic SCHOOLS 18](#_Toc431461412)

[Prayerful Reflection 19](#_Toc431461413)

[Criteria 20](#_Toc431461414)

[Communal Life 26](#_Toc431461415)

[Prayerful Reflection 27](#_Toc431461416)

[Criteria 28](#_Toc431461417)

[Stewardship and Leadership 32](#_Toc431461418)

[Prayerful Reflection 33](#_Toc431461419)

[Criteria 34](#_Toc431461420)

[PARISH SUMMARY REPORT FORM 40](#_Toc431461421)

[PARISH INPUT RECORD 43](#_Toc431461422)

[PARISH COMMUNICATION GUIDELINES 44](#_Toc431461423)

[PARISH COMMUNICATION SAMPLES 51](#_Toc431461424)

[ROLE OF DIOCESAN PARISH FACILITATORS](#_Toc431461425) 54

# The Role of the Parish Core Team

## WHAT IS THE PARISH CORE TEAM?

The Parish Core Team is made up of the pastor/administrator and four parish leaders, including one of the trustees, who the pastor/administrator selects to help lead the planning process in the parish and to contribute to the work of the cohort. Members of the staff are usually not on the core team.

## WHAT IS THE ROLE OF THE CORE TEAM?

The Core Team has six primary roles. These include:

1. To lead the parish through the planning process.
2. To be responsible for the parish’s evaluation of itself according to Criteria established by the Diocese.
3. To be accountable for the parish summary report and verification of data.
4. To participate in cohort planning and in suggesting a model or models for the most effective way parishes can work together in the future.
5. To respond to the Diocesan Planning Commission’s Preliminary Recommendations for their cohort.
6. To ensure support of Bishop O’Connell’s decision for their parish and cohort.

## WHAT IS THE ROLE OF CORE TEAM CHAIR?

1. Schedule meetings and ensure that there is a working agenda.
2. Convene the group and lead prayer or ask someone to be prayer leader.
3. Act as a communication link with other parish leadership groups.
4. Ensure that the parish as a whole is aware of the work of the Core Team through on-going communications.
5. Keep the group on task and ensure that the group accomplishes its task according to the timeline.
6. In cohort meetings, work with other Core Team Chairs to facilitate the work and accomplish the tasks needed to produce a Suggestion Form to be sent to the Diocesan Planning Commission.
7. Work with Cohort Team Chairs to complete a Response Form based on the Preliminary Recommendations sent to the cohort by the Diocesan Planning Commission.
8. Ensure that there is an implementation plan in place after Bishop O’Connell announces his final decisions.

## WHAT IS THE ROLE OF THE CORE TEAM SECRETARY?

* Have access to a computer and the internet.
* Keep notes or minutes from each meeting and distribute them appropriately.
* Ensure that the various forms are properly filled out and presented in a timely manner to the appropriate groups.
* Ensure that there is on-going communication with the parish on appropriate aspects of the work of the Parish Core Team and the Cohort Core Team.

# Ways to Involve Parishioners

# in *Faith in our future*

## PURPOSES

1. To involve parishioners in learning about and assessing the Criteria for Planning based on parish life.
2. To help enhance the vitality of parish life by planning for the future.

## POSSIBLE APPROACHES

**Approach #1 – Parish Assembly**

In this approach, the Core Team studies the Criteria in the following manner.

1. The pastor/administrator works with others on the core team and appoints a parish self-study group to oversee the evaluation process.
2. The Parish Self Study Group convenes two Parish Assemblies or Town Hall meetings to help assess how the parish is measuring up according to the Criteria. One meeting would assess half the areas, while the second meeting would assess the other half.
3. Assistance in helping to plan Parish Assemblies or Town Hall meetings will be provided by The Reid Group upon request, with the help of diocesan parish facilitators.
4. The Parish Self Study Group prepares a draft report for review by the Core Team and the Pastoral Council, based on the input from the Assemblies.
5. The Core Team prepares the final evaluation of the Criteria and completes the Parish Evaluation of Criteria for Planning forms. This evaluation will be used in Cohort deliberations and submitted in the Cohort portfolio to the Diocesan Planning Commission.

**Approach #2 – Task Force**

In this approach, the Core Team studies the Criteria in the following manner:

1. The pastor/administrator works with others on the core team and appoints a task force.
2. The task force studies all nine Criteria and assesses them based on their knowledge and experience of the parish.
3. The task force consults with committees in the parish and other parish leaders in doing the evaluation.
4. The task force prepares a draft report for review by the Core Team and the Pastoral Council and also arranges to obtain input from the parish at large.
5. The Core Team prepares the final evaluation of the Criteria and completes the Parish Evaluation of Criteria for Planning forms. This evaluation will be used in Cohort deliberations and submitted to the Diocesan Planning Commission.

**Approach #3 –Work Groups**

In this approach, the Core Team and Parish study the Criteria in the following manner:

1. The pastor/administrator works with others on the Core Team and appoints a Work Group for each of the four areas to be studied.
2. The work group studies the Criteria based on their knowledge and experience of the parish.
3. The work group prepares a draft report for the Core Team and the Parish Council.
4. The Core Team prepares the final evaluation of the Criteria and completes the Parish Evaluation of Criteria for Planning forms. This evaluation will be used in Cohort deliberations and submitted to the Diocesan Planning Commission.

**Approach #4 – Parish Survey**

In this approach, the Core Team works with a small sub-committee to design, collate, and analyze a parish survey to assess the parishioners’ thoughts on parish ministry and function. The survey questions should be related to the criteria for evaluation and the accompanying indicators which help to identify and make concrete the various aspects of your parish ministries.

1. The survey could be developed to be primarily used online, using a format such as *Survey Monkey* or the survey could be mailed or distributed to the parishioners in hard copy with a deadline and place for returning it.
2. Many parishes choose to do a combination of both with the primary focus being online.
3. For those who do not have access or capacity to deal with the online survey, printed copies are provided. See Sample which follows.

Two sample surveys follow. These must be adapted for use in your parish and in this ***Faith in Our Future*** initiative.

# Sample A: Parish Survey

## INTRODUCTION

These questions can be included in a written survey or are effective for small groups meeting in homes or in meetings after Mass. These questions may also be used for an online survey. The summaries are useful in completing the Parish Evaluation of Criteria for Planning form.

1. What do you appreciate most about your parish?
2. What are a few areas where you hope to grow stronger?
3. What is important to you about liturgy and why do you care?
4. What are some ways liturgy and the sacramental life of the parish could be enhanced?
5. What opportunities do you see in your parish to increase the effectiveness of evangelization and life-long religious education?
6. What would it take to create a strong awareness of the need for vocations to ordained ministry, religious life, and the lay ministry?
7. What bold steps might we take to enhance our personal and our parish’s stewardship of time, talent, and treasure?
8. What outreach challenges can we embrace to make a positive difference in our parish, our region, and ultimately the world?
9. What needs our immediate attention in terms of staffing the parish and facilities?
10. What are two or three hopes you have for the future of the Catholic community in your area?
11. How do you envision working with other parishes to create a viable future of Catholic life in your community, especially given finances, demographics, and the diminished number of priests?
12. How can we support each other in taking the next steps in the *Faith in Our Future* process?

# Sample B: A Parish Survey

Please help us evaluate our Parish Ministries by filling out the survey and returning it to: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ by \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

*Please check the correct column(s)*

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **SACRAMENTAL LIFE OF THE PARISH** | | | | | | | | | | | |
|  | **­­Excellent** | | | | **Good** | | **Fair** | | **This area could be improved by:** | | |
| Sunday liturgy |  | | | |  | |  | |  | | |
| Sacrament of Penance |  | | | |  | |  | |  | | |
| RCIA |  | | | |  | |  | |  | | |
| First Eucharist and Penance |  | | | |  | |  | |  | | |
| Funerals |  | | | |  | |  | |  | | |
| Weddings |  | | | |  | |  | |  | | |
| Confirmation |  | | | |  | |  | |  | | |
| Sacrament of the Sick |  | | | |  | |  | |  | | |
| Infant Baptism |  | | | |  | |  | |  | | |
| Devotions |  | | | |  | |  | |  | | |
| Training of  sacramental ministers |  | | | |  | |  | |  | | |
| Music Ministry |  | | | |  | |  | |  | | |
| Other (specify) |  | | | |  | |  | |  | | |
| EVANGELIZATION, CATECHESIS AND CATHOLIC SCHOOLS | | | | | | | | | | | |
|  | | **­­Excellent** | | | **Good** | | **Fair** | | | **This area could be improved by:** | |
| The parish understands the church’s vision of evangelization. | |  | | |  | |  | | |  | |
| The parish is warm and welcoming. | |  | | |  | |  | | |  | |
| A comprehensive and well integrated catechetical program exists for all ages of parishioners. | |  | | |  | |  | | |  | |
| The needs of youth and young adults are addressed effectively. | |  | | |  | |  | | |  | |
| Parental programs are strong, well-attended and meet the needs of today’s parents. | |  | | |  | |  | | |  | |
| The parish supports Catholic elementary and high school education. | |  | | |  | |  | | |  | |
| Vocation awareness is integrated in all catechetical programs. | |  | | |  | |  | | |  | |
| COMMUNAL LIFE | | | | | | | | | | | |
|  | | | **­­Excellent** | | | **Good** | | **Fair** | | | **This area could be improved by:** |
| Parishioners are educated and formed in stewardship where all disciples share their time, talent, and treasure. | | |  | | |  | |  | | |  |
| The parish has an active stewardship committee. | | |  | | |  | |  | | |  |
| The parishioners are educated on justice issues and encouraged to advocate to those in need. | | |  | | |  | |  | | |  |
| The parish reaches out to serve people in need. | | |  | | |  | |  | | |  |
| STEWARDSHIP & LEADERSHIP | | | | | | | | | | | |
|  | | | | **­­Excellent** | | **Good** | | **Fair** | | | **This area could be improved by:** |
| The pastor/administrator, staff, parish council and finance council exert effective leadership that embodies stewardship and points to the future. | | | |  | |  | |  | | |  |
| Prayer is integrated into all parish meetings. | | | |  | |  | |  | | |  |
| Good communication between pastor/administrator, staff, council, committee and parishioners is a hallmark of this parish. | | | |  | |  | |  | | |  |
| The parish has a well-organized finance council. | | | |  | |  | |  | | |  |
| The parish has a balanced budget and reserve funds for extraordinary expenses and maintenance. | | | |  | |  | |  | | |  |
| The parish has met its diocesan financial obligations. | | | |  | |  | |  | | |  |
| The parish is taking into account the diminishing number of priests as it plans for the future. | | | |  | |  | |  | | |  |
| The parish has worked collaboratively with neighboring parishes. | | | |  | |  | |  | | |  |
| The parish has a well-trained and compensated staff. | | | |  | |  | |  | | |  |
| The parish has adequate and handicapped accessible facilities to accomplish its mission. | | | |  | |  | |  | | |  |
| Is there anything else you’d like to say? | | | | | | | | | | | |
|  | | | | | | | | | | | |

# Parish Evaluations Forms

# Parish Evaluation of Criteria for Planning

Please use the pages that follow to do two things:

Initiate

To ***initiate*** prayer and faith-sharing experiences based on the major topics of the Criteria for the Planning Process.

Evaluate

To ***evaluate*** your parish’s experience in the following areas:

* Sacramental Life
* Evangelization, Catechesis & Catholic Schools
* Communal Life
* Stewardship & Leadership

Your evaluations will be used for cohort planning.

Name of your parish: City:

**Names of other parishes in cohort to which your Parish belongs:**

Name of your cohort parish: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ City:

Name of your cohort parish: City:

Name of your cohort parish: City:

Name of your cohort parish: City:

Name of your cohort parish:

# Parish Evaluation of Criteria for Planning

# Sacramental Life

* Eucharist as Source and Summit of Life
* Diversity of Ministries
* Parishioners are Well Trained
* Music is Seen as an Integral Part of Liturgy

The Christian faithful are those who have been incorporated in Christ through baptism and, thus, constituted as the people of God. As sharers in Christ’s priestly, prophetic, and royal office in their own manner, they are called to exercise the mission which God has entrusted to the Church. The Christian is called to fulfill the mission in the world, according to each one’s state in life. *(Canon 204)*

Basic to the mission is the spiritual foundation of each Christian. The individual Christian finds himself/herself in a parish community where that person is nourished, supported, and formed -- especially by the Eucharist. These elements are found in prayer and worship, as well as in the formation for discipleship which takes place in communion with other parishioners, the Diocese of Trenton and the universal Church.

The spirituality of communion is reflected in a leadership style that promotes co-responsibility in mission and is respectful of the contributions of all.

**As you evaluate your parish, please consider the use of the word parish to include support for schools as well as all parish ministries.**

Name of your parish: City:

**Names of other parishes in cohort to which your Parish belongs:**

Name of your cohort parish: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ City:

Name of your cohort parish: City:

Name of your cohort parish: City:

Name of your cohort parish: City:

Name of your cohort parish: City:

### Prayerful Reflection | Sacramental Life

We are on a faith journey as we begin to plan how we will reflect the mission of Jesus Christ in the future. Each parish is an expression of the mission and ministry of Jesus. We gather to further His mission and to continue to prepare for the reign of God on earth.

**Opening:** Begin the session by inviting each person to bless him or herself, making the Sign of the Cross with the Holy Water at the table.

We gather in the name of Christ. We remember his life, death and resurrection and his sending the Spirit to be with us until the end of time.

**Reading:** Planning is about seeing. It is about seeing all the good we have done. It is about seeing how God’s grace has been present in our lives and in our parish. Read and reflect on the following Gospel passage:

*“When they arrived at Bethsaida,*

*they brought to him a blind man and begged him to touch him.*

*He took the blind man by the hand and led him outside the village.*

*Putting spittle on his eyes he laid his hands on him and asked, ‘Do you see anything?’*

*Looking up he replied, ‘I see people looking like trees and walking.’*

*Then he laid hands on his eyes a second time and he saw clearly;*

*his sight was restored and he could see everything distinctly.*

*Then he sent him home and said, ‘Do not even go into the village.’”*

-Mark 8:22-26

**For reflection and sharing:**

Choose one or two questions which particularly speak to you.

1. On your faith journey when were you blind to God’s presence? As you look back when were you most aware of God’s presence? Who or what helped you to see?
2. What role has the parish community played in your faith journey? When have you felt most connected to others on your journey?
3. What do you think are the core values of your parish community?
4. What collaborative projects have happened in your parish?
5. What do you think are the “blind spots” in your parish?
6. What three hopes do you have for your parish in the future?
7. What gifts do you bring to your parish community?

**Pray the Lord’s Prayer.**

Write any notes you want to keep from your reflection and sharing.

## Sacramental Life

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Criterion 1:**  The Eucharist is the source and summit of the Christian life. The Sunday celebration of the Eucharist is, therefore, the center of parish life, and should be given the primary focus of the parish’s attention, energy and resources. Following appropriate preparation, the other sacraments should be celebrated with fitting dignity. | | | |
| **Indicators:** | **Present Activity:** | **Rating Scale:**  Rate your parish’s present activity    **1 = very good**  **2 = adequate**  **3 = needs improvement**  **4 = inadequate** | **Notes for Planning:** |
| 1. Number of Saturday/Sunday Masses is appropriate for the size of the congregation. |  |  |  |
| 1. Diversity of ministries – each serving in the proper liturgical role, and one role at a time. |  |  |  |
| 1. The clergy, music ministry, readers and ushers all working together to bring about the full, conscious and active participation of the assembly.   *(Active singing, responses, listening, praying--not spectators)*. |  |  |  |
| 1. Homilies are well prepared, relevant and engaging; they help the faithful to apply the Word of God to their own lives. |  |  |  |
| 1. Each year, the attendance at Masses increasing.   *(Indicating that people are actively engaged in the worship experience, and they bring their family/friends).* |  |  |  |
| 1. Celebrations of the other sacraments all derive from, and point to, participation in the Sunday assembly and the celebration of the Eucharist on a regular basis. |  |  |  |
| 1. Parishes with more than one language group develop strong Sunday celebrations and also devotional practices in each language – and—develop a way to pray together for the Triduum and other special celebrations throughout the year so that they have the experience of being one Body in Christ. |  |  |  |
| 1. Parish clergy and pastoral care ministers provide the sacraments of the Eucharist, Penance and Anointing of the Sick for patients of a hospital, residents of nursing homes and correctional facilities within its territory regularly. |  |  |  |

## Parish Evaluation of Criteria for Planning

# Evangelization, Catechesis

# & Catholic SCHOOLS

* Evangelization
* Catechetical Formation
* Catholic School Education
* Methods of Communication

Evangelization according to Pope Paul VI is the reason the Church exists. The purpose of the Church is to bring the good news of Jesus Christ, what He stood for, what He did, what He empowered us to do for all humanity. Programs of lifelong education and catechetical formation based on the Catholic faith and teaching, including sacramental preparation and Catholic schools**,** shall be available through cooperative efforts between and among parishes.

**As you evaluate your parish, please consider the use of the word parish to include support for schools as well as all parish ministries.**

Name of your parish: City:

**Names of other parishes in cohort to which your Parish belongs:**

Name of your cohort parish: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ City:

Name of your cohort parish: City:

Name of your cohort parish: City:

Name of your cohort parish: City:

Name of your cohort parish: City:

## Prayerful Reflection | Evangelization, Catechesis & Catholic SCHOOLS

We are on a faith journey as we begin to plan how we will reflect the mission of Jesus Christ in education and formation. Each parish is an expression of the mission and ministry of Jesus through its education and formation programs and activities as well as its evangelization efforts. We gather to further his mission and to continue to build the reign of God on earth.

**Opening:** Begin the session by inviting each person to bless him or herself, making the Sign of the Cross with the Holy Water at the table.

We gather in the name of Christ. We remember his life, death and resurrection and his sending the Spirit to be with us until the end of time.

**Reading:** Evangelization, Catechesis and Catholic Schools are essential parish ministries. Jesus, particularly in Matthew’s Gospel, is the teacher *par excellence*. Listen as the Gospel is proclaimed:

*“When he saw the crowds, he went up the mountain, and after he had sat down,*

*his disciples came to him. He began to teach them, saying:*

*‘Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.*

*Blessed are they who mourn, for they will be comforted.*

*Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the land.*

*Blessed are they who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be satisfied.*

*Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy.*

*Blessed are the clean of heart, for they will see God.*

*Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.*

*Blessed are they who are persecuted for the sake of righteousness,*

*for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.’” (Matthew 5:1-10)*

**For reflection and sharing:**

Choose several questions which appeal to you for sharing.

1. How does your parish educate and form the community to live out the beatitudes?
2. How does it educate and form children and adults at various stages of their faith life journey?
3. How does your parish demonstrate that it values lifelong faith formation and education?
4. What gifts do you contribute to your parish’s faith formation and education programs and processes?
5. How is your parish an evangelizing parish?

**Pray the Lord’s Prayer.**

Write any notes you want to keep from your reflection and sharing.

## Evangelization, Catechesis & Catholic SCHOOLS

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Criterion 2:**  Every activity undertaken by the parish community is “suitably channeled for the evangelization of today’s world rather than self-preservation.” *(Evangelii Gaudium, # 27).* | | | |
| **Indicators:** | **Present Activity** | **Rating Scale:**  Rate your parish’s present activity    **1 = very good**  **2 = adequate**  **3 = needs improvement**  **4 = inadequate** | **Notes for Planning** |
| 1. The Parish is growing.   New parishioners join the parish; school and/or religious education enrollments are increasing, and baptisms exceed funerals. |  |  |  |
| 1. The registration of new parishioners is a personal process involving more than just completing forms. |  |  |  |
| 1. Baptisms, Godparent/Sponsor forms, Weddings, Funerals are appreciated as opportunities for establishing relationships with the individuals and families that are critical to the evangelization process. Making arrangements and preparations are organized accordingly. |  |  |  |
| 1. The Parish has a developed RCIA team and a year-round process for the initiation of adults and children over the age of 7 years. |  |  |  |
| 1. The Parish offers practical ways for parishioners to grow in their life with Christ; includes Bible Study, Small Group Faith-Sharing, Retreats / Programs, Book studies, Prayer groups, Spiritual reading and recordings that can be used independently. |  |  |  |
| 1. There is intentional outreach that is bringing Inactive Catholics back to regular practice. |  |  |  |

## Evangelization, Catechesis & Catholic SCHOOLS

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Criterion 3:**  Beginning in the Catholic home and continuing with Catholic schools and/or religious education programs, life-long faith formation is undertaken with enthusiasm and the responsibility is shared by the whole parish community. Adult faith formation is a critical part of this endeavor. | | | |
| **Indicators:** | **Present Activity** | **Rating Scale:**  Rate your parish’s present activity    **1 = very good**  **2 = adequate**  **3 = needs improvement**  **4 = inadequate** | **Notes for Planning** |
| 1. Catechetical programs attend to all six tasks: Promoting knowledge of the faith, Liturgical education, Moral formation, Teaching to pray, Education for Community Life, Missionary initiation. |  |  |  |
| 1. Religious Education and Sacramental Preparation of Children is accomplished in cooperation with, and in support of, the parents as primary educators in the faith. |  |  |  |
| 1. The Parish has a professionally-prepared, qualified Catechetical Leader; and well-trained catechists who actively give witness to the faith by the lives they live themselves. |  |  |  |
| 1. The Parish is explicit in its encouragement to enroll children in Catholic Schools, and makes its commitment to Catholic schools concrete through ongoing financial contributions *(subsidy or co-sponsorship)*. |  |  |  |
| 1. The Parish is developing a Comprehensive Youth Ministry model with a designated Youth Ministry Leader and Team, and budgets appropriately for it; or collaborates with area parishes to bring about the same. |  |  |  |
| 1. The Parish undertakes continuous Adult Faith Formation Programs for all ages and phases of life. |  |  |  |
| 1. Provision is made to accommodate non-English speaking Catholics in their native language, if not at the parish then at a nearly parish with particular ministry for that group. |  |  |  |

## Evangelization, Catechesis & Catholic SCHOOLS

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Criterion 4:**  The Parish utilizes effective methods of communication, especially social media, to build community, to inform and motivate parishioners and to attract newcomers. | | | |
| **Indicators:** | **Present Activity** | **Rating Scale:**  Rate your parish’s present activity    **1 = very good**  **2 = adequate**  **3 = needs improvement**  **4 = inadequate** | **Notes for Planning** |
| 1. The telephone at the parish is answered by a person during normal business hours. |  |  |  |
| 1. A simple-to-follow telephone system provides mass times, announcements, and voicemail access when parish offices are closed. |  |  |  |
| 1. Phone messages are returned within 24 hours. |  |  |  |
| 1. The Parish website is well-developed, inviting, and user-friendly. Information is kept fresh; updated and content is reviewed weekly. |  |  |  |
| 1. The Parish website includes a link to the Diocese of Trenton website. |  |  |  |
| 1. The Parish uses the weekly bulletin to educate and inform parishioners. |  |  |  |
| 1. The Parish utilizes social media effectively to engage parishioners and visitors. |  |  |  |
| 1. The Parish uses methods for group communication: email distribution, text-message distribution, or phone message delivery system. |  |  |  |
| 1. Signage and advertisements communicate a consistent message of welcome. |  |  |  |
| 1. The Parish communications methods utilize English and any other language spoken by a significant population within the parish. |  |  |  |

**Parish Evaluation of Criteria for Planning**

# Communal Life

* Outreach with Compassion to Individuals and Families
* Unity in the Midst of Diversity
* Being Welcoming, Inclusive and Hospitable

*“The Church’s social doctrine is an integral part of her evangelizing ministry.”*

(*Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*, no. 66)

*“The Church's social doctrine ‘is itself a valid instrument of evangelization’ and is born of the always new meeting of the Gospel message and social life*. Understood in this way, this social doctrine is a distinctive way for the Church to carry out her ministry of the Word and her prophetic role. ‘In effect, to teach and to spread her social doctrine as pertains to the Church's evangelizing mission and is an essential part of the Christian message, since this doctrine points out the direct consequences of that message in the life of society and situates daily work and struggles for outreach in the context of bearing witness to Christ the Savior’ .” (*Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*, no. 67)

Part of the stewardship activity of the parish reflects the need to encourage the faithful to work for outreach based on Catholic Social Teachings. This includes offering direct service to those in need, working for respect life, attempting to eliminate the causes of poverty and living by the values of the Gospel.

Advocacy is another component of building a more just world. Advocating with other religious groups to elected officials for just laws can be a powerful and successful ecumenical effort to alleviate issues affecting the marginalized and poor.

**As you evaluate your parish, please consider the use of the word parish to include support for schools as well as all parish ministries.**

Name of your parish: City:

**Names of other parishes in cohort to which your Parish belongs:**

Name of your cohort parish: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ City:

Name of your cohort parish: City:

Name of your cohort parish: City:

Name of your cohort parish: City:

Name of your cohort parish: City:

## Prayerful Reflection | Communal Life

Service and outreach are constitutive elements of the Gospel. It is impossible to be a disciple without reaching out to others and thus preparing for the reign of God. On our faith journey we come across many needs of the human community and many ways to meet those needs. As a parish, how do we embrace a discipleship of service?

**Opening:** Begin the session by inviting each person to bless him or herself, making the Sign of the Cross with the Holy Water at the table.

We gather in the name of Christ. We remember his life, death and resurrection and his sending the Spirit to be with us until the end of time.

**Reading:** Serving God involves serving one’s neighbor. As we begin to evaluate how we reflect the Gospel mandate to serve, let us listen to the Word of God:

*“Then the king will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father!*

*Inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.*

*For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink,*

*a stranger and you welcomed me, naked and you clothed me,*

*ill and you cared for me, in prison and you visited me.'*

*Then the righteous will answer him and say,*

*‘Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you drink?*

*When did we see you a stranger and welcome you, or naked and clothe you?’*

*And the king will say to them in reply,*

*‘Amen, I say to you, whatever you did for one of these least brothers of mine,*

*you did for me.’”*

*(Matthew 25:34-38; 40)*

**For reflection and sharing:**

Choose one or two questions to share your reflections with your small group.

1. On your faith journey when have you seen needs and responded to them? Describe the situation?
2. What role has your parish community played in helping you to serve others?
3. What collaborative projects have you done in service of others?
4. What are three hopes that you have related to being a servant parish?
5. How familiar are you with Catholic social teachings?
6. How have you gotten involved in Respect Life issues?

**Pray the Lord’s Prayer.**

Write any notes you want to keep from your reflection and sharing.

## Communal Life

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Criterion 5:**  The Parish reaches out with compassion to individuals and families with particular needs. | | | |
| **Indicators:** | **Present Activity:** | **Rating Scale:**  Rate your parish’s present activity    **1 = very good**  **2 = adequate**  **3 = needs improvement**  **4 = inadequate** | **Notes for Planning:** |
| 1. The Parish nurtures marriages and encourages the family as the domestic church. |  |  |  |
| 1. Clergy and parishioners visit those who are sick or homebound, celebrate the Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick and bring Communion when requested. |  |  |  |
| 1. The Parish upholds the dignity of all human life from conception to natural death by its teaching, witness, and its advocacy efforts. |  |  |  |
| 1. The Parish provides care and companionship to the grieving, those caring for those who are ill or disabled and their family members, and assists those in need; or collaborates in ministry with surrounding parishes to accomplish the same. |  |  |  |
| 1. The Parish collaborates with those who minister on college campuses, and those who work in other Catholic ministries or organizations within their geographical area. |  |  |  |
| 1. The Parish is a “good neighbor” – participating in ecumenical, interfaith and civic initiatives in support of the common good. |  |  |  |

## Communal Life

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Criterion 6:**  Under the leadership of the pastor and pastoral team, the parishioners work to achieve a sense of unity within the parish, while appreciating the diversity of cultures, of experiences, and of worship preferences and styles. | | | |
| **Indicators:** | **Present Activity:** | **Rating Scale:**  Rate your parish’s present activity    **1 = very good**  **2 = adequate**  **3 = needs improvement**  **4 = inadequate** | **Notes for Planning:** |
| 1. The Parish is intentionally welcoming, inclusive and hospitable. |  |  |  |
| 1. The integration of groups into the parish, forming a community of communities—not isolated on their own, or assimilated into the general parish—is the goal toward which the parish is working. |  |  |  |
| 1. Clergy, parish staff, and key leaders are trained in intercultural competency. |  |  |  |
| 1. Ministry among non-English speaking Catholics extends beyond just the celebration of mass and is offered in other languages. |  |  |  |
| 1. Non-English speaking Catholics are treated as equal members of the parish. 2. Adequate resources are devoted to spiritual development and the development of leaders within each cultural group in the parish community. |  |  |  |

**Parish Evaluation of Criteria for Planning**

# Stewardship & Leadership

* Parish Leadership
* Stewardship
* Financial Stability
* Diminishing number of Priests
* Geographic Proximity and Mass attendance
* Adequate Staff and Adequate Facilities

The life of the parish is supported by its leadership as it plans for the future. The parish community’s commitment of time, talent, and treasure shall ensure proper and just fiscal administration, business, personnel, and property management in response to it. It is important that the Finance Council, the Pastor/Administrator and Pastoral Staff, and the Parish Council maintain a collaborative relationship. These areas of leadership must take responsibility for being effective in responding to the needs of parishioners.

**As you evaluate your parish, please consider the use of the word parish to include support for schools as well as all parish ministries.**

Name of your parish: City:

**Names of other parishes in cohort to which your Parish belongs:**

Name of your cohort parish: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ City:

Name of your cohort parish: City:

Name of your cohort parish: City:

Name of your cohort parish: City:

Name of your cohort parish: City:

## Prayerful Reflection | Stewardship & Leadership

The parish administrative function and structures serve the mission of the parish. One can have many wonderful ideas about mission, witness, and service but unless there is a way to make it work, the ideas are just that, ideas. Parishes that effectively witness to the Gospel are well organized and empower ministers to be people of Word, Worship and Service. The ministry of administration is essential to effective parishes.

**Opening:** Begin the session by inviting each person to bless him or herself, making the Sign of the Cross with the Holy Water at the table.

We gather in the name of Christ. We remember his life, death, resurrection and his sending the Spirit to be with us until the end of time.

**Reading:** In the Acts of the Apostles we read that as the community grew, the original disciples realized that they needed help in serving all the needs of the community, so they chose seven more people to serve. Listen as the reading from Acts is proclaimed.

*“At that time, as the number of disciples continued to grow,*

*the Hellenists complained against the Hebrews*

*because their widows were being neglected in the daily distribution.*

*So the Twelve called together the community of the disciples and said,*

*"It is not right for us to neglect the word of God to serve at table.*

*Brothers, select from among you seven reputable men,*

*filled with the Spirit and wisdom, whom we shall appoint to this task,*

*whereas we shall devote ourselves to prayer and to the ministry of the word.”*

*(Acts 6:1-4)*

**For reflection and sharing:** Choose one or two questions to share with your group.

1. When have you been asked to serve because the needs of the community were increasing?
2. What talents do you have for administration?
3. What gifts might you be able to contribute to the running of the parish?
4. What core values do you think those involved in administration should have?
5. Name three essential qualities you think someone who contributes in any way to the administration of a parish should have?

**Pray the Lord’s Prayer.**

Write any notes you want to keep from your reflection and sharing.

## Stewardship & Leadership

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Criterion 7:**  Members of the Parish identify/see themselves as disciples and practice stewardship; they express a sense of shared responsibility for mission and for the life of the parish and Diocesan communities. | | | |
| **Indicators:** | **Present Activity:** | **Rating Scale:**  Rate your parish’s present activity    **1 = very good**  **2 = adequate**  **3 = needs improvement**  **4 = inadequate** | **Notes for Planning:** |
| 1. The Congregation is presently of sufficient size and age distribution to undertake the full range of parish liturgical, catechetical, pastoral care and outreach ministries. |  |  |  |
| 1. At least 40% of registered households financially support the parish. |  |  |  |
| 1. The Parish operates within its ordinary income *(no deficit spending)* and is current with all diocesan assessments, benefits, and insurances *(no debt to the diocese).* |  |  |  |
| 1. New people are constantly invited to participate in ministry and leadership. |  |  |  |
| 1. The Parish employs intentional strategies for engaging young adults *(18–35 years of age)* in the life and ministry of the parish. |  |  |  |
| 1. Parishioners undertaking ministry initiatives are properly trained and supervised. |  |  |  |
| 1. The Commitment to Protect Children and Youth is evident in the procedures of the parish, and in the training and background checks of all clergy, parish staff and youth-serving volunteers. |  |  |  |

## Stewardship & Leadership

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Criterion 8:**  Parish priests, deacons, religious and lay staff serve the Parish community’s needs and effectively lead it in mission. | | | |
| **Indicators:** | **Present Activity:** | **Rating Scale:**  Rate your parish’s present activity    **1 = very good**  **2 = adequate**  **3 = needs improvement**  **4 = inadequate** | **Notes for Planning:** |
| 1. The priest(s) assigned to the parish care for the parishioners as the Good Shepherd cares for his flock; they are available and present to the people of the parish. |  |  |  |
| 1. Pastors share the responsibility for pastoral ministry in a parish with a pastoral team, which may include other priests, deacons, religious or lay pastoral associate/assistants, Director of Religious Education, Youth Minister, etc. The Pastor is not the only pastoral minister for the parish. |  |  |  |
| 1. Priests are able to take a day off every week, overnights as prescribed, and vacation periods a few times a year. |  |  |  |
| 1. The Parish has a qualified Business Manager; or shares one with a nearby parish. |  |  |  |
| 1. Responsibilities are clearly defined *(job descriptions)* and feedback for improvement is offered *(annual evaluation).* |  |  |  |

## Stewardship & Leadership

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Criterion 9:**  Facilities are adequate and well-maintained. | | | |
| **Indicators:** | **Present Activity:** | **Rating Scale:**  Rate your parish’s present activity    **1 = very good**  **2 = adequate**  **3 = needs improvement**  **4 = inadequate** | **Notes for Planning:** |
| 1. All facilities and surrounding environments *(sidewalks, stairs, etc.)* are well maintained and kept in good repair; there is nothing that poses a risk to the health and safety of parishioners, employees or others who may visit the parish. |  |  |  |
| 1. Facilities are handicap accessible. |  |  |  |
| 1. The Parish has developed and follows a written “Repair and Maintenance Plan.” |  |  |  |
| 1. A minimum of 5% of ordinary income is set aside annually as reserve for major repairs/replacement of HVAC and other systems. |  |  |  |
| 1. Facilities are appropriate for the size of the congregation, its regular worship and adequately meet the needs of parish life. |  |  |  |
| 1. Parking is adequate, properly lighted, and well-maintained. |  |  |  |
| 1. Signage clearly identifies buildings, offices, entrances and exits. |  |  |  |
| 1. The property *(landscaping, hardscapes and building exteriors)* looks cared-for and inviting to parishioners and visitors. |  |  |  |

# Parish Summary Report Form

**Name of Parish**\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ **City**\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

In **50 words describe the uniqueness of your parish**, highlighting important historical or cultural aspects which the Diocesan Planning Commission would want to know.

After evaluating your parish based on the Criteria for Planning,

what do you consider your **three greatest strengths**?

1.

2.

3.

Based on the Criteria for Planning, what are **three areas where you hope to improve**?

1.

2.

3.

## HOW IS YOUR PARISH STAFFED TO ACCOMPLISH ITS MISSION?

Please list all paid positions and check if they are full or part time.

**Paid Ministry Positions (List Principal by name and the number of teachers in Catholic School)**

Name of Position Full/Part time Check, if shared with another parish

Example:

*Youth Minister Full time X*

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

**Paid Support Positions (i.e. Secretary, Bookkeeper, Maintenance, etc.)**

Name of Position Full/Part time Check, if shared with another parish

Example:

*Secretary Religious Ed. Part time*

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

**Non-paid Ministry Positions**

Name of Position Full/Part time Check, if shared with another parish

Examples:

*Organist Part-time*

*Youth Minister Part-time*

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

**Non-paid Support Positions**

Name of Position Full/Part time Check…if shared…

Example:

*Secretary Religious Ed. Part time*

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

Is there anything else you want the Diocesan Planning Commission to know about your parish that impacts long term planning for you and/or the Diocese of Trenton?

# Parish Input Checklist

COUNTY: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ PARISH: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

CITY: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

## CHECK LIST

1. Bulletin Inserts \_\_\_ How Often? \_\_\_
2. Bulletin Article \_\_\_ How Often? \_\_\_
3. Pastor/Administrator or Core Team Letter \_\_\_ How Often? \_\_\_
4. Prayers of the Faithful \_\_\_ How Often? \_\_\_
5. Parish Website \_\_\_ How Often? \_\_\_
6. Town Hall Meetings \_\_\_ How Often? \_\_\_
7. Small Group Meetings \_\_\_ How Often? \_\_\_

(other than the Core Team)

1. Sub-Committee Meetings \_\_\_ How Often? \_\_\_
2. Parish Surveys \_\_\_ How Often? \_\_\_
3. Other \_\_\_ How Often? \_\_\_

**Which approach or approaches were most effective and why?**

**Is there any approach you would consider a “Best Practice?”**

**Is there anything else you want to say?**

Thank You! Please send your feedback to Sherrie Sporek at sspore@Dioceseoftrenton.org by March 1, 2016.

# Parish Communication Guidelines 2015

## Information to Be Communicated

Any of the information can be used in bulletin inserts or news releases to local media or parish websites.

Bishop O’Connell has begun a new initiative called ***Faith in Our Future,*** a process designed to have parishes plan for the future in concert with other parishes. The Bishop’s over-all goal is to enhance the vibrancy of parish life in the Diocese of Trenton so that parishes will be even more effective signs and centers of faith, hope, and love to all God’s people. Due to many factors, including demographic shifts, the diminishing number of priests, and the financial situation of many parishes, a process was needed for parishes to work together, in order to strengthen and enhance parish life. Given the availability and leadership of priests as well as deacons, men and women religious, and lay people, the Bishop thought that this is the right time for us to act as good stewards of our human and financial resources and discover ways to strengthen parishes and diocesan-wide ministries, so that current parishioners may be well served both now and in the future.

In the ***Faith in Our Future*** process all parishes in the diocese will be involved in working with neighboring parishes to assess their strengths, name their concerns, and explore how they can work together to better serve the People of God. While understanding that change is inevitable, and that in some cases parishes and buildings will close, they will be asked to suggest a future model or models of parish life. In addition to some parishes closing, other models might include parishes sharing a pastor or pastoral administrator; two or more parishes working closely together at time, sharing staff and programs; or, two or more parishes joining together to form a new parish.

A Diocesan Planning Commission appointed by Bishop O’Connell made up of priests, deacons, religious and lay people will review the suggestions and evaluation material presented from the Cohorts of parishes, make a preliminary recommendation with a rationale back to the Cohort and ask for a response with a rationale. After studying the responses across the diocese and considering demographic data and parish data, the Diocesan Planning Commission will make final recommendations to Bishop O’Connell. He in turn will consult with the Presbyteral Council and other consultative bodies before making a decision for each Cohort. Once the decisions are made, each Cohort of parishes will begin implementation in July 2017.

## Times of Transition

By their very nature, times of transition are unsettling. During this process, it is likely that some will believe that the decisions are already made and their voice does not count. Others may feel that, if only the diocese had the correct information, they would see how great their parish is and exempt them from participating in this process. Even those who do not share these misperceptions might be anxious or uncertain about what changes this process will bring. Because of these concerns, effective communication is vitally important throughout the ***Faith in Our Future*** process. Those involved with change, both directly and indirectly, need accurate and consistent information regarding the future of the parish and the reasons for change. We have developed the following guidelines to assist parish leaders and anyone helping to facilitate the parish process, ***Faith in Our Future.***

**Communication is more than simply putting forth information;**

**it is a dynamic, two-way process.­**

When people experience tension, lack of communication is typically cited as a primary source of the stress. We must not underestimate the positive impact of effective communication — and the negative results when communication is lacking. Communication is more than simply putting forth information; it is a dynamic, two-way process.

Please make every effort to communicate with the various groups in your area with sensitivity to appropriate timing and procedure, and remember that people need to hear information multiple times in order to process it. Help your parishioners to keep in focus the goals of the plan as stated by Bishop O’Connell.

In these pages you will find:

1. Communication Goals
2. Audiences
3. Communication Strategies
4. Communication Tools
5. Tips for Working with the Media

## Communication Goals

* Help people recognize and understand the reasons for change. (Resources: Bishop O’Connell’s Statements, Question and Answer Sheets, etc.)
* Update the parish community regularly, sharing accurate and appropriate information in a timely manner.
* Communicate the same information to all parishes in the Cohort.
* Correct misinformation and control rumors.
* Manage the communication process effectively.

## Audiences

Be aware of the various groups concerned with your parish situation:

* Parishioners
* Staff
* Volunteers
* Neighboring Cohorts
* Neighboring church leaders (both Catholic and other denominations)
* Neighborhood
* Civic community
* Elected officials
* Others of importance to your parish
* Media

## Communication Strategies

* Respect for people should guide all communication efforts. *How* y*ou* *communicate* *is* *as important as* *what* *you* *say.* Openness to those whose opinions differ from yours is critically important.
* Keep a positive attitude and help parishioners and staff through the various stages of the planning and implementation process.
* Maintain a calm presence. Your ability to do so will diminish the impact of rumors and can assuage fears.
* Receive critical comments simply as information that may be helpful to the process. Try to understand the reasons prompting the criticism, and do not take it personally.
* Show respect for the community's history while calling people forward to build the future together. Build on the image of ***Faith in Our Future.***
* Listen to people's concerns: calm fears when possible; help people see their importance to the new community.
* State facts accurately and clearly explain procedures. Information shared clearly and directly will help to reduce the tendency toward "power plays."
* Recognize that premature information sharing, before decisions are actually made or before those most closely affected have been informed, may thwart the planning process and cause divisiveness within the community. It is important for parish leaders to maintain confidentiality until the *agreed-upon* *time* to share information.
* Remember that appropriate information sharing needs to be ongoing. It is important not to assume that, since you have put forth information once, people have understood it. Not everyone is at the same "readiness" level, and we need to respect people's need to hear information many times in order to truly process it. Regular and repeated updates help people feel more grounded and secure amidst transition.
* Avoid the tendency to think that because the core team knows what is happening, communication has taken place. Sharing information with each of the audiences listed in section 2 needs to be carefully planned and implemented.
* Communicate important information directly to parishioners, staff, and anyone else personally affected by a situation *before* the media reports it.

**No matter the audience, specifically target information:**

* Determine the most appropriate timing and sequence for sharing information with particular individuals and/or groups.
* Identify the best ways to share information. A few possibilities include:
* Letters
* Town hall meetings
* Question/answer sheets
* Individual/small group meetings
* Newsletters
* Media releases, etc.
* Web Site updates
* Parish Bulletins

You know your community better than anyone. Draw upon the wisdom and power of people within the parish to help you determine the most effective ways to communicate with different groups. **When you are working as a Cohort, be sure the same information goes to all parishes in the Cohort at the same time.**

* Be consistent in the information you give to various individuals and groups. Having a single point person to whom people may address their questions is helpful.
* Be aware of individuals and/or groups who may have their own agenda.
* Help people recognize that pushing individual agendas harms the entire community.
* Have a back-up plan for combating rumors and addressing information leaks.

## Communication Methods

Again, draw upon the wisdom of your own community to help you. Here are a few examples to assist you.

* Speak from the pulpit about the planning process and update parishioners about the progress of the plan.

**Include regular bulletin announcements to reinforce your pulpit messages. When more than one parish is involved, use the same announcements in all bulletins, if the information affects both parishes.** *(See samples below)*

* Pray in the general intercessions for the mission of the church and for the Holy Spirit's guidance throughout the parish's planning process.
* Make sure all parishioners actually have the recommendation and rationale.
* As you hold parish meetings, routinely draw people's attention to the reality of parishes in transition throughout the diocese and dioceses all over the country.
* On a weekly basis insert one section of Goals or Criteria in the parish bulletin: Sacramental life; Evangelization, Catechesis and Catholic Schools; Communal Life; Stewardship and Leadership. Add a question for reflection appropriate to your parish. Use these for all parish meetings, section by section as feasible.
* If common questions surface regarding your parish's situation, compile a question and answer sheet for inclusion in the bulletin or for mailing to all parishioners if this will be more helpful. It is important that people continue to feel informed and to know that they have accurate, updated information.
* Provide up-dated information on your parish website, if appropriate.
* Send a letter to denominational leaders of your area or gather them together to discuss the planning process affecting your parish. Request their prayers and support during the planning process and for the emerging parish community.

## working with the media

If you are contacted by reporters from newspapers, television, or radio stations, particularly reporters outside your local community, please refer them to:

Diocese of Trenton Office of Communication

Rayanne Bennett, Executive Director

609-403-7188

rbenne@dioceseoftrenton.org

## Conclusion

Implementing a sound communication strategy with your various parish audiences is the best way to assure a successful planning process. By taking time from the outset to explain the issues and offer opportunities for feedback, you will lay the groundwork for building a cohesive faith community.

# Parish Communication Samples

## INTRODUCTION

Being part of ***Faith in Our Future*** provides many opportunities for good communication with all parishioners and the community as a whole. Some ideas which follow will aid in letting all members of the parish know what ***Faith in Our Future*** is and what the parish is doing as part of it.

## BULLETIN ANNOUNCEMENTS OR MATERIAL FOR THE PARISH NEWSLETTER

Please adapt all the material that follows to your local circumstances. These are not recipes, but rather ways to save you time, so you do not have to reinvent the wheel to begin your communications campaign! All announcements do not have to be used and the order can be changed depending upon how your parish is participating in ***Faith in Our Future.***

**Bulletin Announcements do not take the place of face-to-face meetings**

**such as town hall meetings and other more personal vehicles for communication.**

Announcement 1

***Faith in Our Future***

Bishop O’Connell has asked us to be part of the current cycle of parish planning related to the ***Faith in Our Future***. His expectation is that each parish will find neighboring parishes with whom to plan in order to:

1. Share more resources with each other and with parishes in need;
2. Avoid unneeded duplication of services; and
3. Fill in the gaps where service and ministry have not been available.

The parishes with whom we hope to work include:

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

Announcement 2

***Faith in Our Future***

The goals of the ***Faith in Our Future*** process promoted by Bishop O’Connell include:

1. **Strengthen and enliven** the parishes of the Diocese as well as Diocesan-sponsored organizations and ministries.
2. Explore **new models of leadership** in parishes and ministries in institutional settings (schools, colleges, hospitals, nursing homes, prisons, etc.) in order to address the challenges presented by the anticipated retirement of a large number of clergy and religious over the next ten years.
3. **Improve our stewardship** of personnel, finances, and facilities and other parish and Diocesan resources.
4. Establish **collaborative relationships** among the parishes and ministries of the diocese that will build upon the gospel to re/evangelize the local church, especially those who live on the fringes of the church, as well as those who do not yet know Christ.
5. Provide for pastoral ministry to **Hispanic Catholics**, the fastest growing segment of our Diocesan population, within our parishes and organizations.

As our Core Team begins to organize itself, it will be keeping these goals in mind and alerting you to how well we are doing in meeting the goals.

Announcement 3

***Faith in Our Future***

The following people are on the Core Team to do parish planning as part of ***Faith in Our Future***

(Name people.) The Core Team attended a training session on \_\_\_\_\_\_\_date to become acquainted with the materials we will be using to assess our parish ministries.

The Core Team will be overseeing the evaluation of parish ministries based on the Criteria for Planning. The Criteria are divided into four categories: Sacramental Life; EVANGELIZATION, CATECHESIS AND CATHOLIC SCHOOLS; Communal Life; Stewardship and Leadership.

Announcements 4-8

***Faith in Our Future***

The Core Team oversaw the parish evaluation of the Criteria for Sacramental Life and found that our strengths included\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

Our hopes for the future include \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, ­\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

If you have any comment about these, please contact \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ at \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

***For Announcements 5-8***

Repeat this kind of announcement for each of the other areas:

Evangelization, Catechesis & Catholic Schools; Communal Life; Stewardship & Leadership.

Announcement 9

***Faith in Our Future***

The Core Team and Parish Council finished our parish evaluation according to the Criteria for Planning and have come to the following conclusions: *(Highlight the good things happening and the hopes for the future, or any other pertinent information.)*

Announcement 10

***Faith in Our Future***

As part of our planning for the future, The Core Team analyzed some of the demographic trends that are part of our parish’s life. We thought you would be interested in the following: *(Include what is appropriate.)*

Announcement 11

***Faith in Our Future***

The Core Team has begun meeting with the cohort(s) parishes to do some joint planning to look at models for working together. The models presented by the diocese include collaborative, linked or merged parishes as well as teams, parish life directors and personal parishes.

Announcement 12

***Faith in Our Future***

The Core Team invites you to a meeting to accomplish two things:

1) to hear about its deliberations on a model of working with other parishes in the future;

2) and to solicit your input. We would appreciate your attendance and participation.

The meeting is \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_time, place, date\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

Announcement 13

***Faith in Our Future***

The parish Core Team working with the Core Teams in the cohort have submitted a Suggestion to the Diocesan Planning Commission on how the cohort might work together in the future.

We suggested working on Models (designate Collaborative, Linked, Merged, etc.) which for our parish would mean\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ .

The Diocesan Planning Commission will consider our work and make a preliminary recommendation back to us. At that time we will be asked to respond to their preliminary recommendation.

**General Intercessions**

(These may be used in any order)

**Week One**

For the success of ***Faith in Our Future****,* that all parishes will faithfully participate under the guidance of the Holy Spirit to look at how they can best build the Reign of God, let us pray to the Lord. Response…

**Week Two**

That our Core Team will be blessed and strengthened as it participates in the *Faith in Our Future,*  let us pray to the Lord. Response…

**Weeks Three-Nine**

That the Holy Spirit may continue to guide our Core Team as it evaluates our ministries of \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ (Sacramental Life, Evangelization, Catechesis & Catholic Schools, Communal Life, Stewardship & Leadership) let us pray to the Lord. Response… (Use as appropriate.)

**Week Ten**

For our Core Team as it looks for ways to suggest good stewardship practices for our parish and cohort, let us pray to the Lord. Response…

**Week Eleven**

That the Holy Spirit will continue to be with the *Faith in Our Future* as our parish cohort prepares its suggestion to the Diocesan Planning Commission, let us pray to the Lord. Response…

**Week Twelve**

For all those in *Faith in Our Future* who are discerning plans for their future, let us pray to the Lord. Response…

**Week Thirteen**

That *Faith in Our Future* will generate attitudes and actions of sharing across the diocese and the larger Church, let us pray to the Lord. Response…

**Week Fourteen**

That *Faith in Our Future* will renew parish life across the Diocese of Trenton, we pray to the Lord. Response…

**ANNOUNCEMENTS AT LITURGY**

Besides the bulletin announcements suggested above, it is a good idea to have members of the Core Team give a brief update on *Faith in Our Future* at least every other week during the announcement time at liturgy. This will make the work of the Core Team come alive for the parish community.

**Diocesan Parish Facilitators**

**Role Description:**

**Overall Description**

A Diocesan Parish Facilitator is a person active in the Catholic Church with experience working with groups and broad knowledge of the Diocese of Trenton. These parish facilitators receive a stipend and are responsible for assisting local leaders to plan, facilitate and evaluate parish and cohort meetings as part of the ***Faith in Our Future*** planning process. Training will be provided by The Reid Group to enable people to be successful facilitators in this process. Flexibility is required in terms of availability to work when and where the needs arise.

**Facilitation**

Facilitation is a form of leadership which empowers groups to achieve their goals. Facilitators plan meetings; prepare materials; implement meetings; and contribute to the evaluation and report of meetings.

**Specific Tasks of a Diocesan Parish Facilitator**

1. Understands and articulates the purposes of the meeting in the broader context of ***Faith in Our Future***.
2. Prepares the agendas for meetings.
3. Ensures that all the materials needed are available at the meeting.
4. Designs the meeting process depending on the purpose of the meeting.
5. Ensures that prayer has been prepared for the meeting. (Prayer based on scripture is the preferred method of prayer for effective meetings.)
6. Ensures that prayer leaders are in place and that the Bible and a candle are part of prayer.
7. Articulates the “ground rules” for a meeting and obtains buy in from the participants.
8. Manages conflict, if it arises.
9. Helps the group communicate effectively.
10. Insures that a welcoming environment is created to meet the goals of the meeting. This will include an appropriate set-up and refreshments.
11. Fosters leadership in others by sharing some responsibilities at the meeting.
12. Evaluates the meeting.

**Kinds of Meetings Facilitators Oversee**

1. Parish Planning
2. Parish Town Hall Meetings or Assemblies
3. Cohort Planning Meetings

**Skills and Abilities Needed to be an Effective Diocesan Parish Facilitator**

1. Good facilitation skills including excellent listening skills
2. Well-honed planning and time management skills
3. Ability to think on one’s feet
4. Conflict management skills