

SAINT MARY CHURCH, SOLON, IOWA

PHASE ONE PLANNING AND RECOMMENDATIONS REPORT

Meeting # 1

LITURGY – The parish is a worshipping community, a community of prayer which expresses and develops its relationship with God through liturgical and devotional celebrations.

- What are your strengths in the area of liturgy?
 - Good laypeople who are greeters, choir, servers, religious instructors, lectors, eucharist ministers and a nice church with regular and frequent Masses and a good priest.
 - Outreach to the homebound with Holy Communion every Sunday
 - Friendly and welcoming environment at Mass
 - Training of all liturgical ministers
 - Attracting lay ministers
- What are your weaknesses in the area of liturgy?
 - Find appropriate ways to help parishioners at Mass to know each other better
 - Expand liturgical ministries to include sacristans to attend to the preparations for each liturgy
 - Critique the liturgical music program to encourage the “full, active and conscious participation” of all age groups.
 - Develop, plan and evaluate liturgical development/formation programs to enable the entire parish to grow into a deeper relationship with Christ and learn more about the liturgical life of the Church (eg. New Roman Missal, liturgical seasons, environment, RCIA rites, etc)
 - Provide ongoing formation for the parish liturgy commission
 - Address the desire of some concerning devotional opportunities (eg. Rosary, Divine Mercy Chaplet, Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament, etc)

FAITH FORMATION – The parish provides ongoing faith development for all age groups.

- What are your parish’s strengths in the area of faith development for all age groups?
 1. **Embarking on a strong adult formation program.** A variety of opportunities have been offered these past four years. We have 20+ trained facilitators who lead small group communities and 300+ different adults have participated in one or more of recent offerings including: Four year study of the CCC, Rediscovering Catholicism book give-away and 5wk study, 24 wk Bible Study, 9wk Bible Study, 24 wk study of Matthew, Revelation study, Book studies for moms, Full of Grace women’s study, Parenting book groups, 7 Steps to Financial Freedom, Strong Catholic Families, a variety of parent sessions, etc and promoting participation in area events: Martha & Mary Conference, CEWs, Christ our Life Conference, diocesan workshops)

2. **K-12th Grade Faith Formation Program**, 40 + catechists share their time and faith with over 350 kids, working hard to provide creative and interactive ways to pray, serve, and learn together. Families of K-9th grade receive a weekly email to help them live and pass on the faith in their home, and keep them connected to the life of the parish and church.
3. **Vacation Bible School** - offered these past four summers, has now grown to 150 K-6th gr. participants being guided by 60+ teens and 40+ adults. It offers a meaningful way for teens and adults to share their varied talents and it has provided a wonderful opportunity for outreach and evangelization.
4. **Opportunities for teens** outside of regular parish events including: Steubenville Conference (now attended by 50-60 teens each summer), Mission Trips, March for Life
5. **Promoting, Welcoming, Encouraging, Challenging** people to participate in opportunities to grow in their faith (emails, phone calls, bulletin inserts, signs, Mass talks, personal conversations, mailings)
6. **Full Time Staff** to help coordinate faith formation efforts in the parish.

Weaknesses

1. **Adult faith formation as chief catechetical priority** – shifting the paradigm from children as the axis of all faith formation efforts to adults. Continue offering a variety of programs along with providing “demographic specific” spiritual & educational opportunities for the geriatrics, men, single/widowed, parents of different age groups, and young adults.
2. **Teaching to pray** – help all ages deepen their relationship with God through personal and communal prayer; through Sacred Scripture: a correct understanding and fruitful reading; and the liturgical year of the church: draw people into a deeper reflection on and living out of the church’s seasons.
3. **Household formation** – help parents, spouses, families, households, carry out the mission of the church in their homes: to believe & trust in God, love unconditionally, foster intimacy, educate in the faith, pray together, serve together, forgive & seek reconciliation, celebrate life, welcome strangers, act justly, affirm life, and raise up vocations.
4. **Supporting all ages in their journey towards authentic love and freedom** - promote the Catholic vision of marriage, human sexuality, chastity, love, and family life, so all ages can understand it, allow it to transform their lives, and be able to share these truths with compassion and charity.
5. **Use of Technology** – better use of contemporary media, technology, and social networking to evangelize and catechize, including an upgraded parish website.
6. **Deepen the Eucharistic faith of the people** - Use the new Roman Missal as an opportunity to *help the faithful live what they celebrate* by promoting (age appropriately) an authentic and genuine participation in the Mass by forming the minds of the faithful for prayer, thanksgiving, repentance, praying with confidence, for a community spirit, for a correct understanding of the prayers and symbols, and the place of the Mass in the life of the Church.

SOCIAL ACTION – The parish responds to the social concerns of the local area and the needs of the broader world.

- What are your parish's strengths in the area of social justice?
 - Strong commitment of existing commission members to social action
 - Prison ministry (early stages)
 - Strong network for issues and political awareness
 - Nursing home ministry
 - International outreach (Tanzania)
 - Work with pro-life medical center (Choices of Iowa City)

- What are your weaknesses?
 - Need to involve youth in social justice projects
 - More active outreach to local hungry (eg. Wesley House, Iowa City)
 - Need to collaborate more locally with parishes
 - More awareness parish-wide concerning social justice projects
 - Poor understanding of operational needs and structure of social justice projects (eg. Operation Rice Bowl, Campaign for Human Development, Catholic Relief Services)

ADMINISTRATION & FINANCE – The parish is a community of service that sustains its mission and ongoing development through a commitment to good financial stewardship.

- What are your parish's strengths in the area of strategic planning?
 - Well integrated growth plan for parish facilities
 - Anticipation of financial needs to support facility expansion
 - Approve expenditures exceeding \$5000
 - Safety procedures for facilities in place
 - Generous faith community

- What are your weaknesses?
 - Communication
 - Promoting increased financial giving
 - Long-range financial and overall strategic planning
 - Promoting stewardship of treasure
 - Develop procedures for closing the old church building
 - Follow up on safety drills

- What are your parish's strengths in the areas of efficient use and careful oversight of your finances and your buildings and grounds?
 - Pro-active on maintenance
 - Budget preparation
 - Submission of annual report to parish and diocese
 - Advice on salary recommendations for staff
 - Maintain parish directory
 - Follow diocesan policies concerning finances

- What are your weaknesses?
 - Communication
 - Need to investigate adequate insurance coverage for old church
 - Coordinating fundraising events
 - Improve website
 - Promote ways of church giving such as electronic deposits
 - Identifying financial needs of the parish and community

FAMILY LIFE - The parish promotes family life and supports families of the parish.

- What are your parish's strengths in promoting and supporting family life?
 - Baptism preparation classes
 - Strong Marriage preparation program
 - Meals for new moms
 - Parenting enrichment opportunities
 - Mother/daughter program
 - Communicating with families through weekly emails and providing resources to strengthen family faith
 - In general, our parish is comprised of families with strong values who want the best for their children.

- What are your weaknesses?
 - No existing, ongoing marriage enrichment program
 - Not enough social opportunities for couples and families
 - Lack of outreach to young adults (10th grade to 20s)
 - Programs or service projects involving the WHOLE family.
 - Outreach to individuals and families in crisis situations (loss, cancer, sickness, divorce, stress, etc)
 - Needs assessment and program development for mature adults (50-70 yrs)

CHURCH LIFE- The parish is a community of disciples called by Christ and empowered with the gifts of the Holy Spirit to live a life of stewardship and proclaim the Gospel.

- What are your parish's strengths in promoting a sense of faith community?
 - Welcome all into the faith community with warm hospitality (eg. Liturgical greeters)
 - Promote an active commitment to Christian stewardship
 - Hold activities to promote community church life
 - Prepare budget for community events
 - Picture directory every 5 years.

- What are your weaknesses?
 - Develop a parish youth council
 - Be more involved in community to promote church life (eg. Beef days, softball, etc)
 - Identify, reach out to and welcome unchurched and those alienated from the church
 - Improve ecumenical ministry
 - Develop ways to stay in touch with personal trials (eg. Death in family, divorce)

- What are your parish's strengths in fostering a sense of holistic stewardship and a willingness to share gifts?
 - All parishioners complete a time and talent survey when they register.
 - All parishioners completed above survey during picture directory project

- What are your weaknesses?
 - Sometimes parishioners who offer their time and talent are not contacted
 - Better communication

- What are your parish's strengths in fostering vocations?
 - Prayer for Vocations precedes every Sunday liturgy
 - Youth are invited to participate in all ministries of the church including faith formation, liturgical ministries, etc.

- What are your weaknesses?
 - Need to form a vocation committee (Knights of Columbus are investigating such a committee)
 - Difficulty in encouraging youth participation in various ministries due to their extra-curricular activities.

ST MARY'S HELPING HANDS (former "Altar and Rosary Society")

- Doing well:
 - Bereavement support / funeral luncheons
 - Receptions (First Communion, Confirmation, Ecumenical Service, etc)
 - Special Events
 - Fall Harvest Festival
 - Snacks for Vacation Bible School
 - Financial support for Steubenville youth trips
 - Financial support for Post-Prom
 - Two \$500 scholarships to second-year college students
 - Cookie Walk
 - Solon Nursing Care Center bingo volunteers and bingo supplies
 - Sponsor Solon Senior Advocates Meals
 - Donations to the church (eg. Kitchen equipment, fellowship hall tables/chairs, liturgical supplies, etc.

- WAYS TO IMPROVE:
 - A caring and welcoming community of faith (eg. Coffee and donuts after every Sunday morning Mass)
 - Activities with other churches in town
 - More welcoming to newcomers
 - Increase community fellowship

AREA NEED CONSIDERATIONS

Meeting #1

The following is a list of various communities, groups and institutions that may be present within your planning area. When developing recommendations, consideration should be given to addressing these pastoral needs as well. Name these in your area.

- I. Hospitals Iowa City -- University of Iowa, Mercy and VA Hospitals
Cedar Rapids – Mercy and St Luke Hospitals

- II. Nursing Homes Solon Care Center and Assisted Living
Ely Residential Care (no ministry there presently)

- III. Schools Solon Community Schools
Iowa City Regina
 - A. Grade Schools
 - 1. Individual Parish Schools
 - 2. Area or System Schools
 - B. High Schools
 - C. Colleges & Technical Schools – Campus Ministry Iowa City Newman Center

- IV. Multi-cultural Needs None
 - A. Hispanic Community
 - B. Southeast Asian Community
 - C. Other Groups

- V. Prisons and Jails Oakdale (Coralville)

- VI. Group Homes Systems Unlimited (Iowa City)

- VII. Religious Congregations or Mother Houses None nearby

- VIII. Cemeteries Saint Mary Cemetery, Solon

- IX. Other

Meeting #2

1. Parish name **SAINT MARY**
City(s) where located **SOLON**
2. Name of person who completed this report **REV. JAMES VRBA**
Phone # of person who completed report **319-624-2228**
3. Attach the attendance rosters from Meeting 1 and Meeting 2.
4. In what ways, if any, is your parish cooperating with neighboring parishes now?
 - Our facilities are periodically used by others for retreats and other activities (eg. Regina, Newman Center, home schoolers, diocese, etc)
 - We support and collaborate with other parishes with speakers and conferences (eg. Matthew Kelly, etc)
 - Invite Regina, St James, Washington, St Thomas More, St Mary, Tipton, to our Mother/Daughter event.
 - Networking with area DRE's
 - Share adult faith formation resources with St Mary, Iowa City
 - Publicize events sponsored by other nearby parishes
 - Some parishioners frequent other parishes for Sunday Mass, Reconciliation, Divine Mercy Sunday, etc.
5. Which two or three nearby parishes would be the most likely for your parish to work more closely with in the future? Why?
 - Major consensus that we collaborate with St Thomas More, Coralville (proximity, both parishes serve same central geographical area of North Liberty, similar growth and changes, similar ethnic backgrounds, similar size)
 - Second possibility is St Wenceslaus, Iowa City (distance, similar ethnic Czech/German roots, we could enhance their facilities)
6. Given that most parishes in the future will be sharing priests with neighboring parishes, do you have any specific recommendations concerning the assignment of priests in your area?
 - Need a person with high energy!
 - All parishes need to look at lay staffing to pick up ministry priest is not required to do
 - Reasonable distance for travel
 - Reasonable number of families to serve
 - Reasonable number of Masses
 - Ensure weekly Mass for care centers
 - Priest needs to be open to the needs and desires of the parishioners

7. Of all the programs and services provided by the diocesan offices, which does your parish value most? Include here any suggestions you might have on how to strengthen those services.
- Value the bishop visiting on special occasions
 - Catholic Messenger
 - Deacon formation program
 - Good support from Finance Office
 - Continue to promote the Ministry Formation Program
 - Diocese needs to support parish commissions better, eg. Family Life
 - Diocesan commissions need to promote themselves better, eg. Have area meetings of commissions to share ideas, promote new programs, etc.
 - Diocesan website difficult to navigate; very cluttered
 - Who evaluates the Diocesan Commissions?
 - Need to promote programs as career options for people, including salaries that attract talented participants.
 - Help us to live what Christ teaches through his church authentically and faithfully in all areas of ministry.
8. Do you have any suggestions how your parish, either working alone or collaboratively with other parishes, could make Catholic schools more accessible and affordable?
- Parishes could budget to support tuition by parish tithing (eg. Make up the difference between in-parish and out-of-parish tuition)
 - A bigger question is “How do Catholic schools fit into the overall faith formation ministry of the Church?” Are they truly parochial or independent academies? Jeff Johnson (Iowa State University Alumni Association) was a great facilitator for Dowling and Xavier to examine the holistic Catholic mission of these schools. Would be a great resource for our diocese.
9. Are there any other thoughts, ideas or suggestions that you would like to be considered in the planning process?
- Don't kill off the priests!
 - Ensure very good communication back to parishes during the process. Elicit parishioner feedback.
 - Invite seminarians to speak in parishes about priestly vocations.
 - How is the extra funding for seminary education from the Capital Campaign being used?
 - Vocation recruitment needs to be a major focus. How do we do this?
 - How would parishes share costs associated with sharing a priest? How would Mass scheduling be handled?

Indicate the names, addresses, and phone numbers of the two lay representatives from your parish who will serve on the Local Area Planning Committee beginning in February 2011.

Name: Patricia Erusha
Address: 3761 – 170th Street, NE
City: Solon State: IA Zip: 52333
Phone: 319-624-2537
Email: perusha@southslope.net

Name: Michael McLaughlin
Address: 2364 Sugar Hill Ct., NE
City: Solon State: IA Zip: 52333
Phone: 319-624-4105
Email: mike.mclaughlin@kirkwood.edu

If there are any specific dates between January 17 and March 1, 2011 that the pastor/parish life administrator or either of the lay representatives would prefer be avoided in scheduling the first meeting of the Local Area Planning Committee, please indicate those here.

Dates to avoid:

Monday evenings are regular meeting days for the parish.

Signatures:

Pastor/PLA Rev. James Vrba Date 1-16-2011

Parish Pastoral Council President Kathy Hirl Date 1-16-2011

Finance Council Chair David Krob Date 1-16-2011

Lay Director Doug Thompson Date 1-16-2011

Lay Director Marianne Harney Date 1-16-2011

Many thanks to all who contributed to the completion of this report.

St Mary, Solon, MEETINGS ROSTER:

MEETING #1:

Instead of having a special meeting inviting all parishioners to complete the material for Meeting #1, Fr Vrba talked about the project at all the Masses on Saturday/Sunday, November 13-14, 2010. Parishioners were invited to discuss among themselves one strength and one weakness concerning parish life. A survey was included in the bulletin for parishioners to complete and return the following Sunday. All of the responses were transcribed to newsprint and hung in the parish hall for parishioners to review the next Sunday. Additional surveys were available for additional comments. Parishioners were invited to put a check mark on any newsprint item they wanted to "ditto!"

A group meeting of all parish Commission members took place on Monday, January 3, 2011, to respond to the parish survey, which comprised the official Meeting #1. Members participating are:

David Krob	Marianne Klouda	Mike McLaughlin
Duane Krob	Mary Erinberger	Diane Wurzer
Mydge Krob	Deacon Jerry Miller	Whitney Kaefring
Marianne Harney	Terry Rasmussen	June Maiers
Cheryl Krob	JoEllen Ritchie	Patty Erusha
Doug Thompson	Branda Greazel	Ruth Myers
Lisa Kaefring	Gwen Prentice	Pat Zimmerman
Rose-Alice Brokaw	Lisa Bretz	Kristi Ulrich
Mitch Holte	Patty Benzing	Julie Agnie
Kathy Hirl	Mary Knight	Jan Johnson
Sally Holte	Cheryl Reyhous	
DeWayne Klouda	Nancy Upmeyer	

MEETING #2:

A group meeting of the parish Pastoral and Finance Councils took place on January 10, 2011. Members participating:

Patti Benzing	Brad Randall
Patty Erusha	Doug Thompson
Marianne Harney	Fr. Vrba
Kathy Hirl	Diane Wilkinson
Mitch Holte	Pat Zimmerman
Lisa Kaefring	Dave Krob
DeWayne Klouda	Deacon Jerry Miller
Mike McLaughlin	
Ruth Myers	