



Building A Bridge to the Future Diocese of Bridgeport

Resource Manual for the Parish Planning Process

This manual is meant to provide detailed instructions on the parish pastoral planning process underway in the Diocese in 2016.

The planning process encourages consultation by a Planning Task Force as a primary means of identifying the pastoral priorities of the parish in light of the resources available for ministry, and the Global Challenges indentified by the Synod. Pastoral and financial planning should already be ongoing within each parish. The hope is that this process will assist in that endeavor.

To accomplish this consultation, each parish is being asked to complete a **Parish Self Assessment & Planning Questionnaire** and to submit it to the Diocese. The parish self study will include the following:

- Parish Financial and Pastoral Snapshot
- Planning Questionnaire

If you have any questions about the process, please contact:

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Steps of the Planning Process

The planning process to respond to the assessment has multiple steps. The steps of the process are as follows:

- Create a Parish Planning Task Force.**
- Submit names of Task Force Members to the Office for Strategic & Pastoral Planning.**
- Review parish sacramental and financial snapshots with the Planning Task Force Members.**
- Members of the Planning Task Force meet to provide feedback on data reports.**
- In light of the data in the Parish Snapshot, complete the Parish Self-Assessment as honestly and comprehensively as possible.**
- Planning Task Force meets with parish staff, parish & finance councils, and trustees to review draft responses to Self-Assessment.**
- Utilize the Parish Pastoral Plan Template (to be distributed in mid-March). Identify 3-5 priorities for the next 2 pastoral years in light of the Synod Global Challenges.**
- Submit Parish Self-Assessment to Office of Strategic and Pastoral Planning no later than May 15, 2016.**
- Obtain feedback from broader parish community regarding draft goals for parish pastoral plan.**
- Incorporate feedback from the broader parish community regarding identified goals.**
- Submit finalized plan to the Office for Strategic & Pastoral Planning no later than September 30, 2016.**

Timeline for Parish Process

The following timeline has been established to move diligently through the process while allowing as much flexibility as possible considering the schedules and events within each parish, and considering the Holy Days.

Timeline for Building A Bridge to the Future Parish Consultation Process

February 2016	Receive and review parish snapshot.
March 2016	Complete parish self-assessment. Attend Planning Task Force Workshops “Pastoral Planning 101” (March 12 and March 19)
April 2016	Meet with parish staff and lay leadership
May 2016	Parish Assembly or Town Hall Meeting Submit Parish Self-Assessment to Office of Strategic and Pastoral Planning
June 2016	Prepare planning goals in light of the Synod Global Challenges
September 2016	Submit final plan

Parish Data Snapshots

Each pastor will receive a *Parish Data Snapshot* composed of two essential parts. One part of the report will focus on pastoral and sacramental trends while the other will focus on financial data. The data report has been pre-populated as much as possible from reports that have been submitted to the Diocese in the past. The Planning Task Force is asked to review the data and to fill in any data that was not included. Corrections may be sent to the Office of Strategic and Pastoral Planning – pturner@diobpt.org, or by calling 203-416-1633.

Participation and Organization

The main thrust of this planning process is for each parish to develop an intentional roadmap for its future. The Planning Task Force is the organizer of the process. The pastor oversees the process and makes the final determination of all pastoral goals which result from the process. He also gives approval of the final draft of the *Parish Self-Assessment* and sends the report to the Office for Strategic & Pastoral Planning. The professional staff members of the parish, deacons and parish priests are also vital participants in the parish conversation.

Crucial to any planning process is an understanding of the roles and responsibilities of all involved. The following chart provides a brief overview of the responsibilities of those who are involved to bring the parish process to conclusion.

Roles and Responsibilities in Parish Process

Pastor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oversees Process • Verify all data in Parish Data Report • Provides explanation of planning process to parishioners • Participates in Questionnaire Meeting • Approves and sends Questionnaire • Approves final Parish Pastoral Plan
Parish Planning Task Force	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facilitates Self-Assessment Meeting • Facilitates Parish Assembly • Ensures that all data from assembly and questionnaire meeting reviewed
Parish Pastoral Council/ Finance Council/ Trustees	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participates in Planning Questionnaire Meeting • Meet with Planning Task Force to review draft of parish self-assessment • Participate in parish assembly
Parish Staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Verify data on Parish Data Report • Receives data from assembly • Participates in Planning Questionnaire Meeting
Parishioners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participate in Parish Assembly • Remain informed about the process

Questions for Discernment by the Parish Planning Task Force:

1. What are the greatest signs of vibrancy and life that you see in the parish? What do the data trends show?
2. What do you see as the greatest challenges the parish will need to address into the future, based upon the sacramental and financial trends?
3. What are the greatest resources in the parish? What resources are most needed?
4. What are the most critical concerns in the wider neighborhood that the church must address?

Synod Global Challenges – Approved March 21, 2015

1. **Liturgy and Worship: Every Catholic is called to FULL, CONSCIOUS, AND ACTIVE PARTICIPATION (see: *Sacrosanctum Concilium* #14, 41, 48) in the worship life of the Church.**
 - a. *We must foster an attitude of welcome and hospitality that would accompany every occasion of prayer and worship.*
 - b. *Special attention must be given to the preparation and delivery of homilies that are relevant, inspirational, engaging and challenging to those who attend Mass and other sacramental celebrations.*
 - c. *The cultural and ethnic diversity of each community needs to be reflected and celebrated in its worship life, as well as in all diocesan events.*
 - d. *Every ministry associated with the celebration of the sacraments must be revitalized.*
2. **Family Life: There is a need to strengthen and support family life, and to empower and assist parents as the primary teachers of the Catholic Faith.**
 - a. *We call for the evangelization of all parents so that they may share their relationship with Jesus and the Church with their children.*
 - b. *Parents must be provided education, formation and ongoing support in their dual roles as parents and as the first catechists of their children.*
 - c. *Programs and resources must be made available to help families to strengthen the bonds of unity amongst its members.*
 - d. *Families that are confronting particular stressors, such as financial difficulties, employment issues, discrimination, immigration status, addiction, grieving and marital breakup, must be afforded effective pastoral care.*

- 3. Evangelization: We must create concrete plans for evangelization through our parishes, schools, ecclesial movements, and communities.**
 - a. We call every Catholic to ongoing missionary discipleship.*
 - b. There is an urgent need to create a variety of strategies to engage those Catholics who are marginalized to participate in the life of the Church, and to respect the diversity within our communities of faith.*
 - c. People of good will are invited to be evangelized through our effective witnessing of the Gospel.*

- 4. Leadership: There is a need to continually call, form, and support clergy, religious, and laity in active leadership roles in the life of the Church.**
 - a. We must develop a culture that promotes and supports vocations to the priesthood, diaconate and consecrated life in our Diocese.*
 - b. The ongoing education, formation and support of our clergy is vital, to promote holy and healthy living, and to assist them in their leadership roles*
 - c. Continual efforts must be made to assist Catholics to discern their personal gifts and talents, and to share those gifts with the larger community of faith in a spirit of stewardship.*
 - d. Opportunities and structures must be created to support the ongoing training and formation of lay leaders in our Diocese.*

- 5. Catechesis and Education: We must renew the ministry of faith formation throughout our Diocese, leading each person to a deepening relationship with the Lord Jesus in and through His Church.**
 - a. There must be a clear, authentic and faithful teaching of our Catholic faith.*
 - b. Opportunities for faith formation must be offered in holistic and age-appropriate ways.*
 - i. promote knowledge of faith,*
 - ii. liturgical education,*
 - iii. moral formation,*
 - iv. teaching to pray,*
 - v. education for community life,*
 - vi. missionary initiation (1997 General Directory for Catechesis).*
 - c. We recognize the need for more effective faith formation for our teenagers and young adults.*
 - d. Ongoing opportunities must be offered for all the baptized to grow in their prayer life.*