

# Parish Self-Assessment Tool

Growing as the Body of Christ



Office of Faith Formation  
Parish Self-Assessment Tool

Where there is no vision, the people perish...  
Proverbs 29:18

December 2020

## **Lifelong Faith Formation: Self-Assessment for Parishes**

*"Faith formation is a life-long process. It will not only embrace existing programs such as religious education and youth ministry, but also faith formation efforts yet to be developed. It will be directed toward all age groups as well as to the needs of various audiences."*

*Recommendations for Faith Formation from Diocese of Erie Pastoral Planning (2018).*

### **Why use this self-assessment?**

The model of lifelong faith formation was the response to the call articulated out of diocesan Pastoral Planning. The model, and this corresponding tool, allow us to see our people and their diverse needs across different stages of life through a standard metric. The self-assessment tool can be a checkpoint for parish ministries, providing a lens of how effectively they may respond to the spiritual development needs of your people.

By looking broadly at lifelong faith formation efforts at your parish, you can take time to celebrate and thank God for what is bearing fruit and notice any gaps. And, this tool can help you discern and hear God's call for your parish, including how to invest your energy into the most effective and high-impact ways to reach people whose needs are not currently met in intentional ways.

The self-assessment neither advocates for specific programs, nor claims that every parish should look the same. Rather, it provides flexibility to help you examine the needs, gifts, and growth areas for your parish family.

### **How to use this self-assessment?**

First, complete the parish profile. Then, find a small review team whose knowledge represents an understanding of lifelong faith formation offerings at your parish. Next, establish your goals for the review process, and then review the assessment questions for each stage of life. How does your parish respond to the spiritual development needs of people in that group? Lastly, you are welcome to reach out to the Faith Formation team, either for help along the way, a macro-level review of your results, or planning how to move forward.

### **What time commitment will this require?**

The amount of investment your team puts in will determine the level of impact of your work. We recommend 5-10 hours of group work, which can be done over of several weeks or months.

- 3, 1-hour conversations can probably give you a good sense of where your gifts and gaps are

- 4, 2-hour conversations (1 hour of discussion on each of the 8 stages of life) can open up deep dialogue on what lifelong faith formation looks like, and could look like, at your parish.
  - With either option: Plan on 1-2 hours of debrief and planning your next step, to help your fruitful areas continue to flourish and discern a gap you feel called to address.

**What supports can I expect from Faith Formation at the diocese?**

- Step-by-step tutorial videos that will walk you through each step of the process
- Support thinking through who the best team would be (i.e. Pastor + staff, vs. Pastor + pastoral council, vs. Pastor + a few knowledgeable parishioners)
- On-call support: Schedule a call to help throughout or after the process.
- Coming in early 2021, we will launch a new resource that can help you fill in gaps. The Best Practices Tool is a curated list of best practices for high-impact faith formation at each stage of life. Choose one of these 16 ideas (2 suggestions for each age group) for “plug-and-play,” to help build a new intentional ministry for a particular age group.

## Parish Profile

Let them thank the LORD for his mercy, such wondrous deeds for the children of Adam.

Psalms 107:31

Parish Name	
Street Address	
City/Town	
Zip Code	
Phone Number	
Pastor	
Pastor's email	

## Parish Self-Assessment Process

The parish self-assessment process can be worked by the pastor or a minister alone, but the strongest results come from the work of a team.

The most effective parish self-assessment teams consist of a minimum of four members and include the pastor, staff, and interested parishioners. Members chosen for the parish self-assessment team should represent varied perspectives on parish life. Team members should come to the self-assessment with a whole-parish mindset. While they may understand or be invested in a particular ministry, they should be able to see the process from the perspective of the whole parish rather than from the perspective of the ministry. The ideal team member should be:

- HUMBLE - Ideal team players are humble. They lack excessive ego or concerns about status. They are quick to point out the contributions of others and slow to seek recognition for their own. They share credit, emphasize team over self, and define success collectively rather than individually.
- HUNGRY – Ideal team players are hungry. They are always looking for more—more things to do, more to learn, more responsibility. Hungry people rarely have to be pushed [...] to work harder because they are self-motivated and diligent. They are constantly thinking about the next step and the next opportunity.
- SMART - Ideal team players are smart. They are emotionally intelligent and have common sense about people. They tend to know what is happening in a group situation and how to effectively deal with others. They have good judgment and intuition around the subtleties of group dynamics and the impact of their words and actions.

(Humble, Hungry, Smart model comes directly from Pat Lencioni's *The Ideal Team Player* at <https://www.tablegroup.com/books/ideal-team-player/>)

Different types of members may be needed at various times in the self-assessment process. For example, strong involvement from teen parishioners may be needed in examining the parish's outreach and offerings for teens, while more involvement from parish leaders, such as parish council, could be used in analyzing the demographics and mission statement.

In general, when there is doubt about whether a certain individual should be involved in planning due to the size of the group, it is best to involve him or her. It is worse to exclude someone useful than it is to have one or two extra people in planning.

## Parish Self-Assessment Team

There are different kinds of spiritual gifts but the same Spirit; there are different forms of service but the same Lord; there are different workings but the same God who produces all of them in everyone. To each individual, the manifestation of the Spirit is given for some benefit.

1 Corinthians 12: 4-7

Name of Team Member	Role of Team Member (e.g. parishioner, parish counsel, DRE, etc.)	Meeting Date(s) Attended

## **Shared Mission**

Entrust your works to the LORD, and your plans will succeed.

Proverbs 16:3

Reflect as a team on your parish. Why is this self-assessment important? What do you hope will be different in your parish because of engaging in self-assessment and reflection? How do you hope that your parish can foster the personal and spiritual growth of parishioners in new ways?

The current mission statement for our parish is:

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We hope that this self-assessment can lead to:

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## Review of Demographics

O Lord, you are my God, I extol you, I praise your name; For you have carried out your wonderful plans of old, faithful, and true.

Isaiah 25:1

Reference your local government and parish data for the following. The following data can help clarify any misunderstandings regarding the population of your parish and/or the general population in your area. A clear understanding of your demographics can help focus ministry and evangelization efforts. If data is missing or finding it is an undue burden, skip this portion and continue in the self-assessment.

<b>FOR THE CALENDAR YEAR:</b>	<b>20</b>		<b>to</b>	<b>20</b>	
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<b>Population</b>	<b>Number of registered parishioners</b>
Attends Mass at Christmas/Easter	
Attends Mass weekly	
Children under 18	
Adults, 18+	
Single parishioners	
Married parishioners	

<b>Population<sup>1</sup></b>	<b>General population for the county in which the parish resides</b>
Children under 5	
Children under 18	
Adult	

Comment on 2 or 3 major trends that emerged as you reviewed and discussed demographic data.

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<sup>1</sup> Parishes can use the US Census data at <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/US/PST045219> to find population breakdowns in their area. In-depth analysis of the population data listed in the census table, in addition to what is asked for in the parish self-assessment, may also point to ministry opportunities.



## Guiding Questions

Moreover, God is able to make every grace abundant for you, so that in all things, always having all you need, you may have an abundance for every good work.

2 Corinthians 9:8

In the next section, you will focus on the spiritual and developmental needs of parishioners and analyze how the parish's ministry responds to them. There are common challenges and themes in faith and human development that generally occur for parishioners at similar times in life. Each challenge is an invitation from God to grow closer in relationship with him, to grow more fully into the person he created, and to grow in relationship with one's neighbor. These questions and challenges will be called spiritual invitations in the following text.

A chart will guide the team as they examine spiritual invitations that are common for each age group and determine whether the parish is meeting the needs for parishioners' growth in that area. An excerpt from the chart is given below as an example. The first column expresses a common spiritual invitation. The middle column unpacks the spiritual invitation and provides specific questions for the self-assessment team to consider. The third column provides a place for the team to answer the questions from the middle column. Provide concrete examples by listing ministries, resources, efforts in culture development, or available referrals currently offered at the parish.

<b>Spiritual Invitation 1:</b> Is being with God and His people a safe and happy experience?	How does the parish offer opportunities for young children to engage in faith and prayer in a fun and sensory way?  Does our parish make parents of young children feel welcome, even <u>in the midst of</u> challenges that come with bringing young children to Church?  Does our parish help parents introduce the faith and let small children become comfortable with Church persons, symbols, culture, etc.?	Evidence/opportunities:
		Ranking: 1 2 3

A parish helps its people respond to spiritual invitations adequately when there are specific opportunities for growth through a ministry or through deliberately fostered parish culture. After listing all the evidence for a spiritual invitation, rank the parish's ability to foster growth in this invitation on a 1-3 (low – average – high) scale.

You are asked to engage in **open and honest discussion** with members of your team to determine how your parish meets the spiritual invitations of distinct age groups in your community. Remember that your discussions should center on both evidence and data that substantiate your reasoning.

This time of self-reflection will highlight areas where parish ministry is strong and should be celebrated. Parish challenges will become apparent as you notice invitations that will require additional focus to attain. These challenges will be the basis for your goal setting in the future. Keep in mind that no parish is perfect. This assessment is intended to highlight areas where ministry is already strong and to showcase opportunities for parishes to grow and connect in ways they may not have recognized before.

Note: Many ministries have been changed or discontinued as a result of current public health concerns. Engaging in the parish self-assessment with what is currently offered helps a parish understand how they are reaching their people in real time.

## Ages 0-2

<b>Spiritual Invitation 1:</b> Is being with God and His people a safe and happy experience?	How does the parish offer opportunities for young children to engage in faith and prayer in a fun and sensory way?  How does the parish make parents of young children feel welcome, even in the midst of challenges that come with bringing young children to Church?  How does the parish help parents introduce the faith and let small children become comfortable with Church persons, symbols, culture, etc.?	Evidence/opportunities:
		Ranking: 1   2   3
<b>Spiritual Invitation 2:</b> Am I safe, comfortable, and loved?	How does the parish help parents learn how to parent with love?  How does the parish provide support for parents who are facing challenges in helping their children experience love and emotional warmth in family life (e.g. postpartum depression, overwhelmed)	Evidence/opportunities:
		Ranking: 1   2   3
<b>Spiritual Invitation 3:</b> How should I act around others (later end of this period)?	How does the parish provide opportunities for age-appropriate formation in virtue?  How does the parish provide/cultivate a community of families who support each other in fostering virtue in their children?	Evidence/opportunities:
		Ranking: 1   2   3

## Ages 2-5

<b>Spiritual Invitation 1:</b> What is God like?	How does the parish provide sensory ways for children to explore key stories of faith?	Evidence/opportunities:          Ranking: 1   2   3
	How does the parish provide parents with resources to introduce faith concepts and answer their children's questions about them in emotionally warm ways that relate to their children's lived experience and concerns?  How does the parish coach parents and parishioners on how to create a warm and positive environment when interacting with children – especially when talking about God?	
<b>Spiritual Invitation 2:</b> Is it good to be me?	In what ways does the parish show the love and concern of a family for all young children in the parish?	Evidence/opportunities:          Ranking: 1   2   3
	How does the parish family recognize and celebrate the personal gifts and goodness of the children in the parish?	
<b>Spiritual Invitation 3:</b> What is the world like?	How does the parish help parents teach their children about love by teaching them healthy, moral boundaries?	Evidence/opportunities:          Ranking: 1   2   3
	How does the parish help parents explain the purpose and meaning of life and a relationship with God?  How does the parish help children and their parents cultivate a healthy combination of dependence/trust and independence?	

## Ages 6-12

<b>Spiritual Invitation 1:</b> How is God present in the world and my life?	How does the parish help young people recognize God in daily life?	Evidence/opportunities:
	How does the parish help children develop an interactive and vibrant prayer life?  How does the parish help parents create a climate in which it is normal, comfortable, and important to talk to and about God?	Ranking: 1 2 3
<b>Spiritual Invitation 2:</b> What does it mean to do the right thing?	How does the parish communicate right and wrong in a spirit of kindness and love?	Evidence/opportunities:
	How does the parish communicate that right action leads to freedom and joy?  How does the parish celebrate and affirm the good decisions and virtues of young people?	Ranking: 1 2 3
<b>Spiritual Invitation 3:</b> How can I be part of a larger community?	How can young people directly serve their family, parish, and community?	Evidence/opportunities:
	How do we as a parish invite young people to be aware of and invested in the lives of people around the world (i.e. rice bowl, learning about Church/parishes in other countries)?  How does the parish show young people that they are supported, loved, and cared for by our community?	Ranking: 1 2 3

## Ages 13-18

<b>Spiritual Invitation 1:</b> What does it mean to be in a personal relationship with God?	How does the parish help young people listen to and discern the voice of God in their lives?  How does the parish coach young people and their parents in a variety of ways to communicate with God (pray)?  How does the parish foster a sense of being loved by God, especially in the face of emotional and cultural challenges unique to this age group?	Evidence/opportunities:
		Ranking: 1   2   3
<b>Spiritual Invitation 2:</b> What are my gifts and talents and how can I use them?	What channels exist that allow young people to explore and uncover their gifts, with a sense of gratitude and appreciation for their unique person?  What channels exist that allow young people to share their gifts with the parish and beyond?  How is the parish helping young people grow in a healthy and firm self-respect and Gospel love for self?	Evidence/opportunities:
		Ranking: 1   2   3
<b>Spiritual Invitation 3:</b> How do I share love in different relationships? (parents, siblings, dating, marriage, etc.	How is the parish helping young people face new relationships and develop healthy boundaries?  How is the parish helping young people develop a sense of love that includes sacrifice and self-gift?  How is the parish helping young people develop healthy expectations and skills for relationships (among friends, with parents and family, and in romantic relationships)?	Evidence/opportunities:
		Ranking: 1   2   3

## Ages 19-35

<b>Spiritual Invitation 1:</b> What is real faith and why do I need a Church?	How does the parish foster an understanding of faith that informs my daily life?  How does the parish foster a sense of belonging in parish life for this age group?  How does the parish help individuals integrate truths of the faith into their hearts, minds, emotions and lives?	Evidence/opportunities:     
		Ranking: 1   2   3
<b>Spiritual Invitation 2:</b> What should I do with my future?	How does the parish provide tools of discernment?  How does the parish provide accompaniment for those going through intense periods of discernment (job selection/change, vocation, etc.)?	Evidence/opportunities:     
		Ranking: 1   2   3
<b>Spiritual Invitation 3:</b> How should I live my values?	Which opportunities does the parish provide to engage in value-oriented service in the parish and society?  How does the parish help individuals navigate situations in which their values seem to be in tension with societal values? Or their values are in tension with one another?  How does the parish provide opportunities for individuals to mature in their values and priorities?	Evidence/opportunities:     
		Ranking: 1   2   3

## Ages 35-50

<b>Spiritual Invitation 1:</b> How do I experience God's presence with increasing demands on my time and attention?	What opportunities does the parish provide for growth in prayer and awareness of the presence of God in daily life?  How does the parish help individuals discern a regular prayer commitment that corresponds to the responsibilities God has placed in their lives and vocations?	Evidence/opportunities:
	How does the parish help discern a healthy Sabbath?	Ranking: 1   2   3
<b>Spiritual Invitation 2:</b> Am I on the right track in life?	How does the parish help individuals discern how God is calling them to use their gifts and talents in this phase of life?  How does the parish help individuals come to terms with the mistakes they have made in life and recognize their value?	Evidence/opportunities:
		Ranking: 1   2   3
<b>Spiritual Invitation 3:</b> How do I love in different seasons of life?	How does the parish help individuals show Christ's love through attentive presence to the people and activities that they engage in?  How does the parish connect families to resources they need in seasons of struggle or challenge (dealing with health issues, relationship or parenting challenges)?	Evidence/opportunities:
		Ranking: 1   2   3



## Ages 50-70

<b>Spiritual Invitation 1:</b> Where is God in the places that I need to surrender?	How does the parish support persons who are grieving (i.e. loss of parents, spouse, etc.)?	Evidence/opportunities:
	How does the parish encourage individuals to develop a relationship of surrender and trust in God in the midst of new and more challenging struggles (i.e. health issues, challenges/changes in the Church and/or parish life, children who have fallen away from the faith)?  How does the parish support and help individuals discern the ways that God is calling them to grow in faith?	Ranking: 1   2   3
<b>Spiritual Invitation 2:</b> Did I do a good job at living my life so far?	How does the parish help individuals ground themselves in their true identity as son or daughter of God, especially as they face questions like financial security/retirement, the quality of their parenting, past choices, and how they should make a difference in this new phase of life?	Evidence/opportunities:
		Ranking: 1   2   3
<b>Spiritual Invitation 3:</b> How do I find new ways to give of my time, love and resources?	How does the parish help individuals adjust to a change in lifestyle (sick parent moving in, children moving in, becoming an empty nester, life without a spouse)?  How does the parish recognize, invite, and reengage the talents of individuals whose life changes provide them with more time to share?  How does the parish identify and respond to the needs of caregivers, especially those caring for the severely ill or those who are caring for multiple generations simultaneously?	Evidence/opportunities:
		Ranking: 1   2   3

## Ages 70+

<b>Spiritual Invitation 1:</b> Am I ready to meet God face to face?	How does the parish help individuals wrestle with end of life questions?	Evidence/opportunities:
	How does the parish help individuals cultivate a spirit of reliance on and trust in God's mercy?  How does the parish help individuals recognize and embrace Christ in the midst of increasing sufferings?	Ranking: 1   2   3
<b>Spiritual Invitation 2:</b> Where does my life find value?	How does the parish help individuals recognize their power as intercessors and honor the wisdom of its members in this phase of life?	Evidence/opportunities:
	How does the parish help individuals recognize and hold on to their purpose and value as persons at this stage in their life?	Ranking: 1   2   3
<b>Spiritual Invitation 3:</b> How do I find peace (especially with past conflicts and present challenging realities)?	How does the parish keep individuals at this stage of life connected with each other and with other generations?	Evidence/opportunities:
	How does the parish help individuals work toward forgiveness, reconciliation, and peace, especially at this stage of their life?	Ranking: 1   2   3

## Prioritize Challenges

But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, so that the surpassing power will be of God and not from us.

2 Corinthians 4:7

Review the challenges that you identified in your discussion of the spiritual invitations and opportunities in your parish. Identify the challenges most likely to have a significant impact on the growth and health of your parish and parishioners.

- Record the most compelling challenges that were discussed.
- Numerically rank the priority of each highlighted challenge in the right-hand column with (1) being the most significant challenge.
- Consider which challenges are urgent and translate into long-term goals.
- Decide with your team which of these challenges could best translate into a goal(s) for the next 12 months.

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