

ST. ELIZABETH PARISH

Pastoral
Study

REPORT TO THE PARISH

175 WOLF HILL ROAD
Melville, New York

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INTRODUCTION FROM THE PASTOR

June 28, 2007

Dear Parishioner:

It is my pleasure to present the Pastoral Study Report to our parish community of St. Elizabeth. During my first year as pastor I have tried my best to listen and learn about “how we do things here.” There have been few changes these past months as we have gotten to know each other. One year ago today I arrived as Father Bruce Powers’ successor – and I have chosen this date to publish the Report which will guide us over the next five years when we celebrate our fiftieth anniversary.

I am pleased that this Study has been as open-ended as possible so that every voice could be heard. Many parishioners chose to be participants in the Study and spoke with Greg Cellini. Greg has written a complete report that includes the comments, suggestions and ideas voiced during the course of the Study. You have received the summary of the Report and can view the entire document on the parish website.

From the beginning we realized that we needed a clear focus for the Study. So, the Report opens with the *Five-Year Goals*. These Goals have been revised, expanded; and even additional Goals came out of the Study. I invite you, as well, to focus on these Five-Year Goals as you read the Study.

You will find the Goals are first presented in a general way, highlighting the main points of the interviews and focus groups. In the next section, the Goals are discussed in more detail, giving the suggestions of most participants and including suggestions of even one or two participants. All these materials help us better understand the final Five-Year Goals and will serve to guide the Pastoral Team and the Pastoral Council in long-range planning for the parish from 2007 until 2012.

Because the Study was open-ended, additional topics surfaced on their own in many of the interviews and focus groups. These topics called for further examination and helped us finalize the Five-Year Goals. Because they are important to the Goals, these summaries are included in a special section of the Study. This report includes a detailed presentation on our human resources. This will help explain the restructuring being undertaken that will ensure we can carry out our Five-Year Goals.

Greg hosted a number of focus groups and listened to many of the heads of ministries, organizations and groups in the parish. All the suggestions, comments and recommendations are on the parish website. They have been given to the Pastoral Team to guide in pastoral planning and decisions.

I believe that you will be fascinated by the variety, enthusiasm and passion of all the participants. The Pastoral Study Report will surprise, challenge, inspire and guide us at this moment in the history of our parish.

Yours in Christ,



I. The Heart of the Pastoral Study: Five-Year Goals

These Goals are the result of the discussions held during the Pastoral Study. They form the blueprint for pastoral planning for the next five years as we prepare to celebrate the parish 50th anniversary in 2012.

Youth

- Develop an organized Youth Ministry.
- Locate a “Youth Room”.
- Develop an organized Young Adult Ministry.

Evangelization

- Develop a plan for reaching out to inactive parishioners.
- Enhance Hospitality in light of Evangelization.

Justice

- Enhance Social Justice education.
- Strengthen Parish Social Ministry to continue to be a valuable resource for the poor.

Faith Formation

- Enhance faith formation, especially of adults.

Stewardship

- Strengthen Stewardship education.
- Maintain financial stability.
- Update Employee Handbook.

Parish in General

- Enhance communication and encourage website utilization.
- Achieve greater integration and increased collaboration between the ministries.
- Have more effective use of the Mission and Vision Statements.
- Plan 50th anniversary celebration(s); establish parish archive for photos, memorabilia, articles, etc.

Pastoral Team

- Review and enhance all sacramental processes.
- Engage in strategic planning for all areas of ministry.

Buildings and Grounds

- Compile long-range plan for maintenance and utilization.
- Investigate parking lot entrance and exit enhancements.
- Maximize use of space and properties, in particular the Spiritual Life Center.
- Investigate a “Toddler Room” in the church.

II. Study Overview

A. Background

On June 28, 2006, Monsignor Francis J. Schneider assumed the position of Pastor of St. Elizabeth Parish, Melville. Fr. Frank replaced Fr. Bruce Powers, who had been pastor since 1990.

Fr. Frank's background included studying Canon Law in Rome and Washington, D.C., and earning his doctorate (J.C.D.). His last assignment prior to St. Elizabeth was Rector of the Seminary of the Immaculate Conception in Huntington. Fr. Frank chose to adopt an "evolutionary, not revolutionary" approach, and informed the parish that, during his first year as pastor, parish activities and operations would continue unchanged.

To better understand the parish and see what changes might be needed, in the summer of 2006 he consulted the Pastoral Team and Pastoral Council, and commissioned a Pastoral Study. On September 1, Fr. Frank hired Greg Cellini, a candidate with the Franciscan Brothers of Brooklyn, as a Pastoral Assistant to oversee the information gathering pertaining to the Study.

As an initial step, Greg reviewed data that had been previously collected regarding the parish. This included a CARA Study which was completed in 2004, and over 40 pages of documentation compiled for the April 18, 2006, parish-wide meeting held by the Diocese of Rockville Centre in conjunction with selecting a new pastor. Upon review of this information, Greg compiled a study charter for Fr. Frank's review and approval.

B. Information Gathering Techniques/Sources

Rather than written surveys, Fr. Frank believed that personal, open-ended conversations would be most helpful, and wanted to gather information for the Study using this strategy. It was determined that interviews and focus groups would be the primary information gathering techniques. It was important that information be obtained from diverse sources. These sources included Pastoral Team and Support Staff members, contractors, leaders of ministries and parishioners. To solicit parishioners, a Pastoral Study sign-up form was printed in the bulletin and posted on the website in late October/early November. Fr. Frank mentioned the Study in his November 4th letter to all parishioners, and during his November 5th and 12th stewardship renewal homilies.

The interviews and focus groups were conducted from late November to early March. Information was obtained from the following sources (approximate number of participants in brackets):

- Pastoral Team and Support Staff members (15)
- Contractors (2)
- Ministry leaders (52)

- Pastoral Council members (9)
- Finance Committee member (1)
- Active parishioners (82)

There were eight focus groups held. Two of the groups were “open” and the remainder targeted as follows:

- Adult Choir
- Bulletin
- Catechists
- Hospitality
- Outreach
- Young Adult

In addition to the focus groups and interviews, feedback regarding the September 2007 - August 2012 Goals was obtained via email from a Sounding Board Group made up of approximately 30 parishioners. Some of these parishioners had participated in a focus group or interview. Moreover, diocesan officials provided benchmark/best practices information.

Thanks are in order to all participants in the Study, whose openness and honesty provided the bedrock for the information derived.

III. The Five-Year Goals

A. Introduction

Goals are an important aspect of any organization, as they are the specific areas in which the entity wishes to focus. For St. Elizabeth, the Goals established for September 2007 - August 2012 will help successfully take the parish to its 50th anniversary.

The process to derive a preliminary list of September 2007 – August 2012 Goals was the following:

1. In 2004, the parish engaged “CARA” to perform an updated survey of the parish. The materials and recommendations from this study have been used to guide the parish over the past three years. Some of the Goals were also used to form the new Five-Year Goals.
2. On April 18, 2006, the Diocese of Rockville Centre hosted an open forum for the parish in which to gather information regarding the appointment of a new pastor. A report containing over forty pages of materials was given to Fr. Frank when he became pastor. Many of the ideas that surfaced during the meeting helped to form the new Five-Year Goals.
3. Fr. Frank also added his ideas to the list of Goals.
4. The Goals were clustered into the following categories:
 - Youth
 - Buildings and Grounds
 - Parish
 - Evangelization and Justice
 - Pastoral Team
 - Stewardship.
5. The Goals were discussed with the Pastoral Team and updated with their feedback.
6. The Goals were presented to the Pastoral Council and enhanced to become those appearing on the parish website.
7. As the Pastoral Study broadened to the wider parish, these Goals were discussed in interviews and focus groups for feedback, enhancement, and even additions.

B. Findings: What Were the Strongest Reactions?

The following clear feedback was received regarding the Goals during the Study interviews and focus groups. Please refer to the next section, Detailed Goals Discussion, for more feedback.

1. Youth

The response strongly supported the allocation of resources to youth (grades 6 – 12) and the hiring of a full-time Director of Youth Ministry. (Note: a search for such a director began in February and the new Director of Youth Ministry began on June 1, 2007.) Existing facilities should be utilized for the youth, especially a gathering place. A Young Adult Ministry is also needed and should be a focus of the new Director of Youth Ministry. The initial Five-Year Goals were strongly validated during the course of the Pastoral Study.

2. Evangelization and Justice

The Evangelization and Justice Goals hit the mark; however, many felt they should be separated into their own categories. The Outreach Office renovation needs to be done. Based on the feedback from participants, a new category was added to the Goals: *Justice*.

3. Stewardship

Participants felt strongly that stewardship education is very much needed, beyond “treasure” to “time and talent.” The goal of “Establish solid parish financial reserves” needs to be reworded to avoid the connotation that the parish is a bank. Keeping the Employee Handbook updated is recommended practice. The initial Goals were modified according to these suggestions.

4. Parish in General

The initial Goals in this area were well-received. The 45th and 50th anniversaries celebrations need to be affordable for parishioners and low-key in the spirit of St. Elizabeth. There are several materials from the first 45 years that can be archived. The Mission and Vision statements need to be updated and effectively communicated to the parish.

5. Pastoral Team

It is interesting to note that there were not too many comments in this area of parish life. This may be due to the confidence participants have in parish leadership, or to a lack of knowledge of the day-to-day ministerial and administrative life in the parish offices. Nevertheless, participants agreed that periodically reviewing the sacramental processes was important. Providing long-term planning skills to Pastoral Team members was thought effective; however, the design of the process needs to be added to the goal.

6. Buildings and Grounds

Participants agreed that the overall condition of the building and grounds is very good. Most felt that there is no need for another parish building. The concentration over the next five years should be on maintenance and optimal utilization of the site; in particular, the Spiritual Life Center (SLC). It was felt appropriate to investigate enhancing the ways to enter/exit the site. There was general support for investigating the possibility of a toddler room in the church. Some minor changes, therefore, were made in the initial five-year Goals.

7. Additional Goals

During the course of the Pastoral Study, it became apparent that the initial Goals were not sufficient to meet the needs that were surfacing during interviews and focus groups. There were three additional focus areas that called for Goals to be added. These are:

- Faith Formation of adults, teens and children.
- Communication, with emphasis on increased utilization of the website.
- Integration of parish life as a whole, in particular the ministries.

8. Recommended Rewording of Goals

To finalize the September 2007 - August 2012 Goals, enhancements were made to the preliminary Goals to reflect the input of the Pastoral Study participants. These Goals now form the basis for parish pastoral planning for the next five years.

C. Findings: More Detailed Goals Discussion

1. Youth (Youth Groups/Young Adults)

Under the leadership of interim Director of Youth Ministry Tom Efstathiou, and with assistance of an Adult Planning Group headed by Laura Scanlon, a middle school (grades 6 – 8) Youth Group and high school Youth Group were formed during the fall of 2006. Over one hundred youth have participated in events held to date.

After the January 21st event, Laura led a discussion with attendees to determine which events would be of interest to the middle school Youth Group. The contents of the discussion have been given to the new Director of Youth Ministry, which will assist him in pastoral planning for the youth.

Some study participants raised the question of constructing a gymnasium. The majority of participants did not feel a gym was a project in which the parish should become involved. There were many additional suggestions that arose during the Study. Even if they were made by just one participant, they are listed here:

- Beth-el Lutheran Church's Youth Program is working well and may be a benchmarking opportunity for new the Director of Youth Ministry.
- The downstairs area of the SLC should be renovated for the youth groups, and include couches, televisions and game tables.
- Young Adult Ministry members could assist with the youth.
- Activities could include bike outings, trips, retreats, Praise and Worship Music, guest speakers, and plays.
- Youth groups need to get involved in parish Outreach, as well as local, national and international community projects.
- More youth should participate as lectors, Eucharistic Ministers and ushers.
- We need to have youth involved in more ministries.
- Youth can assist in decorating the church.
- We need to have youth groups involved in the website.
- We could involve youth in the 45th and 50th anniversary celebrations.

[Note: Young Adults, as defined by the Diocese of Rockville Centre, are between the ages of 19 and 39.]

There are several diocesan sponsored events for Young Adults. There is currently no Young Adult Ministry in the parish. This will be a responsibility of the Director of Youth Ministry. In an attempt to provide information to the Director of Youth Ministry, a focus group was held to discuss the needs of Young Adults. The highlights of the Young Adult Focus Group can be found on the parish website. They will assist the new Youth Minister in planning a Young Adult Ministry.

Recommendations:

1. The Director of Youth Ministry consider the above feedback and implement as appropriate.
2. Continue to advertise Young Adults events sponsored by the diocese in the bulletin and website.
3. The Director of Youth Ministry develop a Young Adult Ministry.

2. Evangelization

Participants commented favorably on the parish's welcoming spirit and how it has improved. People feel more welcome here than at other parishes. Little things are very meaningful -- like being greeted when arriving at mass, and the mass presider welcoming visitors or those who have returned.

Based on parish statistics the majority of families registered do not attend mass on a regular basis. Various attempts to obtain input for the Pastoral Study from these inactive parishioners were sadly unsuccessful. Even though the parish must continue to satisfy those people who are coming, the need for Evangelization became quite apparent during the Pastoral Study. As one interviewee said, "It is critical to show inactive parishioners the benefit of God being the glue of their life."

Participants thought Hospitality that has been offered after weekend masses should be an important component of evangelization. As the Pastoral Team liaison and leader of the Hospitality Ministry, Greg was receiving much feedback that Hospitality was a ministry challenging to organize.

On November 29, 2006, a focus group was held to discuss Hospitality. Please see the parish website for the highlights. They will be given to the Pastoral Team to evaluate and assist in pastoral planning.

Feedback from interviews and open focus groups validated the need to take a closer look at the current structure and purpose of Hospitality after all weekend masses. This feedback included:

- Hospitality is a social gathering.
- We need to do a better job speaking to people who are by themselves.
- Hospitality could be a forum to promote ministries.
- Eucharistic Ministers and Readers who participated at mass could attend Hospitality and greet anyone they do not know.
- Pastoral Council members need to attend Hospitality and be identified as such.
- Lighting is dim in the Hospitality Room.
- Continue serving the baked goods, but stop the wine and cheese.

Recommendations:

- Establish an evangelization strategy.
- Expand the parish understanding of Hospitality beyond “Hospitality-after-all-the-masses” to using Hospitality as an excellent means to welcome and evangelize.

3. Justice

As Outreach is such a large and critical part of Parish Social Ministry, a focus group of Outreach members was held on February 7th. Please see the parish website for the highlights. These will assist the Director of Parish Social Ministry in pastoral planning.

Additional suggestions made by at least one study participant regarding Parish Social Ministry included:

- Open the parish one night a month to feed/house poor families.
- Take occasional special collections for needy families in the parish.
- Confirm that users of Outreach really need the services.

Recommendations:

- Consider naming a Coordinator for each Outreach daily team.
- Investigate the possibility of having Catholic Charities train at the parish during the day.
- Consider enhancing parish awareness about needs of the poor.
- Consider participant feedback.

4. Faith Formation

This area of parish life surfaced strongly during the Pastoral Study. As stated earlier, there is a new Five-Year Goal added to the initial list. Parishioners desire a greater focus on faith formation and spirituality. Eucharist and prayer need to be more emphasized to all ages.

Faith formation activities suggested included:

- Adult bible study
- Annual parish mission with sacramental Reconciliation
- Theology (especially Christology) classes
- Family issues classes

Recommendation: Evaluate the above suggestions.

5. Stewardship

The concept of stewardship appeared nebulous to many. More education about stewardship would definitely be beneficial. Many participants felt that there is currently too much focus on the “financial” part of stewardship. The priority order of Time, Talent, and Treasure needs to be clear.

Smaller ministry fairs could be more effective than larger ones. The purpose is often lost when the fair is too large.

Specific suggestions made by at least one study participant regarding stewardship included:

- As stewardship is a fruit of faith, increase faith to lead to greater stewardship.
- Educating people as to how contributions are spent will motivate more giving.
- The parish should give to the poor as much money as possible.
- The stewardship video should be shown.
- Stewardship cards should be put in the collection basket, not walked to the altar.
- Calls for stewardship pledges should not be made during dinner.
- The annual Stewardship Tithing Grant can continue, but the selection process should be re-examined.
- Provide seminars on strengthening finances so people can afford to contribute more.

Recommendation: Consider the above suggestions in an effort to enhance stewardship education and implementation.

6. Parish in General

In addition to the periodic picnic, participants are seeking more inclusive parish-wide social events. Whenever possible, the events should also have a spiritual aspect. There was passion about creating events that are accessible to all and to avoid as much as possible the impression that there are cliques/groups open only to the affluent. The events need to be affordable for the majority of the parish, i.e., around \$50 per person. When events are held in Msgr. Kane Hall, little children need to be better controlled.

Many voiced the desire to create a journal for the 50th year anniversary similar to the one created for the 40th anniversary. The materials used for the 40th can be incorporated.

The current Mission and Vision Statements were widely discussed. Feedback included that the current statements:

- Must be effectively communicated to all parishioners.
- Took much thought/effort to derive, which should be understood prior to re-evaluating/updating.
- Are not understood, and hardly used and lived.
- Do not represent current times.

- Are too wordy, and need to be condensed and more inviting.
- Need to be more specific.
- Need to incorporate more about the importance of being holy people.
- Should be revisited/changed at the end of the Pastoral Study to incorporate the September 2007 – August 2012 Goals.

Recommendations:

- Consider offering more affordable, inclusive parish events;
- Look into creating a 50th year anniversary journal;
- Make it a priority to use study information to update the Mission and Vision Statements.

7. Pastoral Team

Participants did not have many comments on this area of the parish structure. As stated earlier, periodically reviewing the sacramental processes was embraced and providing long-term planning skills to Pastoral Team members was thought effective.

8. Buildings and Grounds

On December 4, 2006, Deacon John Trodden (Pastoral Associate for Administration, The Parish of St. Joseph, Kings Park), Facilities Manager Mickey Szypot, and Greg did a walk-over of the buildings, i.e., rectory, Parish Center (including church) and SLC, and grounds. It was apparent that the facility is in excellent condition. There are no major repairs anticipated during the next five years.

Study participants said they were pleased with the overall condition of the buildings and grounds. They raised some suggestions to improve them. These suggestions are included in ideas about the church and the rest of the site.

Church

A significant number of participants raised questions regarding the location of the Blessed Sacrament. These people felt strongly that it is more appropriate to locate the Blessed Sacrament inside the main body of the church. Some talked about the centrality of the Eucharist for the parish. If the tabernacle is left in its current location, the sanctuary lamp could be more visible from inside the church. Missing plexiglas pieces in the chapel screen need to be replaced.

Another suggestion from participants dealt with the Stations of the Cross. Some felt they are placed backwards and are in need of cleaning. Additionally, several people mentioned that the processional cross should be a crucifix. [Note: a new processional cross was donated and is in use in the church. It has the “corpus” that is called for by church documents.]

Reaction was mixed about the need for a Toddler Room. Some people felt parishioners could be more tolerant of young children at mass, while others (especially parents of young children) thought a Toddler Room would be helpful to them and motivate them to attend mass as a family. If implemented, the Toddler Room could contain soundproof glass.

Some participants desired more visibility of statues in the main body of the church. Suggestions included placing a Blessed Mother statue in the church, and relocating the St. Elizabeth statue in the Gathering Area for her 800th anniversary and parish 45th anniversary. Many participants suggested that two handrails should be added to the altar. This would ease the challenge of walking up and down the altar, especially for the less mobile.

There were many additional suggestions about the church that arose during the Pastoral Study. Even if they were made by just one participant, they are listed here:

- Have the “upper portion” cleaned quarterly to relieve the dust.
- Add kneelers to the far most left pews and for Altar Servers.
- Install ceiling fans to keep cool air down in summer and warm air down in winter.
- Place a railing in front of the first rows of pews.
- Have acoustics inspected/adjusted as needed.
- Put cushions on pews.
- Repair missing moldings and broken hymnal holders in pews.
- Have a section designated for handicapped people.
- Adjust the church doors so they do not slam when closed.
- Have a smaller holy water font on the side accessible for children.
- Ring bells during the consecration (the Rosary Society would pay for new bells).
- Bring back the Carillon (outdoor bells). [Note: installed 6/2/07.]

Rest of Site

The largest concern raised by the participants was that the SLC needs to be better utilized. Perhaps a task force should be formed to investigate alternative utilization.

Parishioners surfaced a variety of concerns about the roadway used to enter and exit the facility. It was felt appropriate to investigate enhancing ways to enter and exit the facility. Currently there are parishioners and employees who come in the exits, creating danger. In the meantime, the road in front of the Parish Center should be designated as a “one-way” and indicated as such with large signs.

Additional Facilities Needs

Participants also voiced the strong feeling that facilities should be used first for parish needs and then to generate income. Parish activities – in particular Family Program and

Outreach - need to have appropriate space. The Study uncovered additional facilities needs for the Family Program, Outreach, the music programs, and CYO.

- Family Religious Education Program

Due to lack of available space, Family Program classes are being held in various places not conducive for learning, including the sacristy and hallway between the church and parish offices. Some of the classes are being held in rooms leased to third parties. Much effort is needed to set up and break down these rooms. Participants suggested that, by having classes in these places, the message being sent is that religious education is not a priority. This was also mentioned by Deacon John Trodden during the December 4th facility walk-through.

[Note: To avoid holding Family Program classes in the spaces named above which are not conducive to learning, and to avoid those rooms leased to third parties, approximately ten additional classrooms are needed. If Family Program classes continue to use those rooms which are leased, then to avoid the other less helpful learning environments, another five classrooms are needed.]

- Music Programs

The Adult Choir and the Children's Choir currently practice in the church. It would be very helpful to have a dedicated room the size of 109 for choir practice. Ideally, the room would contain lifts on which the members could sit and stand.

Additionally, the main organ is about 2/3 completed, according to the Director of Music, Virgil Barkauskas. The Choir Division is not started and the Antiphonal Organ is not started. If desired, cost estimates for these could be provided by Virgil.

- Outreach

During the Pastoral Study, additional facilities needs surfaced for Outreach which include more space for the food pantry, enlarged storage space close to the pantry, a "linen" closet for smaller items, two private interview rooms (both with phones), reception/waiting area solely for Outreach, ample desk chairs, one computer with printer, a small copier, better lighting, air conditioning unit added to the roof, speakers in the ceiling of the waiting area and food pantry. It does not appear viable that Outreach could be moved to another location, e.g., the SLC. Several volunteers would resign because they would feel unsafe working in a confined area with some clients who are mentally unstable. In addition to the above needs, it would be helpful for the Director of Parish Social Ministry to have a third room with a phone. This room would be used by other Parish Social Ministries without taking space from the Outreach Ministry.

- CYO

CYO has a designated space for meetings and storage next to the garages. Participants from CYO suggested that too much equipment is stored in their field house. They requested additional storage space for their equipment.

Parish Center Reception Area

Some participants said the Parish Center Reception area is challenging because the atmosphere is not always friendly. Sometimes the parishioner must initiate the greeting.

Leases

Participants felt that only space not needed for parish activities should be leased. They stressed the need for priorities: “we are a parish with unused space, not a rental property company with a church attached.”

Suggestions made by at least one Pastoral Study participant regarding leases included the following:

- Profitability of the leases – especially the lease to Huntington Seniors – needs to be analyzed.
- Parishioners could be allowed to lease Msgr. Kane Hall for parties.
- When the Parish Center is closed, the 12-step recovery programs should not be permitted to meet.
- Conduct the 12-step recovery programs in the SLC.

There were many additional suggestions regarding the rest of the site that arose during the Study. Even if they were made by just one participant, they are listed here:

- Put a Blessed Mother statue in front of the Church, visible from Wolf Hill Road.
- Place the mass schedule on the Wolf Hill Road sign.
- Build a conference room in the Parish Center.
- Build a covered walkway between the Parish Center and the SLC.
- Remove the post-and-rail fence and add a living waters fountain display.
- Increase handicapped access and parking lot spaces.
- Repair cracked/uneven sidewalk blocks.
- Provide the Business Manager a soundproof office.
- Put a sign in Hospitality Room that no food/drink are allowed in Gathering Area.
- Fix the doors to the main entrance of church.
- Purchase new audio-visual equipment.
- Designate a Catholic Resource Center containing books/articles. [Note: These participants were not aware that a spiritual library exists in the SLC.]

Thrift Shop

Two parishioners requested to be interviewed for the Study to raise the idea of opening a Thrift Shop. This possible use of the parish facilities is included in this section of the Pastoral Study. In the past there was a Thrift Shop. The participants requested the shop be opened under the following criteria:

- The purpose of the Thrift Shop would be to sell gently-used, second-hand, clean clothes donated by parishioners.
- The shop would be open Wednesdays, Thursdays, and Fridays, from September to June, 10:00 A.M. – 3:00 P.M.
- Volunteer pairs would oversee the shop during 2.5 hour shifts.
- Coupons could be given to clients of Outreach.

According to other Study participants, the Thrift Shop was closed because the room was needed for other activities. They pointed out that the major clients usually were the staff themselves and sufficient volunteers could not always be recruited.

Recommendations:

- Evaluate the suggestions made for the church, especially the tabernacle.
- Investigate a Toddler Room.
- Establish a task force to look into SLC utilization.
- Make road in front of Parish Center a “one-way”.
- Evaluate suggestions made to enhance the rest of the site.
- Create a task force to assess the additional facilities needs of Family Program, Outreach, CYO, and the music programs.
- The pastor and trustees should consider the suggestions about the leases.
- Review expectations with those who cover the reception desk and use this as an opportunity for welcome and evangelization.
- Consider the request for the Thrift Shop.

IV. Ministries

A. Introduction

Another key to St. Elizabeth meeting/exceeding its September 2007 – August 2012 Goals is its ministries. For purposes of the Pastoral Study, a ministry is a “Group of parishioners sharing a common goal who are called by the Holy Spirit to serve for the sake of the parish’s mission”.

As an initial step to reviewing the ministries, an inventory was compiled (see website). To learn about each ministry, Greg:

- Spoke with each Pastoral Team and Support Staff member regarding his or her ministries;
- Conducted one-on-one interviews with leaders of several ministries;
- Facilitated focus groups of the larger ministries -- i.e., Adult Choir, Family Program catechists, Hospitality and Outreach.

Below is a summary of key findings and recommendations for ministries overall.

B. Findings

There are many dedicated, energetic people involved with ministries at St. Elizabeth. These ministries are doing wonderful things and members need to be commended.

There appears to be various opportunities for improvement relating to ministries, including:

- Be more proactive in planning/scheduling events.
- Provide forums in which ministries can share knowledge.
- Create greater synergy between the ministries.
- Eliminate those ministries which do not align with the updated parish mission.
- Make greater efforts to recruit new members.
- Increase communication about the ministries and their different events.

C. Recommendations

Regarding ministries, the following actions should be considered:

- Require that ministries submit by June 15 desired events for fiscal year, i.e., September – August.
- Hold a meeting of ministry leaders during which time is allotted to knowledge sharing.
- Encourage ministries to integrate more by working together on events.
- Review ministries which may not align with the parish’s updated mission and eliminate those which do not align.
- Create a Welcoming Ministry which introduces ministries to new parishioners as part of the orientation process and encourages them to join at least one ministry.

- Include a standard page in the weekly bulletin which includes for each ministry:
 - o Ministry name
 - o Pastoral Team liaison
 - o Ministry leader name
 - o Ministry leader phone number
 - o Ministry leader email address
- Pastoral Team liaisons encourage their ministry leaders to fully utilize the website by including on the website the above information contained in the bulletin plus:
 - o A brief description regarding the ministry;
 - o Pictures from recent events;
- Consider creating a “Wall of Ministries” in the Gathering Area which contains information regarding ministries.

Study findings and recommendations received from participants regarding individual ministries can be found on the parish website.

V. Pastoral Council

A. Introduction

Another key aspect to St. Elizabeth meeting/exceeding its September 2007 – August 2012 Goals aspect is the Pastoral Council. As part of the Study, in January and early February, Greg conducted one-on-one interviews with each of nine Council members. The following is a summary of the interviews, arranged by each question topic. For each topic, recommendations for actions to be considered are included.

B. Findings and Recommendations

1. Council Mission

The majority of the members agreed on the Council mission, i.e., why it exists. The Council's mission is to be a:

- Liaison between the Pastoral Team (especially Fr. Frank) and the parish for concerns/needs of the parishioners.
- Visionary arm of the parish (as opposed to being a hands-on entity).
- Sounding board for new items generated by the Pastoral Team or parishioners.

Recommendations: none.

2. Expectations of Council Members

There was a wide range of expectations for Council members, including:

- Attend all/virtually all meetings.
- Be approachable and welcoming.
- Be a good steward and role model of Christ.
- Be honest.
- Be open to new ideas.
- Communicate regularly with Pastoral Team liaison.
- Create meeting agendas and minutes periodically.
- Listen to parishioner desires.
- Obtain feedback from ministries he/she represents.
- Relay information to and from parishioners.

Recommendation: Ensure that all Council members agree to and understand these expectations and have the desire to meet and exceed them.

3. Effectiveness of Council

The majority of members felt the Council is effective. Strengths of the group include:

- Addressing issues as needed.
- Being a wonderful team who compliment Fr. Frank and each other.
- Being able to agree to disagree.
- Facilitating improvement in all aspects of parish life.
- Fulfilling its mission.

Opportunities for improvement include:

- Knowing more about concerns of parishioners.
- Stressing importance of attending meetings.

Recommendation: Council members need to make a conscious effort to attend meetings (also, please refer to recommendations in “Ways Council Can Better Serve Parish”).

4. Mission and Vision Statements

The Mission and Vision Statements are implicitly used by most members to help ensure that Council activities are aligned with these statements. The clarity of the statements varied. Members felt Fr. Frank should feel free to re-evaluate these statements and update them as needed to represent his purposes and desired outcomes for St. Elizabeth. Prior to doing so, he needs to understand the effort and thought process that went into creating the current statements.

Recommendation: Fr. Frank lead a re-evaluation of the statements.

5. Preliminary Long-Term Goals

The majority of Council members thought the Goals listed on the parish website and circulated among the interviewees, focus groups, and Pastoral Team, hit the mark. Input regarding these Goals included:

- Youth Ministry is an important focus area for adequate dedicated parish resources.
- Better utilization of the building in which the Spiritual Life Center currently resides should be clearly delineated in the Buildings and Grounds Goals.
- The goal of “Establishing solid financial resources” should be reworded.
- Mission and Vision Statements may not need to be changed, but updated and more effectively communicated to the parish.
- A goal regarding enhancing parish communication should be added, with the website being an integral component of the goal.
- The Outreach renovation needs to be done.
- Opinions re: need for a Toddler Room were mixed.

Recommendations:

1. Clearly delineate in the Buildings and Ground Goals better utilization of the building in which the Spiritual Life Center currently resides.

2. Reword the goal regarding establishing solid financial resources.
3. Reword the Mission and Vision Statements goal.
4. Add a goal regarding enhancing parish communication.
5. Maintain the goal of investigating a Toddler Room.

6. Ways Pastoral Council Can Better Serve the Parish

Many members stated the Council could better serve the parish by having greater connection with parishioners to learn more about their concerns. Related to this, there is a need for more education of parishioners about what the Council is and does.

There were several ways members suggested we increase connection and education, including:

- Have one Council meeting per year open to the parish, and allow time at the end for questions and answers.
- Members wear their badges when going to mass.
- Members attend Hospitality and openly solicit input.
- Members increase communication with the ministries they represent.
- Members have a list of “Sounding Board People” from whom to solicit feedback regarding new ideas.
- Update the January 2003 Guidelines for Pastoral Council.
- Recognize members annually in accordance with the Guidelines.
- Encourage parishioners to use our website to suggest, complain, etc.

Recommendation: Consider each of the above suggestions.

7. Ways the Pastor Can Support the Pastoral Council

The majority of members felt Fr. Frank is too new to evaluate what he can do to better support the Council. Members are pleased with the current collaborative interaction.

Recommendation: Evaluate in 2nd half of 2007 the support being provided by Fr. Frank.

8. Resources/Information

Resources/Information being supplied to members is sufficient to carry out their responsibilities.

Recommendations: None.

9. Frustrations/Concerns

One frustration was the length of time it took to handle the music survey.

A few members expressed concern that four Council members are scheduled to leave in August, 2007. Some members offered that they like the current election process, while another suggested that the pastor appoint one/two members.

Recommendation: Review the current election process and enhance as needed.

VI. Human Resources

A. Introduction

The right people resources are key to St. Elizabeth meeting/exceeding its September, 2007 – August, 2012 Goals. People are the issue; everything else is just detail.

St. Elizabeth has historically used a blend of internal and external human resources. Please see the parish website for a listing of these resources as of March 1, 2007.

B. Findings

1. Pastoral Team

Research regarding existing Pastoral Team human resources yielded the following:

- Director of Parish Social Ministry: The Director is handling many clerical duties that could be delegated to an administrator level. Administrative support of eight hours per week would be very helpful.
- Director of Religious Education: The Director agreed to be responsible for additional responsibilities when the Director of Youth Ministry resigned in July 2006. These duties should be incorporated into the role of the new Director of Youth Ministry. The responsibility for Religious Education fees should be transferred to the Business Office.
- Director of Spiritual Life: This role has evolved into one of being concerned for the maintenance and support of the building and the ministries and lessees who use it, rather than for the spiritual development of parishioners. These responsibilities distract the director from fully utilizing her skills, experience, and education. The concerns of maintenance and long-term and short-term leasing belong to the Business Office. Responsibility for the work supporting the ministries which use the SLC belongs to the people in those ministries.
- Business Manager: Vacant since July 31, 2006. The office is being covered by a consultant and temporary replacement.
- Director of Youth Ministry: Vacant since July 31, 2006. The position is being covered by temporary help and volunteer leadership. [Note: Director of Youth Ministry hired 6/1/07.]
- Additionally, someone on the Pastoral Team needs to be dedicated to Adult Faith Formation and Evangelization, as these are two critical areas for which the parish has long-term Goals.

2. Support Staff

Research regarding existing staff positions yielded the following:

- Administrative Clerk (8 hours per week): This position dedicates as much as 25% of working time to the Hospitality Ministry.

- Business Office Administrative Assistant: This position was originally intended to be a support function for the Business Manager; however, it has grown significantly since the Business Manager resigned in July, 2006. One major duty it has assumed is determining content for the weekly bulletin. A request has been made that this person handles the filing of facilities-related paperwork (one hour per week).
- Facilities Manager (part-time): For the past twelve years the parish facilities have been managed by a part-time facilities manager who is off-site. The participants noted strongly that the buildings and grounds are maintained well. During the Pastoral Study, more demands on the staff regarding the lessees, visitors and parish groups came to light. This opened the possibility of moving to a different model, i.e., the typical parish position of Business Manager/Facilities Manager, a full-time, on-site person. The rationale for combining these responsibilities also includes:
 - Synergy is created; i.e., knowledge gained by the Business Manager is helpful when managing facilities.
 - The Business Manager can provide ongoing on-site direction to the custodial help.
 - The Business Manager is on-site to address issues arising with lessees, visitors, etc.
 - The Business Manager is on the premises to deal with facilities emergencies that arise.
- Parish Secretary: A key responsibility of this role, as originally intended, was to provide for the secretarial needs of the pastor, including handling correspondence and scheduling appointments; also, this position was to take an active role in sacraments such as Baptisms. Due to the high volume of calls and visitors, this position has evolved into a receptionist role. During the past year the pastor has handled his own appointments and correspondence.
- Religious Education Secretary: Over the past years there has been an increasing demand to handle efficiently the data relating to the Family Program. Currently, this position has significant interaction with Family Program parents, including introduction to the parish, stewardship, etc. These needs could be better served, and more thoroughly and pastorally done by the Director of Religious Education. Given the change in focus, the position responsibilities should be able to be handled within three days per week.

Additionally, participants were generally pleased about the support provided by the Business Office. One area of opportunity in the Business Office is a centralized, automated facilities scheduler to replace the various current manual calendars. Research has begun on various facilities schedulers. Another area of opportunity is the handling of Family Program fees, currently done by the Director of Religious Education and her secretary. This process should be driven by the Business Office. Additional suggestions made by at least one study participant regarding the Business Office included:

- The Business Office handles activities in the SLC as in the Parish Center.
- The Business Office follow-up for lessee payments.

- The volunteer who validates the weekly posting of contributions cease doing so and use other opportunities to assist.
- Annual letters regarding contributions be more frequent due to 2007 change in Tax Law.
- A filing cabinet be established only for paperwork/documentation pertaining to facilities.
- Be consistent when soliciting volunteer information, e.g., if one volunteer is asked for a Social Security number, all are asked.

3. External Resources

- Bookkeeper: This position is handled one day a week. The checks are drawn, accounts balanced, budget reports prepared.
- Bulletin Consultant: Please refer to the Bulletin section for a discussion regarding this resource.
- Possible Cleaning Service: A need was expressed to have a cleaning service work between 6:00 and 10:00 pm. on the Family Program nights (currently Monday and Tuesday) to assist with mopping, security, sickness and waste removal. Doing this would alleviate the need to have a security person those nights. The additional cost to the parish would be approximately \$35 per night.

4. Recommendations

The following actions are recommended pertaining to human resources:

1. Eliminate the position of Director of Spiritual Life.
2. Create the position of Director of Adult Faith Formation and Evangelization.
3. Create the position of Parish Communications Assistant which will become accountable for the bulletin, and support the pastor, and directors of Adult Faith Formation and Evangelization, Parish Social Ministry, and Youth Ministry.
4. Eliminate the Facilities Manager Position and fold these responsibilities into a full-time Business Manager/Facilities Manager position.
5. Eliminate the position of Parish Secretary.
6. Cover the front desk with the following part-time positions:
 - a. Receptionist One – 16 hours/week dedicated 100%
 - b. Receptionist Two – 16 hours/week dedicated 100%
 - c. Administrative Clerk – 16 hours/week dedicated 50%;
7. Eliminate the position of Religious Education Secretary.
8. Create a Religious Education Data Assistant position (three days per week),
9. Consider engaging a cleaning service during the evenings on which the Family Program is in session.

Please see the parish website for the result of these recommendations.

VII. Additional Topics

During the Study, participants raised various issues regarding additional topics. These topics included:

A. Bulletin

The parish has a bulletin agreement with John Patrick Publishing Company (JPP) which continues until June 6, 2011. Benefits accruing to St. Elizabeth under this agreement include the following:

- Weekly 12-page bulletin
- Twenty inserts per year
- One twenty-four page Annual Report
- Revenue of \$8,000 annually

As part of the Study interviews with the Pastoral Team and Support Staff, it became apparent that opportunities for improvement existed regarding the bulletin process.

Indicators of these opportunities included:

- The twelve-day lead time for the bulletin was causing much frustration.
- The cost to generate the bulletin appeared significant.
- The decision-making regarding bulletin content has burdened the Business Office Administrative Assistant.

Further research regarding the bulletin uncovered the following:

- The majority of the bulletin cost comes from payments made to an external consultant for layout and design services.
- On one occasion JPP did not supply a bulletin; at other times JPP has been late; and on at least one occasion pages were missing. (The company acknowledged significant equipment problems.)

To externally benchmark the bulletin process, Greg spoke with diocesan personnel. They advised the following:

- The annual revenue being received was low as compared to other parishes.
- The cost of the St. Elizabeth bulletin was at least 500% greater than that being incurred by other parishes.

To obtain participant feedback regarding the bulletin, a focus group was held on December 6th. (Please see the parish website for the highlights.) The suggestions coming from the focus group included:

- Assign a staff person to be the Bulletin Editor.
- Reduce the cost to produce the bulletin.
- Make the bulletin simpler.
- Renegotiate the bulletin agreement to provide higher annual revenue.

Recommendations:

1. Assign the Bulletin Editor role to the newly created position of Parish Communications Assistant.
2. Eliminate use of the external consultant doing layout and design.
3. Simplify the bulletin's content and format.

B. Communication

Parishioners are overall pleased with communication. The Study has helped to create a culture of clear, transparent, two-way communication.

Suggestions made by at least one Study participant regarding communication included the following:

- Use the website to maintain a database of parishioner email addresses.
- Hold an annual state of St. Elizabeth meeting (Frank Talk) to discuss current status and vision for upcoming year.
- Put on website links to reliable information regarding current issues.
- Include in bulletin and website bios of parishioners who recently died.
- Encourage parishioners to utilize the website for suggestions and gripes.
- Advertise more effectively events occurring in the SLC.
- Establish a hotline which people can call to advise of repairs needed.
- Explain how Fr. Frank and the Pastoral Council interact.
- Post on website minutes of Pastoral Council meetings.
- Remove St. Elizabeth from being listed on many websites as a gay-friendly parish.
- Advertise services available to shut-ins.
- Emphasize holy days of obligation.
- Clarify how someone receives the Long Island Catholic.
- List the Parish Staff in the bulletin.
- Send targeted communication after the Study is completed to
 - those not attending mass;
 - those not using sacraments;
 - those not using Religious Education;
 - those using Religious Education but not going to mass.

Recommendation: Consider these suggestions and review the Bulletin Focus Group suggestions.

C. Family Program

As catechists are such a large and critical part of the Family Program, a focus group of catechists was held on March 1. Please see the website for the highlights.

Additional suggestions made by at least one study participant regarding the Family Program included:

- Conduct the Family Program on Sundays.
- Hold K-5th grade classes during the day and grades 6 – 8 at night.
- Increase awareness of benefits of the Family Program.
- Include Eucharistic Adoration in activities for grades 7 and 8.
- Instruct recipients of the Family Program registration letter to see Religious Education staff, not Reception Desk personnel.
- Have Family Program calls go directly to Religious Education staff.

Recommendations:

1. Consider each of the opportunities for improvement suggested by the focus group.
2. Refer to Buildings and Grounds section above for discussion regarding facilities for the Family Program.
3. Consider each of the above suggestions.

VIII. The Next Steps

The following is an outline of what we can expect for the Pastoral Study in the next months (and years):

1. Report to the Parish is available for all parishioners and placed on the website.
2. The Pastoral Team has received all parts of the Report, especially those which have been placed on the website. These recommendations will assist in guiding the various aspects of pastoral life in the parish.
3. The Pastoral Council will focus on the Five-Year Goals when the new members are selected (fall, 2007). The Pastoral Council will assist the pastor and the pastoral team in planning for the future.
4. A Pastoral Plan based on the Goals will be developed.
5. As parish leadership reaches decisions about other matters contained in the Pastoral Study, they will be communicated to the parish at large.
6. Should further discussion about recommendations be needed, parishioners will be encouraged to be part of the consultation process.

The continued support, patience and honesty of all of us in St. Elizabeth parish will allow this Pastoral Study to bear much fruit!

VISION STATEMENT

Confident of Christ's transforming love, nourished by Word and Sacrament, we are compelled to further the Reign of God in our families, our parish, and our community through welcome and outreach to everyone.

MISSION STATEMENT

Recognizing the dignity and value of all human beings and honoring their life situations, we the people of St. Elizabeth –

- * Challenge one another to promote the Gospel message by serving the issues of justice.*
- * Welcome and seek to engage all people, especially those who feel marginalized.*
- * Provide a well-spring of strength and support through active participation in liturgy; engagement in faith formation; and the deepening of our spirituality.*
- * Encourage creativity and imagination toward the fulfillment of our Vision through collaboration, dialogue and mutual accountability.*