

May 25, 2022

Parish Reporting Tool

Name of Parish: St. Peter the Apostle, 11 Prince Street, Provincetown, MA 02657

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Overview of the demographic of participants. How were the consultations carried out?

The demographics of St. Peter's is an over 60 years of age population, consisting mostly of retirees with an influx of tourists during summer months. We have an increasing LGBTQ population that feel welcome and want to participate in the parish. St. Peter's is the only parish in the Fall River Diocese that has a Gay Spirituality Group.

Our religious education numbers are declining every year. Once the children receive confirmation few continue to attend mass. Parents are not interested in the church. It is mostly the grandparents who influence a child's attendance at religious education classes.

Economic and social issues affecting St. Peter's and Our Lady of Lourdes include a declining younger population and families; lack of affordable housing; lack of year-round jobs; low wages; lack of childcare; lack of transportation; access to medical care; and isolation. More and more businesses are owned by corporations who are not local and whose money is not invested in the community. This poses both challenges and opportunities for our parish.

Our program held April 23rd attracted 21 parishioners. We had three younger men in attendance, one in their twenties, one in their forties, and one in their fifties. They brought a new and fresh experience about their faith journeys, the joys of their faith, their views of the church, and strategies to increase faith participation, and outreach to younger populations. There was a group of long-time parishioners that were born in Provincetown; raised; married; raised children; baptized and confirmed at St. Peter's. Some attendees were retirees to Provincetown. Some had converted to Catholicism and others had left the church and returned.

There was extensive collaboration, planning and outreach for this program between Our Lady of Lourdes and St. Peter's. Invitations were sent to 284 parishioners. Some were identified as non-practicing, occasional parishioners, or seasonal. We also realized the parish list is outdated. Outreach continued with weekly notices in the bulletin, flyers posted in town and press releases to radio stations, newspapers, and local TV.

Summary of responses to Fundamental Questions: A synodal Church, in announcing the Gospel, “journeys together.” How is this “journeying together” happening today, in your particular Church? What steps does the Spirit invite us to take, in order, to grow in our “journeying together”?

In the evaluation of the program, participants strongly agreed or somewhat agreed they had a greater understanding of Synodality. They were able to identify places in their lives and community where they could journey together. They were able to experience joy in the Mass, Eucharist, hymns, readings, homilies, rosary, celebrating together, and heard the voice of the Holy Spirit in their lives. However, they felt there needed to be improvement to increase their joy, to growth in faith, and share it with others. Suggestions included: special events (e.g., Blessing of the Fleet), speakers, faith discussion groups, penance and prayer services, Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament, greater participation of religious education students in services, altar servers (especially women), meditation, contemplative prayer, greater involvement of the Knights of Columbus, reinstatement of greeters at mass, and greater interaction of the pastor with parishioners and the community. They would like more joint programs with Our Lady of Lourdes and more ecumenical services with other town churches. In the community, St. Peter’s is viewed as the “snobs” on the hill. It was felt the church needed to be more visible in the community and due greater outreach not only to their own parishioners but the larger community.

A participant shared with the group how young people approach their faith and hear the Holy Spirit differently from their parents or grandparents. Young people do not respond well to rules and view the church as rigid. They experience faith and the Holy Spirit through spirituality, contemplation, and prayer. They view Church hierarchy, clergy, and religious as preaching Jesus’ message but not exhibiting His teachings in word, action, or deed.

Other themes that came from the consultations:

Knowing the Pope’s hope for the Synod and greater participation of the laity, the consultation packet missed the mark. It was evident it was prepared by clergy and difficult for lay people to relate too. We revised the questions but kept the intent and outline of the packet. The question about people on the periphery was demeaning. Its intention of bringing people closer to the church would have had the opposite effect. The Church’s message of mercy and love needs to be communicated and extended to those who have experience annulment, women who have had abortions, divorced, LGBTQ, sexually abused, and other people who feel marginalized. With the lack of vocations, heterosexual men should be allowed to marry and become priest. The

Church is patriarchal, and all decisions are made and led by men. However, historically, women had a greater role in the church. The organizational structure of the Church was determined by men and Jesus'.

These discussions and decisions are beyond our control. It is unlikely they will be resolved in our lifetimes.

How well has this consultation allowed the Parish Community the opportunity to listen and share experiences?

The participants appreciated the program. They felt respected, listened to, and heard. We ran out of time. Further discussion and followed up was requested. They wanted to discuss specific issues and develop solutions to problems. They would like a meeting with the pastor to hear his vision, expectations, and ideas for the parish. People felt their voices were not heard. They were afraid if they spoke-up they would receive a negative reaction. They want a greater voice in decision-making. People did not realize the church had a parish council, the composition of the council, and its role. The council needs to educate its self on its purpose and role, develop a plan, and create links for communication between the council and parishioners. Much time was spent on media outreach and marketing.

What practical suggestions do you have for your faith community to continue the synodal journey and be a more listening, discerning, and participatory Church?

Recommendations, objectives, and outcomes:

1. Create a plan for a shared vision and mission on how our parish can be more synodal.
2. Plan programs to increase individual and the parish community to grow in communion, participation, and mission.
3. Develop a media plan for outreach to parishioners and community.
4. Expand programs for outreach and involvement in the community.
5. Identify parishioners' gifts and talents to implement goals and programs.

What practical suggestions do you have for the diocese to support parishes in becoming more synodal?

1. Meet individually with parish to assist with parish planning as needed and share resources.
2. Diocese to learn and understand the demographics of Cape Cod, available assessments of community needs and involvement with the community.
3. Highlight individual parish programs.
4. Extend media coverage of diocese strategic plan to parishes and community beyond diocese website.