

CHOOSING PATHS ON THE JOURNEY



Living Out Our Call to Discipleship Through Commission Life

Planning Guide for Parish Faith Formation Commissions

Office of Catholic Education
Archdiocese of Indianapolis

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Acknowledgments:

The Office of Catholic Education, Archdiocese of Indianapolis, wishes to acknowledge all of our dedicated Parish Administrators of Religious Education who have helped in various ways to bring this planning guide to fruition. In particular we thank Annette Calloway, Director of Religious Education at Saint Jude, Indianapolis, whose expertise contributed greatly to this resource. May all who use this guide choose wisely the paths that will lead to ever more effective parish catechetical programs—by God’s grace drawing women and men in southern and central Indiana ever more close to Him.

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May 2009

Dear Catechetical Leader,

Your efforts related to your parish faith formation commission are very much appreciated and very much needed. Commission life helps us draw out the best of our ideas, implementing them in ways that show genuine progress for catechetical programs from one year to the next.

Parish life can change from one year to the next. How important it is that we keep our finger on the pulse of our faith community and administer our parish catechetical programs accordingly.

May our Lord continue blessing you as you use this planning guide in the efforts of your parish faith formation commission. With gratitude for your contribution to ongoing authentic catechetical renewal, I am,

Sincerely yours in Christ,

+Daniel M. Buechlein

Most Reverend Daniel M. Buechlein, OSB
Archbishop of Indianapolis



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May 2009

Dear Catechetical Leader,

Our archdiocesan Office of Catholic Education encourages a vibrant commission structure for our parish catechetical programs. Experience has proven that when faith formation commissions are engaged and well-guided, lifelong catechesis is much more likely to be available.

Choosing Paths on the Journey is a valuable resource for the strategic planning process of your faith formation commission. Annual goals for true enhancement of your catechetical effort will emerge from this process of engaging parishioners in commission life.

I am greatly appreciative for the dedication you show to making your parish faith formation program the best that it can be by God's grace. May God bless you today and always as you work to share the light of truth with His people.

Sincerely,

Annette "Mickey" Lentz
Executive Director
Catholic Education and Faith Formation

FOREWORD

In 1997 the Archdiocese of Indianapolis published *Preparing Your Parish for the New Millennium: Parish Structure and Organization*, a guide for parish leaders designed to foster a greater awareness of the diverse ministries within a parish community and propose an organizational structure to sustain ongoing leadership and enrichment of those ministries. Key to the organizational structure was the formation of a commission for each broad area of parish ministry. A commission is a consultative body. It is a subgroup of the pastoral council responsible for recommending guidelines, developing goals, and coordinating activities in a specific area of ministry. Over the course of nearly a decade, the parishes have achieved remarkable results with the new organizational structure as many more persons stepped forward to answer Jesus' call to discipleship through sharing faith, vision, and expertise.

Choosing Paths on the Journey: Living Out Our Call to Discipleship Through Commission Life is a guide for the life of the parish Faith Formation Commission that will enable the parish administrator of religious education and commission members to collaborate effectively as stewards of the essential ministry of lifelong faith formation.

*Come, let us climb the Lord's mountain to the house of the God of Jacob,
that he may instruct us in his ways and we may walk in his paths.* Is. 2:3

BACKGROUND

The ministry of Faith Formation is one of the major educational ministries serving the Catholic Church in central and southern Indiana. Along with the Catholic Schools, the Faith Formation ministry receives its guidance and support from the Archdiocesan Office of Catholic Education. In its governance role, the parish Faith Formation Commission has the obligation to ensure that parish catechesis becomes increasingly effective in light of an ever-changing society, the new evangelization, and the many recent official Church resources and directives for the renewal of catechesis. Consequently, sound planning and goal setting must be at the forefront of the work of the Faith Formation Commission. (See Resource C for resources, catechetical documents and directives.)

Since 1977, educational planning has been part of the mission of the Archdiocese of Indianapolis, its deaneries, parishes and schools. For many years, the Office of Catholic Education, through a coordinator of boards of Total Catholic Education, monitored educational planning and provided direct services to

parish educational administrators and boards of education. Since the inception of the commission model of parish governance in 1997, and the subsequent establishment of separate school and faith formation commissions, the commission itself has been charged with the responsibility for long-range planning. In some parishes, the term “board of education” may still be in use. Regardless of terminology, the governance group for parish faith formation is responsible for long range planning.

For Catholic schools, the Office of Catholic Education provides a planning process that ensures their accreditation by the state of Indiana and recognition by appropriate educational associations as well as planning for essential strategic areas. Such accreditation, based on ongoing attention to standards and goals, is essential to the continued success of the Catholic schools in the archdiocese.

While the ministry of Faith Formation is not bound by any civil constraints, there are a number of mandates that flow from the universal Church, the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, the Archdiocese of Indianapolis, and local parish policy. These requirements and their supporting resources form the foundation for the work of the parish administrator of religious education. As the professional catechetical leader for the parish, the administrator informs the commission about mandates for faith formation ministry and engages the commission in working toward their effective implementation (More will be said about mandates within the planning process that follows.)

In recent years, planning for parish faith formation ministry has, for the most part, utilized a planning process called TEAMPLAN, a strategic planning process for non-profit organizations. More than thirty parishes and one deanery center have benefited from the TEAMPLAN process. The results were noteworthy and beneficial.

- New programs were developed, often with a focus on diverse populations.
- Communication with parishioners was enhanced through creative use of technology and other means.
- Outreach to youth and young adults was increased.
- Adult faith formation gained more stature and attention.
- Much greater emphasis was placed on fostering a spiritually aware and mature parish community.

While TEAMPLAN and its sponsors served the parishes very well, in the past few years faith formation leaders began to ask for adjustments to the process that would give it more of a “Catholic” rather than “not for profit” perspective, using “Church” language and adding a more intentional spiritual dimension.

In response to those requests, an entirely new parish-planning document, *Choosing Paths on the Journey*, was produced. In addition to a new process with more familiar language, *Choosing Paths on the Journey* provides a methodology for developing a meaningful relationship between administrator and commission as they journey together in faith-filled planning for the ministry.

It has been a long-standing expectation of the Office of Catholic Education that parish commissions engage in strategic planning. In 2007, this expectation became a policy-based requirement (See [Appendix](#).) Educational commissions for both school and parish will develop a three-year plan for program improvement and mission enhancement for their respective ministry. They will explore three critical planning questions:

- Where are we today?
- Where do we want to go?
- How are we going to get there?

The commissions will engage in a step-by-step method of reviewing mission and values, analyzing key issues, determining priorities, designing strategies, and monitoring results. In the process they will combine the best of human wisdom with the guidance of the Holy Spirit. The entire enterprise of planning and implementation will become the work of the commission and the administrator.

RESPONSIBILITIES AND RELATIONSHIPS

COMMUNITY—THE BODY OF CHRIST IN _____ PARISH

Name of parish

Catholics share a common set of beliefs, traditions, and values as one Church united through baptism and worship. In each local parish, the members of the body of Christ are a special and unique communion, a community. Each parish community is the locus of the body of Christ within the broader mission of the universal Church. While some aspects of the Church's mission are enduring and unchangeable, in the local parish visions are realized and needs are met through a unique, suitable and mutual sharing of members' time, talent, and treasure.

SHARED RESPONSIBILITY

A significant result of Vatican Council II was an emphasis on encouraging lay people to share fully in the responsibility of the life of the local church. The *Decree on the Apostolate of Lay People* (Apostolicum Actuositatem or AA) in November 1965, a month before the Council drew to a close, called for the establishment of diocesan, parochial, and other councils to assist in the apostolic work of the Church (AA 26). These councils became the initial models in recent times for the concept of the shared responsibility of all the baptized in the mission of the Church.

The Church was founded to spread the kingdom of Christ over all the earth for the glory of God the Father, to make all...partakers in redemption and salvation, and through them to establish the right relationship of the entire work of Christ (AA 2).

Many parish leaders enjoy a strong sense of “ownership” regarding their Church and local faith community. This sense of ownership carries with it, by virtue of baptism, the obligation to worship, serve, lead and share fully in fulfilling the mission of the parish—the obligation to be a steward of the Catholic faith in all of its local manifestations. Every baptized person, young, old or in between, is called to discipleship, the same discipleship that flourished in the early Church and remains encouraged in our times through the wisdom of the Magisterium.

ROLES WITHIN THE MINISTRY OF FAITH FORMATION

As the spiritual and temporal leader of the parish, the pastor is the final authority for all matters within the parish. Therefore, along with holding many other roles, the pastor is the chief catechetical leader responsible for the ministry of lifelong faith formation.

With very few exceptions, pastors in the Archdiocese of Indianapolis and nationwide have delegated the responsibility for faith formation ministry to a professional catechetical leader, a director, coordinator, or administrator of religious education. This individual, who may also have another title—pastoral associate, youth minister, etc.—is responsible for designing and implementing catechetical programs for a wide range of parishioners.

A Faith Formation Commission serves as a consultative body for the ministry. As such the members of the commission are stewards of faith formation and advocates for excellence in all catechetical endeavors. While the commission is accountable to the pastoral council, it is the responsibility of the commission,

working closely with the parish administrator of religious education, to “establish goals and objectives to meet the spiritual and religious education of children, adolescents, adults, and persons with special needs” (Preparing Your Parish 12). *Choosing Paths on the Journey* is designed to enable Faith Formation Commissions and parish administrators of religious education (ex officio members of commissions) to work closely as a community of disciples toward fulfilling the vision and mission of Jesus Christ, the first and greatest teacher of the Catholic faith.



Thank you for choosing to use this guidebook to create or renew your parish’s plan for Faith Formation ministry. The Archdiocese and many other parishes benefited from those thirty parishes and one Deanery Center that used the TEAMPLAN process from 1999-2006 and have shared their positive results from planning. This guidebook was inspired by reflections from those participants and valuable feedback was also shared by many Association of Parish Administrators of Religious Education (APARE) members as well as Archdiocesan leadership staff.

Please note that by fully using this guidebook, your plan for Faith Formation should *never end!* It is designed to guide you through a brief annual renewal and extension of the plan that should result in an updated three year horizon complete with annual strategies for the upcoming year. Our prayers are with you!

The Planning Process

Step I: Why do we seek to undertake the journey? In planning terms this means, what is the mission of this ministry or why does this group exist? Writing a good mission statement will help unravel many questions later on.

In this step you will:

- a. Review the definition of mission and features of a good mission statement.
- b. Identify mandates that define the mission of the commission.
- c. Identify programs that respond to the mandates.



Definition of Mission:

1. A good mission statement will identify what the commission is called to be.
2. It will include...
 - A. What the commission and its members are called to do,
 - B. What is unique about them in this mission,
 - C. Who they are empowered to serve.
3. It should be brief, to the point, and memorable so that it can be repeated in a heartbeat.

Do not skip this step! This is a planning cycle that is meant to be repeated every three years, so it is likely that a group may already have a mission in place. Even if your mission exists, this step should be taken to renew your mission.

- Is still right for the times?
- Do all members of your commission understand what the mission means?

Memorable: If the leaders of a ministry cannot remember their mission statement, maybe it does not say what they believe they are about.

Brevity: Without destroying the message keep the mission statement to the point. Take time to review the wording to accomplish this.

- Are there phrases that can be captured in one word?
- Are there phrases that add no new meaning?

Examples of Mission Statements

- **St. Mary Parish (Navilleton) Faith Formation Commission:** To provide faith development opportunities for parishioners of all ages.
- **Our Lady of Lourdes (Indianapolis) Faith Formation Commission:** To support Christ-centered education for all parishioners, fostering lifelong spiritual growth in our Catholic faith.

Function of the Mission Statement

1. Provides a compass for making decisions.
2. Should bring harmony and a sense of common purpose to the programs that comprise the ministry.
3. Is a source of communicating identity to the community that is served.
4. Links hope to possibility.
5. Should link ministry to the mission of the parish.

Example Of Faith Formation Mission Linking to Parish Mission Our Lady of Lourdes - Indianapolis

Our Lady of Lourdes Parish Mission Statement: We commit ourselves to the mission of proclaiming the Gospel of Jesus Christ through:

- ✝ Joyful Worship
- ✝ Ministering to the needs of our parish, the Irvington community, and the global community
- ✝ High-quality Catholic education
- ✝ Welcoming new members into our parish family with open arms

Mission of Our Lady of Lourdes Faith Formation: To support Christ-centered education for all parishioners, fostering lifelong spiritual growth in our Catholic faith.

Step IA: The goal of the first meeting is to identify two things that will help you write your mission.

(Prayer for this session: Resource B)

First: What are the mandates that define what this commission does?

Second: What are the programs that currently exist and how do they accomplish the mandates of this ministry?

First: Understanding your mandates What are those things that entities in authority expect the commission to do?

Mandates are the objectives that people with authority expect this ministry to achieve and, if applicable, how they are charged to accomplish them. In other words, what autonomy and parameters does this commission have?

1. The first step is to identify the governing bodies for this commission, for example parish council, the Archdiocesan Office of Catholic Education, the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, etc.

Facilitator Tip: A good facilitator is neutral about the content of the plan but assertive about the process. For those of you who have familiarity and opinions about the content, it is important that you leave that "hat" at the door.

Cohesive: A commission's mission must foster the mission of the parish by taking ownership for a portion of parish values.

In the example at Our Lady of Lourdes parish "high-quality Catholic education" equates well with the Faith Formation mission to provide Christ-centered education for all.

Reviewing mandates:

- Brainstorm a list of all governing bodies and Church documents that might need to be researched for uncovering the mandates.
- Trim the list to the top six or seven most pertinent to this commission.
- Be sure that the research item has been clearly defined.
- Assign one of the team members to research the item.

Assigned team member should return with completed worksheet for that item for research. (See Resource D.)

- A. Some of these groups will have documents that define what your commission is required to do. What are these documents? The most pertinent ones will need to be reviewed (See Resource C.).
 - B. Some groups will not have defined policies that can be reviewed; they will need to be interviewed.
2. Keep the selection of sources focused to a manageable level, probably no more than six.
 3. For each source a “Mandate Questions Worksheet” should be completed (See Resource D.).
 - A. If the commission reports to this organization, does it also have a mission that the commission’s mission must complement?
 - B. What services or benefits does this organization require the commission to provide?
 - C. Are there any specific activities defined as outside this commission’s parameters?
 - D. What limits (i.e. location, resources, content, timeframe etc.) are there on how the programs of the commission are provided?
 - E. Who is the intended recipient of these programs?
 - F. Who is outside (location, age, etc.) the jurisdiction of the commission?
 - G. Should any changes be made in the existing activities of this group?

First: Reviewing current programs Programs (Example list of programs provided below.) are the specific events or resources that are being provided.

1. These programs are reviewed (See Resource E.) to understand:
 - A. What specific benefit they provide to the people who participate in them.
 - B. To whom, specifically, do they provide that benefit.
2. Second example below is that of a completed worksheet.

The program review:

- Create a list of all programs.
- A review sheet (See Resource E.) should be completed for each program
- It is time effective and collaborative to complete these worksheets as homework in order for

Example of Faith Formation Programs

- Elementary Religious Education
- Adult Formation Committee
- Sacramental Preparation Programs
- Children’s Liturgy of the Word
- The Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA)
- RCIA for Children of Catechetical Age
- Vacation Bible School
- Cherub Church (Sunday Preschool)

relevant committees to participate.

- When done as homework, make sure a team member is clearly identified with the task.
- Present review sheets at the next meeting to prepare for creating the mission.

**Program Review Sheet Example
Religious Education**

Benefits	Who it Serves
<p>Help the children grow in their relationship with God.</p> <p>Help build a sense of community among the families whose children attend public schools.</p>	<p>Elementary age children and their parents</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Who are members of our parish. • Who do not attend St. Jude School.

TIME TO REVIEW

Accomplishments while preparing to write the mission:

- a. *Identified mandates for further investigation.*
- b. *Identified the affiliated programs and the people who are involved in them.*

Homework to be done before next meeting:

- a. *Return with completed Mandate Question Sheets (Make enough copies to distribute.).*
- b. *Complete Program Review Sheets.*

Our next meeting date is: _____

Resource B
Step IA: Why Journey? (Discovering Mandates and Programs)
Prayer: Called and Gifted

Opening Prayer for the Meeting

Leader: Let us pause a moment to place ourselves in God's presence (*Pause for just a minute or so before you read the prayer.*).

God of love and mercy, you call us to be your people,
and gift us with your abundant grace.
Make us a holy people, radiating the fullness of your love.
Form us into a community of people who care,
expressing your compassion.
Remind us day after day of our baptismal call to serve
with joy and courage.
Teach us how to grow in wisdom and grace and joy
in your presence.
Through Jesus, and in your Spirit, we pray.

Leader: Let us enter into this next reflection with the energy of contemplation, which allows the Holy Spirit to guide us. Seek to hear what will be our call.

At the end of this reflection we will sit quietly for a moment to reflect on what from this teaching resonates in a special way with each of us.

Reader: This is a reflection from the Vatican II document *Decree on the Apostolate of Lay People* (AA 2).

“The Church was founded for the purpose of spreading the kingdom of Christ throughout the earth for the glory of God the Father, to enable all people to share in His saving redemption, and that through them the whole world might enter into a relationship with Christ.
All activity of the Mystical Body directed to the attainment of this goal is called the apostolate, which the Church carries on in various ways through all her members. For the Christian vocation by its very nature is also a vocation to the apostolate.
No part of the structure of a living body is merely passive but has a share in the functions as well as life of the body: so, too, in the body of Christ, which is the Church, "the whole body . . . in keeping with the proper activity of each part, derives its increase from its own internal development" (Eph. 4:16).

Step IA: Why Journey? (Discovering Mandates and Programs)
Prayer: Called and Gifted

“In the Church there is a diversity of ministry, but a oneness of mission. Christ conferred on the Apostles and their successors the duty of teaching, sanctifying, and ruling in His name and power. But the laity likewise share in the priestly, prophetic, and royal office of Christ and therefore have their own share in the mission of the whole people of God in the Church and in the world. The laity derive the right and duty to the apostolate from their union with Christ the Head; incorporated into Christ's Mystical Body through Baptism and strengthened by the power of the Holy Spirit through Confirmation, they are assigned to the apostolate by the Lord Himself.”

All: We give thanks to God for this teaching.

Leader: *Have the group pause for a moment to reflect on the reading. Was there a word or phrase that really spoke with them? After a few minutes of quiet, allow time for each member, if they choose to do so, to share that phrase with the group. Just have them offer that word or phrase with no explanation. Then continue ...*

Leader: As we bring your gift of faith to the work of this Commission ...

All: Guide us, Gracious God.

Leader: As we bring your gift of hope to all who hear the Good News ...

All: Guide us, Gracious God.

Leader: As we bring your gift of love to the people we will meet ...

All: Guide us, Gracious God.

Leader: As we bring the gift of teaching to help others share your Word ...

All: Guide us, Gracious God.

Leader: As we foster a greater appreciation of the gift of your Son in the gift of our sacraments...

All: Guide us, Gracious God.

Leader: As we bring the gift of service to promote dignity and justice ...

All: Guide us, Gracious God.

Leader: As we bring the gift of community to parish and workplace ...

All: Guide us, Gracious God.

Leaders: We offer these prayers in the name of Your Beloved Son, Jesus Christ.

All: Amen.

Step IA: Why Journey? (Discovering Mandates and Programs)
Prayer: Called and Gifted

Closing Prayer for the Session

Leader: Let us close this session in prayer of thanks for the work we are called to do.

All: Gracious God,
We are thankful for the dignity
and creative challenge of our unique tasks.
For the work that enables us,
that lifts up our spirits, we are grateful.
By means of these labors,
We are able to give flesh to our spiritual dreams
And to help work out the salvation of the earth.

Help us, Lord our God,
To use the work of this meeting
to perform with mindfulness and attention,
with care and devotion what will be holy and healing
for us and for all whom we are called to serve.

Amen.

Leader: May almighty God put our faith into action,
to work in love,
and to persevere in hope.

And may God bless us + in the name of the Father and of the Son,
and of the Holy Spirit.

All: Amen.

Resource C

FAITH FORMATION DOCUMENTS AND RESOURCES

Most of the following resources are available in either the parish office or the parish faith formation resource library. Many are available online and can also be ordered in print format from the Office of Catholic Education or the Publishing Department of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops.

Necessary Documents from the Archdiocese of Indianapolis

Catholic School and Faith Formation Commission Guide (1998)
Archdiocesan Religion Curriculum Guidelines, Millennium Edition (2001)
As Good Stewards Personnel Development Process (2005)
Preparing Your Parish for the New Millennium: Parish Structure and Organization (1997)
(Out of Print—Call: 317-236-7325 or 800-382-9836, ext. 7325 for PDF version.)

A Select List of Documents from the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops

www.usccbpublishing.org

Our Hearts Were Burning Within Us: A Pastoral Plan for Adult Faith Formation in the United States (1999)
Welcome and Justice for Persons with Disabilities (1999)
In Support of Catechetical Ministry (2000)
Go and Make Disciples: A National Plan and Strategy for Catholic Evangelization in the United States (2002)
Encuentro and Mission: A Renewed Pastoral Framework for Hispanic Ministry (2002)
National Directory for Catechesis (2005)
United States Catholic Catechism for Adults (2006)

A Select List of Documents from the Vatican: The Holy See

http://vatican.mondosearch.com/search_en.aspx?query=catechetical+documents

Vatican Council II, *Apostolicum Actuositatem*, Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity (1965)
Vatican Council II, *Dei Verbum*, Constitution on Divine Revelation (1965)
On Evangelization in the Modern World, *Evangelii Nuntiandi* (1975)
Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (1974)
On Catechesis in Our Time, *Catechesi Tradendae* (1979)
Adult Catechesis in the Christian Community (1990)
Catechism of the Catholic Church (1992)
General Directory for Catechesis (1997)
Compendium of the Catechism of the Catholic Church (2006)

Resource D

Mandate Questions

1. If there is an organization that this commission reports to, do they have a mission statement that your commission's mission must complement?

2. What services or benefits is this organization requiring your commission to provide?

3. Are there any specific activities that are defined as outside this commission's parameters?

4. What limits (i.e. location, resources, content, timeframe etc.) are there on how the program is provided?

5. Who is the intended recipient of the program?

6. Who is outside (location, age, etc.) the jurisdiction of the commission?

7. Should any changes be made in the existing activities of this group?

Resource E
Ministry Program or Resources Review

Ministry/resource _____

Benefits	Who it Serves

Definitions

Ministry

is an event, series of events or activity through which pastoral outreach is accomplished. It could be regular classes provided, feeding the poor, regular articles in a parish newsletter or a self serve library of books. Try as hard as possible to list all services you provide.

Benefits

promote the well-being of the target. Why does this ministry or service exist? What is it supporting? Examples could range from physical health, fun, fellowship, to faith development, understanding, love of God etc.

Who is served:

Describe this completely. Who specifically benefits from this ministry or resource? Include demographics: age, gender, ethnic make-up, economic situation, education etc.

Step 1B: Writing the Mission Statement. (Prayer for this session: Resource F)

In this step you will:

- a. Use completed worksheets to start the writing process.
- b. Reflect in prayer and discussion on the information gathered.

1. Use the material gathered in the mandate review and ministry review for this process.
 - A. Give copies of the completed “Mandate Questions” worksheets to every member and let the person who completed them present the information they found and take questions.
 - B. Using the completed “Ministry Program or Resources Review” worksheet display the program information on flip charts or marker boards for the group to review as a whole.
 - a. List all the programs.
 - b. List all the benefits from each program.
 - c. List who is served.
2. **Reflecting With God:** Finding another layer to what we have uncovered in our review of mandates and programs: Where is God present in all this work and hubbub (theological reflection, see Resource G)? Example in appendices (See Resource H.).
 - A. What is happening in all the information we have gathered?
 - a. What stimulates or disturbs you?
 - b. What is happening for others?
 - c. How does this information make you feel?
 - B. What core values emerge as you think about what we have learned?
 - a. What values are different from yours or challenge you in some way?
 - b. What social issues, power issues, or economic issues are at work?
 - C. Looking at all the information that has been shared and the feelings you have about the information, what from our tradition or history are you reminded of?
 - a. Where are you being called and how is this similar to something in our religious tradition?

Facilitator tip: Use your “privilege” as facilitator to make sure all in attendance get a fairly equal chance to contribute. Share the wealth.

Reflecting with God: Lead this spiritual exercise as a team activity (See Resources G & H.).

- First, allow each member time to reflect on questions A-C giving them a sheet to journal their thoughts. (15-25 min.)
- Now discuss each question together as a team.
- After sharing the traditions from question C that people chose, choose one tradition that the group will use to continue the exercise.
- Work through understanding what can be learned by this religious tradition by discussing the next questions D, E & F as a team.
- How does this tradition contrast or challenge your ministry?
- Where does it lead?

- b. It could be something from scripture, history, traditional practices, hymns, etc?
- D. How does what we know about this tradition contrast, challenge or complement what our ministry is about?
- E. How is this example calling you to lead your ministry?
- F. The goal of this reflection is to listen for God’s voice, which might call you to broaden your ideas about your ministry.
 - a. Is there anything this reflection highlighted for you?
 - b. Based on this reflection is there anything to be added to the benefits and/or about the people we serve?
- G. Write the mission.
- H. Sharpen the mission: keep the wording succinct.
- I. Option: At this time a few (three to four) values may have been surfaced that you want to capture to illuminate your mission.

**Example of Mission Statement with Inclusion of Value Affirmation
Our Lady of Lourdes - Indianapolis**

Our Lady of Lourdes Parish Mission Statement: We commit ourselves to the mission of proclaiming the Gospel of Jesus Christ through:

- ✝ Joyful Worship
- ✝ Ministering to the needs of our parish, the Irvington community, and the global community
- ✝ High-quality Catholic education
- ✝ Welcoming new members into our parish family with open arms

3. Sharing for input: It is time to open up dialog with key groups of people about your mission.

- A. Choose key groups that should be contacted directly to share the commission’s mission with.
 - a. Assign a member of commission to be the liaison to these groups.
 - b. This sharing should be done before the next commission meeting if possible.
 - c. Use parish publications such as the weekly bulletin, newsletter or website for publishing the mission.

Writing the mission:

- Allow the members of the group to each write a statement. (10 min.)
- Have members write their statement on the flip charts or marker boards.
- Review what each person wrote.
- There may be one statement that instantly says it or parts of a few may be forged to create the mission. Work with the input until you have your final mission.
- If no clear consensus exists you might assign two or three people to work on it together to be presented at the next meeting.

Example Analysis

The **mission** is to proclaim the Gospel.

The four **value statements** tell you how Our Lady of Lords plans to achieve that mission.

Sharing the mission:

Choose groups that are important for the success of the commission’s future.

- Groups that provide the mandates.
 - Parish Council
- Lateral groups that work with the commission.
 - Other commissions
 - Pastoral staff

Liaisons should encourage further input from these groups on what they have done.

TIME TO REVIEW

Accomplishments for this session on mission writing and sharing:

- a. The first draft of the mission is either done or in the works.*
- b. Key groups in and outside the parish that are vital to making this mission happen have been identified.*

Homework to be done before next meeting:

- a. Return with the response from the people we shared the mission with.*

Our next meeting date is: _____

Resource F
Step IB: Why Journey? (Writing the Mission)
Prayer: Traveling Together

This evening's prayer services will require the song "City of God", a candle and matches.

Opening Prayer for the Meeting

Leader: May the Spirit of God be with you.

All: And also with you.

Leader: God of Wisdom, grant us the grace at this moment—to pray:
to pray as our own hearts are lifted up to you,
to pray through your Holy Word of Psalm and Gospel,
and to find peace in the silence of faith and trust.

All: Blest be God forever.

Psalm: *(There are several ways to have the members enter more fully into this prayer. One way would be to create two parts, right and left, and have them alternate in reading the stanzas of the psalm. Another way would be to have each member read a stanza by going around the table.)*

Leader: Let us enter into this next reflection with the energy of contemplation, which allows the Holy Spirit to guide us. Seek to hear what will be our call.

Grant us, Guiding God, a meeting of minds,
a meeting of those baffling faculties of thought,
a meeting and an understanding of each other's feelings and values.
Grant this profound request at least where it is crucial, where injury or pain will follow if we fail.

God of understanding,
You who comprehends each least distinction
in all of creation's majestic variety,
you whose mind meets every other mind with perfection,
grant us some small share of your understanding
at those times when we must understand.

Human minds seldom meet very well or for very long.
Each of us learns slowly, moment by moment.
Sometimes, we find ourselves learning illusions, lies or errors
just as fast as we learn the truth.
Help us to hear your truth above all else tonight.

Step IB: Why Journey? (Writing the Mission)
Prayer: Traveling Together

Give us, then, a meeting of minds,
 most of all with those we seek to serve and love.
Give us a meeting of understanding so that we can proceed
 to build a community where many minds attempt to meet
and understand what matters.

Give us a level of respect for each other
 that we will listen and listen again,
even when we fail, however often, to achieve a meeting of minds.

Help us to grow in love and generous care for each other
 as we realize your kingdom in the meeting of our minds.

Reader: (Eph. 4:1-6) A reading from the Letter of Saint Paul to the Ephesians.

“I, then, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to live in a manner worthy of the call you have received, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another through love, striving to preserve the unity of the spirit through the bond of peace: one body and one Spirit, as you were also called to the one hope of your call; one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.”

The Word of the Lord.

All: Thanks be to God.

Leader: It is time now to reflect on the teachings of the Church and the work of our commission. Let us come to see the unity of this work and understand our mission. Please Lord, send us your Spirit, so we may come to know what we are to be about. We ask this blessing on our work through Christ our Lord.

All: Amen.

Step IB: Why Journey? (Writing the Mission)
Prayer: Traveling Together

Closing Prayer for the Session

Leader: Let us ask God's blessing as we go forth from this meeting to share our mission with others. "No one who lights a lamp hides it away or places it under a bushel basket, but on a lampstand so that those who enter might see the light (Luke 11:33)." *(Light a candle, letting it burn till the session ends.)*

Let this candle represent the light we take from this room, which is represented in the words of our mission. May others come to see the goodness in what our commission is about and help us in the realization of this work in and through our parish community.

All: Amen.

Song: *(optional)* "City of God" verses 1&2

Resource G

Reflecting with God

Facilitator should define what the group has been doing with the work at hand. (This input could be from the mandates and ministry review, the survey or other sources you are contemplating.) The results of these assignments need to be communicated to the whole group in the most effective way. Now, it is time to discern what the information is telling you.

After reviewing the homework, allow all members of the group to reflect on the first three questions. Encourage them to write down their thoughts so they will not lose track of them as discussion begins.

Finding another layer to the event: Where is God present?

- A. What is happening in all the information we have gathered? What stimulates or disturbs you? What is happening for others? How does this all make you feel?

- B. What core values emerge as you think about what we have learned? What values are different from yours or challenge you in some way? What social issues, power issues, or economic issues are at work?

- C. Looking at all the information that has been shared and the feelings you have about the information, what from our tradition or history are you reminded of? Where are you being called and how is this similar to something in our religious tradition? It could be something from scripture, history, traditional practices, hymns, etc. Reflect on why you made the choice.

STOP

The group, under the direction of the facilitator now explores the following questions together.

Reflecting with God

The facilitator should...

Have the group share and discuss their discoveries from questions 1 and 2.

On a flipchart, chalkboard or device that allows all to see, list all the discoveries of the Faith that people connected with the experience. Together choose one for your group reflection. Which one speaks to them, and why? Remember, you only need to come to consensus; it might not be everyone's favorite. There may be no perfect choice; each option will lead to insight.

D. What does this tradition say to you? How does it contrast, challenge or compliment what the ministry is about?

E. Is there anything this reflection highlighted for you? Maybe the reflection on the item from tradition calls you to new ideas or sets a different course of action?

F. The goal of this reflection is to listen for God's voice, which might call you to broaden your ideas about your ministry. If you are working on your mission statement, now is the time to craft that statement. If you are goal setting, it is time to choose two or three things the group decides on.

Resource H

Reflecting with God *Example*

Example using this reflection to choose goals

Finding another layer to the event: Where is God present?

A. What is happening in all the information we have gathered? What stimulates or disturbs you? What is happening for others? How does this all make you feel?

When working on improving things one Faith Formation Commission was challenged to look at their communication efforts. During the review of a survey that had been taken of the parish, it became clear that many people had no idea what the commission was or what programs they provided. Surveys actually came back saying things like, “I am not familiar with any of the programs you listed.” “You need to advertise your programs more; I did not know they existed.” “I suggest you follow your mission and invite.”

What was even more telling was how many people did not fill out an assessment. The lack of response made the members of the commission wonder if members of the parish did not feel like any of the Faith Formation programs involved them or it was not worth their time. All this data led to the goal that communications had to improve through better delivery of the message to really make each person of that parish feel invited to the events provided by the Faith Formation Commission.

B. What core values emerge as you think about what we have learned? What values are different from yours or challenge you in some way? What social issues, power issues, or economic issues are at work?

When the subcommittee met to discuss what could be done to improve the situation, the first reaction was to defend what was being done. This group of three was very defensive of their efforts to communicate with the parish. They were ready to conclude that the problem was not with them, but the parish at large. Records showed that every program offered had been in the weekly parish bulletin, which is distributed after all the Masses, for at least a month before the event occurred. In addition to that, the quarterly parish newsletter, which is mailed to every registered member’s home, contained articles on what the Faith Formation Commission was doing along with registration forms. When fitting, information was also placed in the school and the religious education newsletters. Also, mailings to invite people to the Catholic Church or register for Religious Education had been sent when appropriate. How could people tell the commission they were not familiar with the faith formation programs?

C. Looking at all the information that has been shared and the feelings you have about the information what from our tradition or history are you reminded of? Where are you being called and how is this similar to something in our religious tradition? It could be something from scripture, history, traditional practices, hymns, etc. Reflect on why you made the choice.

Through theological reflection, the Faith Formation Commission began to imagine what would have happened if the disciples would have stayed in that upper room after the Spirit descended upon them at Pentecost (Acts 2). Peter could have stayed upstairs and discussed with those present the impact of what had just happened and hoped that others would eventually come up the stairs and join them. It was possible that the people on the street had heard the great wind and would have made an investigation. But instead, they immediately went out into the street and began to preach the Good News. Those who were present understood them regardless of their native tongue.

D. What does this tradition say to you? How does it contrast, challenge or compliment what the ministry is about?

This connection to Pentecost leads this taskforce to ask how they needed to go forth and get the word out about the opportunities they offered the members of their surrounding community. It is clear the methods of communication chosen thus far had only reached those who are already familiar with the commission's work, so they knew to watch for information.

The apostles had the power to break through the language boundaries to deliver their message. The commission had to break through the kind of apathy that is reflected in the belief that coming to church on Sunday is enough to nurture personal faith. The apostles knew they had to hit the road to reach new people and lands to enlighten new disciples for Christ. It was the right answer for the times. What did the Faith Formation Commission need to do to reach out from their room?

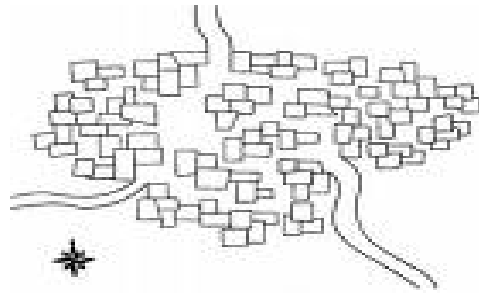
E. Is there anything this reflection highlighted for you? Maybe the reflection on the item from tradition calls you to new ideas or set a different course of action?

Our world is made up of people who are bombarded with information. We are used to sorting through hundreds of messages each day, which means that something needs to really catch our attention. The message needs to hit them where they live, be easy to come by and disposable. Today's world is wired to the world wide web and that is where this commission decided to go.

Through this theological reflection on the works of the apostles, this commission was challenged to make their ways of preaching the Good News meet many people where they live and work. It may seem like an unlikely correlation, but the Spirit helped them see that they could not stay the way they were. This is what has to happen if the group wants an effective mission or goals.

Update:

The group now sends out regular e-mails to over 200 members for upcoming programs, especially adult education. They have also established a website that is kept current as program seasons change. Many registrations are coming from this site, so the commission feels like they have reached out to more people by leaving their area of comfort and communicating in new ways.



Step II: Pre-travel planning. (Prayer for this session: Resource I) In any journey there are many choices of destinations. When planning a trip one might seek out people who have traveled to hear of their adventures. Now is the time to seek out seasoned travelers by gathering input from the parish.

In this step you will:

- a. Design a survey tool unique to your ministry and parish.
- b. Determine how to distribute the survey tool.
- c. Set up a distribution and tally system for the survey.

1. First make sure the mission is complete. Allow time for people to share the reactions from the various groups the mission was shared with after the last meeting.
2. Creating Parish Dialogue: Use an open-ended survey tool such as a SWOT (See Resource J). A SWOT is a very simple way to start an open-ended dialog. In the SWOT the surveyed group is asked to assess...
 - A. **Strengths:** What are the strengths of the ministry?
 - B. **Weaknesses:** What are the weaknesses of this ministry?
 - C. **Opportunities:** What opportunities exist in our parish community that we should be taking advantage of?
 - D. **Threats:** What threats in the environment outside our parish community do we need to manage effectively if we are to thrive in the future?
3. As the design of the survey takes place, consider whether the target survey group needs to know anything about the commission so they can respond effectively. (If this information is lengthy use

Is the mission complete?

After sharing the mission with other groups there may be some change you want to make. Take the time to get the mission statement correct before moving on.

Creating dialog in a parish:

- Dialogue: means an exchange of ideas and opinions¹ needs to take place.
- In most modern suburban parishes today there are probably many people, who need to be reached, which means some sort of survey device will be needed to create dialogue.

¹ <http://www.webster.com>

the back of your survey form to share it.)

A. Mission

B. Description of current programs

4. Set up distribution system for the survey.
5. Set up system to collect the survey and tally the results to be distributed to the commission before the next meeting.

***Once the SWOT data are collected from the parish and summarized for the commission, the team will begin to prepare the foundation for choosing goals and creating a strategy to achieve these goals. The first step in this process is to identify key issues.*

A. *Each member should prepare the “Key Issue Identification” (See Resource K.).*

- a. *Each member should bring this completed form to the next commission planning meeting to contribute to the determination of the plan’s key issues.*
- b. *The purpose of this worksheet is to allow each member to consider what he or she thinks are the top three key issues for strategic planning.*

B. A “key issue” is defined as:

- *An important strength to be leveraged.*
- *A weakness to be corrected.*
- *An opportunity to be pursued.*
- *A threat to be managed.*
- *A new capability to be developed.*

In the plan, each key issue will have strategies and an action plan.

- Open-ended surveys prevent leading your audience to answers.
- What vehicle will you use to distribute your survey?
 - Direct mailing?
 - Parish bulletin?
 - A parish newsletter?
 - Hand out after Sunday Mass or at the parish picnic?
 - Other? Be creative.
- Be sure to share the results of the survey with the parish.
- Check with Archdiocesan coordinator for names of other parishes to gain ideas on maximizing parishioner participation in SWOT.
- One or two members should be assigned the task of summarizing the results of the survey. Simply type out all of the comments under their respective heading: Strength, Weakness, Opportunity and Threats.
- Copies of the results should be given to the commission members at least one week before the next meeting so they can complete the “Key Issue Identification” worksheet to bring to the next meeting.

TIME TO REVIEW

Accomplishments towards dialoging with the parish:

- a. Created a unique survey tool for this ministry.*
- b. Identified the system to distribute the survey to the parish.*
- c. Set-up system for collecting the data from the survey and preparing it for use by the commission.*

Homework to be done before next meeting:

- a. The results of the survey should be collected, tallied and distributed to the commission members before the next meeting.*
- b. Each member should complete the Key Issue Identification worksheet found in the appendices.*

Our next meeting date is: _____

Resource I
Step II: Pre-travel Planning
Prayer: Creating Dialog

Opening Prayer for the Meeting

Leader: Let us all take a moment of silence here in the midst of our busy lives in order to collect the events of the day and bring ourselves, body and soul, into this gathering.

Lord you have called us to(*insert your mission here, even if it is still in the review stage*). Although the words may not be perfect yet, we know your call is present.

There are many ways or paths to achieve this mission. Help us now prepare a way to dialog with the people of our community hoping to hear Your voice in them. Be with us this evening as we look for inspiration and guidance to make this an opportunity for all.

Reader: (Luke 6:46-49) This reading from Saint Luke's Gospel.

"Why do you call me, 'Lord, Lord,' but not do what I command? I will show you what someone is like who comes to me, listens to my words, and acts on them. That one is like a person building a house, who dug deeply and laid the foundation on rock; when the flood came, the river burst against that house but could not shake it because it had been well built. But the one who listens and does not act is like a person who built a house on the ground without a foundation. When the river burst against it, it collapsed at once and was completely destroyed."

All: We give thanks to God for this Holy Gospel.

Leader: Builder God, we are ready to act. Help us to know which path to choose that we may lay our foundation deep and in solid ground.

All: Amen.

Step II: Pre-travel Planning

Prayer: Creating Dialog

Closing Prayer for the Session

- Leader:** Guiding One, we are ready to plant your seeds in the hearts of the people we serve, seeds of hope and promise for a future that will lead them to a closer relationship with you. As we look for their input into our ministry, grant them the generosity of heart to help us see what is needed to help your kingdom grow in our parish.
- Reader 1:** (*Mark 4:3-8*) A reflection based on the Gospel of Mark. Hear this! A sower went out to sow. And as he sowed, some seed fell on the path, and the birds came and ate it up.
- All:** Creator God, may the people of our community be open with constructive ideas that will produce fruitful soil for our ministry to grow in.
- Reader 2:** Other seeds fell on rocky ground where it had little soil. It sprang up at once because the soil was not deep. And when the sun rose, it was scorched and it withered for lack of roots.
- All:** We pray that the fruit from our planning will be strong and lasting.
- Reader 3:** Some seed fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up and choked it and it produced no grain.
- All:** Help those who grow in our ministry be like seeds which then bring life to future generations.
- Reader 4:** And some seed fell on rich soil and produced fruit. It came up and grew and yielded thirty, sixty, and a hundredfold."
- All:** For this we pray in the name of Our Lord your Son, that your Spirit will be the guiding force of our mission always. Amen.

Resource J Sample SWOT Survey

The Faith Formation Commission of XYZ Parish needs your help to set a course to journey towards our mission of spreading Christ's love through teaching the essential and fundamental elements of the Catholic Church's faith to our parish family.

Specific programs that are now being offered are...

Sunday Morning Elementary Religious Education Classes
Tuesday Evening Bible Study
Saturday Morning Junior High and High School Faith Formation
Vacation Bible School

- Two Main Strengths (What do we do well?)

A. _____

B. _____

- Two Main Weaknesses (What can be done better?)

A. _____

B. _____

- Two Main Opportunities (What opportunities exist in the parish and surrounding community that we should be taking advantage of?)

A. _____

B. _____

- Two Threats (What threats do we need to manage effectively if our parish ministry is to thrive in the future?)

A. _____

B. _____

- Based on your answers above, which is the single most important issue that faces the Faith Formation Commission?

The need _____

Thank you! Name (optional) _____
(please print)

Resource K
Key Issue Identification Worksheet
For use by individual committee member

Our Main Strengths (Unique built-in capabilities we now have)

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Our Main Weaknesses (Deficiencies we have that reduce our effectiveness in pursuing our Mission)

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Our Main Opportunities (Possible ways to become more successful by building on what we do well or exploring a promising new direction)

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Our Main Threats (Possible events or developments in our external environment that would seriously damage, impede or restrict us)

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

The Three Most Important Key Issues

1. The need to _____
2. The need to _____
3. The need to _____



Step III: Choosing Paths It is time to choose the destination for the journey and the paths that will be traveled.

In this step you will:

- a. Discern 3-5 key issues to make a priority.
- b. Create a task force for each key issue.

Step IIIA: What are the destinations or goals for our journey?

(Prayer for this session: Resource L)

1. **Selecting Three Key Issues.** When selecting the three most important key issues, keep in mind the following:
 - A. Focus on correcting the causes rather than symptoms of an issue.
 - B. Are some of the issues brought forward by individual committee members more appropriately objectives, goals or strategies rather than key issues?
 - C. Some key issues can be addressed with a short-range plan. Not all key issues require a long-range solution and would not be appropriate for this three-year strategic plan.
 - a. If these are more operational or administrative they can be dealt with by the parish staff.
 - D. Consider the probability (likelihood) of an issue actually presenting severe problems for the parish in your ranking of key issues. Focus on the big picture of the parish as a whole and ask what other ministries may be negatively impacted by this idea.
 - E. Consider the extent of the positive impact of addressing a key issue relative to the cost it will take to accomplish. In other words, within limited time, talent and treasure, which key issues will provide the most bearing to your ability to achieve the mission?

Reviewing Key Issues:

- The facilitator should offer the members an opportunity to present their key issues for consideration.
- Once all are on display, are there any natural subject groupings that could be given a broader heading such as Programs, Staffing, etc.?
- Finally, if there are more than 2-4 key issue groupings they need to be limited. The committee should give itself permission to “leave a few key issues behind.”
 - This means that several issues may not make the priority list. That is okay. When the taskforce is formed to re-plan each year, determine whether the left behind key issues are enough of a priority now to be included in the strategic plan.
 - Let each committee member come to the newsprint and cast a priority vote.
- Remember you are seeking consensus (everyone can live with the final choices) rather than waiting for unanimity.

2. **Travel Planning** Understanding the key issues to set specific goals.
- A. Once the commission has identified the 3-5 key issues that they will address over the next three years it is time to map out a course of action.
- B. Create a taskforce for each key issue that will create a key issue plan. This plan will be presented at the next planning meeting using the Key Issue Planning Sheet (See Resource M.).
- a. Included on the Key Issue Planning Sheet: (For an example of a completed sheet see Resource N)
- **The Key Issue:** This is the statement that was formed by the commission and was given to the taskforce. It should begin with the phrase “the need to.”
 - **Background:** By describing how a particular issue got to this point, it provides a context for the reason(s) this issue became a focus for your plan.
 - **The Goal and Strategy:** This declaration helps everyone understand exactly what the issue is and the need that is being addressed.
 - Be specific in how to address the key issue.
 - Commit to achieving that outcome by a specific date.
 - No more than four goals per key issue.
 - **Strategies:** These are action steps intended to achieve the desired goals. The strategies include:
 - **What** will be done
 - **When** or the deadline for accomplishment
 - **Who** is responsible
 - Refer to **cost**, if significant.
 - **Results: Measures of Success:** The measures of success are objective results that the commission can use to monitor whether the plan is creating the desired outcomes. There should be one for each goal. If these are not created, it increases the likelihood that the plan will not achieve the desired impact.

The Taskforce: Although the taskforce should include some members from the commission it might be appropriate to include other standing committees in this planning work. This will get their buy-in for implementing the strategy.

A Goal is the end toward which an effort is directed

Why Goals? By committing to a desired outcome by a certain date, the plan is becoming specific on how you plan to address each key issue.

Reflecting with God. Using theological reflection for discerning goals can really produce good fruit and collaboration in the group. By looking to our religious tradition and asking the Holy Spirit for help, new and creative solutions often result. To do this, use the *Reflecting with God* worksheet (See appendix G.).

Limit Your Goals: How can your taskforce use the limited resources of time talent and treasure to effect a positive change? Choose no more than four goals for yourself or you will stretch your resources too thinly.

Strategies are the actions that will be taken to achieve the goal.

- The “who” is the person responsible for the strategy but does not necessarily run or complete the task. They insure that it gets done. It is helpful if this person is a member of the commission: if not, clear lines of communication must be defined.

Cost can be time, talent or treasure. Make sure you consider all three.

- C. Each Key Issue Taskforce will present its plan at the next commission meeting.
- a. The entire commission should review each first draft of the Key Issue Planning Sheets prior to the meeting. Set up a distribution system for this to happen.

TIME TO REVIEW

Accomplishments achieved while selecting key issues:

- a. *3-5 key issues have been selected to be the focus of planning.*
- b. *A taskforce has been created to be responsible for each key issue.*

Homework to be done before next meeting:

- a. *Each taskforce must complete the Key Issue Planning Sheet prior to the next meeting.*
- b. *Secretary should insure the Key Issue Planning Sheets are distributed one week before the next meeting.*

Our next meeting date is: _____

Resource L
Step IIIA: What are the Destinations or Goals for Our Journey?
Prayer: Listening for the Spirit

Opening Prayer for the Meeting

Leader: Let's pause a moment to place ourselves in God's presence (*Pause for just a minute or so before you read the prayer.*).

God of wisdom,
You have been present through all of time,
trying to call all people to yourself. Help us now
as we look to you for guidance.

Reader: (1 Kings 9-13) This is a reading from the book of Kings. "At the mountain of God, Horeb, Elijah came to a cave where he took shelter. Then the LORD said to him, 'Go outside and stand on the mountain before the LORD; the LORD will be passing by.'

A strong and heavy wind was rending the mountains
and crushing rocks before the LORD
but the LORD was not in the wind.
After the wind there was an earthquake
but the LORD was not in the earthquake.
After the earthquake there was fire
but the LORD was not in the fire.
After the fire there was a tiny whispering sound.
When he heard this,
Elijah hid his face in his cloak
and went and stood at the entrance of the cave."
The Word of the Lord.

All: Thanks be to God

Leader: Dear Lord, as we begin to look at what our parish wants us to know about the small piece of Your Kingdom that we work to serve, help us hear the whisper. Sometimes we let the strong people, those with articulate speech, fill our ears; but we need to find and hear all the voices that fill our minds and hearts. Let Your Spirit be with us as we seek to hear Your Voice.

Grant this through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, forever and ever.

All: Amen.

Step IIIA: What are the Destinations or Goals for Our Journey?
Prayer: Listening for the Spirit

Closing Prayer For the Session

Before entering into this prayer, have each of the taskforce teams stand together in a circle and hold hands.

Leader: Holy Spirit you reside in each of us. Please, make your presence come to life in the work of these taskforce teams as they go forward to vision your piece of the kingdom that seeks to come to life in this parish. Guide us as we go forward to know Your will for our ministry. Help us hear Your voice.

Now I ask that the taskforce teams stay in a circle, but that each member face outward and then rejoin hands.

We face outward in anticipation of the work we are taking with us. When we pray, “thy kingdom come,” let us hear those words as members of Christ’s Body, who have been called through baptism to continue Jesus’ work on earth, to help bring the Kingdom to life.

Now let us pray together the words Jesus taught us.

All: Our Father, who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy name,
Thy kingdom come,
Thy will be done,
on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread,
and forgive us our trespasses
as we forgive those
who trespass against us,
and lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.

Amen.

Resource M
Key Issue Planning Worksheet
For use by each key issue taskforce

Understanding Where We Have Come From: Exploring Key Issues

Key Issue Statement (This should have been given to you by the commission.)

The need to

Why this Key Issue? (Provide the background in 2-3 paragraphs.)

Where We Are Going: Goals

Goals (“By insert specific date.” this/these observable outcomes will have occurred—no more than four objectives)

Strategies (What, By Whom, By When; for each goal, add as many lines as necessary)

What	When	Who

Results (Describe desired measurable results for each goal.)

Key Issue Planning Worksheet

Remember to test this key issue plan as follows:

1. Does the key issue statement and background adequately reflect the commission's intent and scope?
2. Are the goals A) in line with the parish and Faith Formation Mission, B) compatible with all other goals in the plan and C) challenging enough to address the issue?
3. Consider unintended consequences and/or circumstances that could derail this plan if not anticipated or addressed.
4. Can the parish actually implement these plans?
5. Did the taskforce consider alternative objectives and strategies and if so, why were they not chosen?
6. Are the benefits of achieving this plan worth the investment of time, talent and treasure?
7. Will the language used in each Key Issue Plan be understandable for Faith Formation Commission members, Parish Staff and parishioners?

The Contract for the Completion of Key Issue Plan

-Taskforce members:

-Send Draft to _____ by _____
commission secretary

-The commission will receive Key Issue Plans from _____ by _____
commission secretary

- Each Key Issue Taskforce should prepare to present plan at next Planning Committee meeting

Resource N

Example of a Completed Key Issue Planning Sheet

- **Key Issue Review**

Key Issue Statement: The need to provide avenues of Christian fellowship and faith formation that meet the needs of the retired members of our parish.

Why This is a Key Issue: In the surveys that came back many parishioners indicated that they did not know the “Fifty and Over Club” existed. They knew that once a month some older “ladies” played cards in the parish center, but they did not see this as meeting their need to connect with other retired members of their parish or grow in their relationship with God. These members of our community expressed some concerns that the issues they have at their stage of life that they wish the parish would guide them in addressing where not being met. They had an interest in topics such as living wills, maturing in the spirituality, returning to single living, etc. As our population of baby boomers continues to age, the commission sees this as a growing need.

- **Goals and Strategies**

Goal 1: Participation in the Fifty and Over monthly luncheon will double by May of 20ZZ.

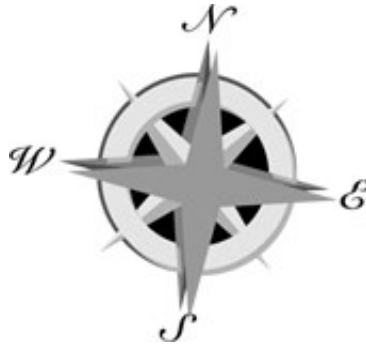
Strategy

What	When	Who
1. Form a committee to review the monthly luncheon format (i.e., prayer, setting, food sharing and activities) and implement changes.	Jan. AA, 20XX	Mary Smith
2. Invite new members to attend the Fifty and Over Monthly Luncheon through a mailing sent specifically to members of the parish 50 and over.	May AA, 20XX. May AA, 20YY	Mary Smith
3. Review new structure and change in participation of the luncheon bi-annually. Make any necessary revisions to increase participation.	Sept. AA, 20XX March AA, 20YY Sept AA, 20YY March AA, 20ZZ	Mary Smith
4. Continue to advertise the luncheons in the bulletin.	Every month	Bill Jones
5. Etc.		

Measure of Success

By May AB, 20ZZ there will be at least 30 participants in the Fifty and Over Monthly Luncheon.

Goal 2: would be completed the same as above.....



In this step you will:

- a. Review and revise the entire plan.
- b. Name the key groups which should see plan in its almost final form.

Step IIIB: Fine-tuning the travel plans. (Prayer for this session: Resource O)

1. At this meeting each Key Issue Planning Sheet should be reviewed and suggestions for revision recorded according to the consensus of the entire of the commission.
 - A. Final revision brought to next commission meeting.
 - B. The entire plan should be shared for input with any other appropriate input sources, identified from working on the mission statement.
 - C. Schedule the final planning meeting.

TIME TO REVIEW

Accomplishments achieved while fine-tuning the plan:

- a. *Each taskforce should have gathered input for changes to the Key Issue Plan.*
- b. *Identified groups that the plan needs to be shared with.*

Homework to be done before next meeting:

- a. *Each taskforce should meet with key groups to gather input.*
- b. *Make revisions to their Key Issue Plan according the last commission meeting and input from other key groups.*

Our next meeting date is: _____

Step IV: Finalizing the Plan (Prayer for this session: Resource P)

At the final planning meeting, the commission should...

1. Share input from final sharing with our key groups in the parish.
2. Decide upon any final revisions thanks to this input.
3. Determine how the plan will be published and distributed.
4. End with “Hospitality and Celebration” to express the parish’s gratitude to the commission’s work.

TIME TO REVIEW

Accomplishments achieved while completing the plan:

- a. *Plan is final and ready to become reality.*

Homework to be done before next meeting:

- a. *Need to get the word out to the parish.*
- b. *Start making it happen.*

Our next meeting date is: _____

Resource O
Step IIIB: Fine Tuning the Plan
Prayer Reflection²

Opening Prayer for the Meeting

Leader: It helps, now and then, to step back and take a long view.
The Kingdom is not only beyond our efforts,
it is even beyond our vision.
We accomplish in our lifetime only a tiny fraction
of the magnificent enterprise that is God's work.
Nothing we do is complete, which is a way of saying
that the Kingdom always lies beyond us.
No statement says all that could be said.
No prayer fully expresses our faith.
No confession brings perfection.
No pastoral visit brings wholeness.
No program accomplishes the Church's mission.
No set of goals and objectives includes everything.

All: This is what we are about.
We plant the seeds that one day will grow.
We water seeds already planted,
knowing that they hold future promise.
We lay foundations that will need further development.
We provide yeast that produces far beyond our capabilities.
We cannot do everything,
and there is a sense of liberation in realizing that.
This enables us to do something, and to do it very well.
It may be incomplete, but it is a beginning,
a step along the way, an opportunity
for the Lord's grace to enter and do the rest.
We may never see the end results, but that is the difference
between the Master Builder and the worker.
We are workers, not Master Builders; ministers, not Messiahs.
We are prophets of a future not our own.

Leader: Dear Lord, help us to know Your will for us today. To know when we are
doing all we can to bring Your Kingdom to life and when to leave the rest to
You our Master Builder.

All: Amen.

² John Cardinal Dearden, Homily at Mass for Departed Priests, November 1979.

Step IIIB: Fine Tuning the Plan Prayer Reflection

Before entering into this prayer, have each of the taskforce teams stand together in a circle and hold hands.

Closing Prayer for the Session

Leader: Gracious God, thank you for our time together. Give us now the fortitude to continue to discern Your will for our ministry to the Church. We have been working for some time to find Your will for us; do not let us lose hope and heart now.

Help us find comfort in knowing that we cannot do it all, but that what we do will be a beginning to something more than we can know or understand. We are the workers, not the Master Builder. We seek to lay the foundations that will allow Your Spirit to bring life and grow within our community.

All: Amen.

Leader: Now I ask that each taskforce stay in their circle, but that each member face outward and then rejoins hands.

We face outward in anticipation of the work we are taking with us. When we pray, “Thy kingdom come,” let us hear those words and remember that we are the workers, not the Master Builder, yet we are called to do something and to do it very well.

Now let us pray together the words Jesus taught us.

All: Our Father, who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy name,
Thy kingdom come,
Thy will be done,
on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread,
and forgive us our trespasses
as we forgive those
who trespass against us,
and lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil. Amen.

Resource P
Step IV: Finalizing the Plan
Prayers of Gratitude

Supplies: This prayer will require one 3x5 slip of paper for each member of the commission, pens, and a medium size basket to hold the paper once blessings have been recorded on them.

Create a prayer table for this meeting using the blessing basket, cross and candle. Light the candle at the beginning of your prayer time.

Opening Prayer for the Meeting

Leader: Today we gather to complete our planning and thank God for the help and guidance of His Spirit. Let us take a moment to reflect on what has transpired over this process and offer God thanks for one thing that really struck us. It could be something that was a surprise, an event that inspired us, a fear that the Lord's guidance removed, a special person we met on this journey, etc. *(Now hand out 3X5 slips of paper and give everyone time to write something about this planning process that they are grateful for.)*

Leader: (Psalm 136: 1-9, 26)

Dear God, You have traveled with us during this time of planning for our commission. For months we have offered up many petitions for Your aid. Now it is time to offer You our hymn of thanksgiving and everlasting love.

Praise the LORD, who is so good; praise the God of Gods; praise the Lord of Lords;

All: God's love endures forever

Leader: Who alone has done great wonders, who skillfully made the heavens, who spread the earth upon the waters.

All: God's love endures forever

Leader: Who made the great lights, the sun to rule the day, the moon and stars to rule the night.

All: God's love endures forever

Leader: Praise the God of heaven.

All: God's love endures forever

Leader: *(Invite each member to now read what they were grateful for in this planning process while placing their slip in the basket. If some have items that they find too personal, allow them to participate by saying "in thanks for this personal thanksgiving" as they place their slip in the basket.)*

All: God's Love endures forever.

All: Amen.

Step IV: Finalizing the Plan Prayers of Gratitude

Closing Prayer for the Session

Leader: Gracious God, we are thankful for the dignity and creative challenge of our unique tasks. For the work that enables us, that lifts up our spirits, we are grateful. By means of these labors, we are able to give flesh to our spiritual dreams and to work towards the salvation of the earth.

Help us, Lord our God, to use the work of these meetings to perform it with mindfulness and attention, with care and devotion, that it will be holy and healing for us and for all whom we are called to serve.

All: Amen.

Leader: May almighty God put our faith into action, to work in love, and to persevere in hope.

And may God bless us + in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

All: Amen.

The Journey: Implementation

1. Each commission member responsible for any of the plan's objectives and strategies should report the progress of each strategy to the commission as frequently as agreed upon but at least every quarter.
 - A. There should be no surprises in this report for the parish administrator of religious education. Members who are heading up various parts of the implementation strategy should be in regular contact with the PARE, especially if there is a problem.
 - B. The commission secretary updates the Key Issue Plan based on the progress reported on during the commission meeting. This becomes a major part of the commission's minutes.
 - C. For strategies incomplete by deadline the member accountable will offer reasons why.
 - D. The Faith Formation Commission will determine what changes should be made to the plan for incomplete items or problems that arise.
 - a. It might be that a new strategy should be considered
 - Or maybe a new deadline is acceptable.
 - b. This process repeats itself until the strategies are completed and the goal is achieved.
 - c. The Pastor should receive minutes of all the meetings of the commission including these that discuss the results of the plan.
 - E. The commission's representative on the Parish Council (usually the chairperson) will, at least quarterly, report to the council on the progress of the Key Issue Plans.
 - F. Since communication of the plan's progress is crucial, the parish administrator of religious education and the Faith Formation Commission must commit to updating parishioners through written and electronic communication options used to get Parish news out! Options may include...
 - a. The parish bulletin
 - b. The parish newsletter
 - c. The parish website
 - G. All Strategies in the Plan due to be completed in the upcoming year become the OPERATING PLAN.
 - a. These strategies should also be included in the administrator's administrative or communication goals as outlined in the Archdiocesan document "As Good

Annual Operating Plan:

Contains strategies from each Key Issue plan that are to be completed in any one year.

- Successful achievement of all strategies is maximized when:
 - A) Staff members responsible for the strategies include them in their annual performance goals
 - B) The Faith Formation Commission accepts responsibility for monitoring progress and communicating and celebrating the achievement of each strategy.
- Re-Plan: This step should not take more than one or two meetings each year. Review key issues from the first year that did not get included, use the SWOT definitions to identify anything new that has arisen and should be included.

Stewards.” (A copy of “As Good Stewards” is included on the Office of Catholic Education webpage.)

- H. Re-Plan—annually, the Faith Formation Commission should appoint an ad hoc committee (hopefully including some representation from the original taskforces) to revisit the plan and key issues identified (including those not chosen initially) to remove completed key issues and to select and create a key issue either from among those not chosen in the initial planning year or an issue that has arisen in the past year.
- I. Again, the year’s strategies from each key issue in the strategic plan form the OPERATING PLAN for the year. Parish administrators of religious education need to include these strategies in their annual goal setting and reporting process.

Glossary

Commission

A commission is a consultative body. It is a subgroup of the pastoral council responsible for recommending guidelines, developing goals, and coordinating activities in a specific area of ministry.

Mission

A good mission statement will identify what the commission is called to be.

Mandates

The objectives that people with authority expect this ministry to achieve and, if applicable, how they are defined to accomplish them. In other words, what autonomy and parameters does this commission have?

Programs

The specific events or resources that are being provided by the commission of a specific ministry area of the church.

Key Issue

An important strength to be leveraged, a weakness to be corrected, an opportunity to be pursued, a threat to be managed or a new capability to be developed.

Goal

The end toward which an effort is directed.

Measures of Success

Objective results that the commission can use to monitor whether the plan is creating the desired outcomes.

Strategies

The actions that will be taken to achieve the goal.

Appendix

Strategic Planning

Policy No. 2007-02

Policy Statement

In keeping with their commitment to the gospel call to stewardship and discipleship and to the ministries of Catholic education and lifelong faith formation, schools and parishes in the Archdiocese of Indianapolis will implement a three-year cycle of strategic planning for program improvement and mission enhancement.

Recommended: January 16, 2007 by the Archdiocesan Education Commission

Ratified: June 11, 2007 by +Daniel M. Buechlein, Archbishop of Indianapolis

Rule No. 2007-02

Administrative Rules

1. The strategic planning process for a school or a parish program selected by the Office of Catholic Education shall be the normative process for strategic planning.
2. A parish program may request permission to use an equivalent professional strategic planning process in place of one selected by the Office of Catholic Education. Such a request must be submitted in writing to the Office of Catholic Education and will be subject to the approval of the Executive Director, Catholic Education and Faith Formation.
3. The educational administrator will be responsible for initiating the strategic planning process for their respective ministry.
4. Parish school and faith formation commissions will be responsible for monitoring the implementation of their respective strategic plans and will be required to submit periodic progress reports to the Office of Catholic Education.
5. The Office of Catholic Education will provide guidance, training, and support for schools and parish strategic planning efforts.
6. When an outside facilitator is involved in the planning process, schools and parishes will be responsible for compensating that individual for services rendered.

Promulgation Date: June 13, 2007 by Annette "Mickey" Lentz, Executive Director, Catholic Education and Faith Formation

Application

This policy and rules applies to all Catholic elementary and secondary schools and parish faith formation programs in the Archdiocese of Indianapolis.

History/Rationale

Since 1977, educational planning has been part of the mission of the Archdiocese of Indianapolis, its deaneries, parishes and schools. For many years, the Office of Catholic Education, through a coordinator of boards of Total Catholic Education, monitored educational planning and provided direct services to parish educational administrators and boards of education. Since the inception of the commission model of parish governance in 1999, and the subsequent establishment of separate school and faith formation commissions (with some exceptions), two different strategic planning processes have emerged: an accreditation and institutional development process for Catholic schools and a program improvement process for parish faith formation programs. While parishes and schools are now more directly responsible for the development of their respective strategic plans, the Office of Catholic Education continues to provide leadership and support for their efforts.

Strategic planning is a disciplined, continuous process for decision-making that deals with three critical planning questions:

- Where are we today?
- Where do we want to go?
- How are we going to get there?

The strategic planning process involves a step-by-step method of reviewing mission and values, analyzing key issues, determining priorities, designing strategies, and monitoring results. It focuses on action and results and provides direction for success. Good strategic planning combines the best of human wisdom with the guidance of the Holy Spirit toward ongoing program improvement.

Guidance

In the third millennium of Christianity, in a rapidly changing world, the importance of strategic planning cannot be understated. A mobile, diverse, educated and busy Catholic population and a re-visioning of the traditional Catholic parish demand fresh approaches to lifelong faith formation. Ongoing program improvement is essential for both Catholic schools and faith formation ministries. Total parish catechesis—the parish as the curriculum—is becoming widespread (*Our Hearts Were Burning Within Us* # 118). Pastors, educational and catechetical leaders, commission members, parents, catechists, and the entire parish community are called to a renewed awareness of mission and purpose that, modeled in strategic planning, can secure a faith-filled future for generations to come.

A strategic planning process can name key issues for both educational and institutional planning through an analysis of Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats (SWOT Analysis), identified by all members of the parish community and encourage responsible decision-making in light of particular human and fiscal resources.