

Section 1 – Overview

In support of the Archdiocese of Hartford's Pastoral Plan for New Haven (the creation of a city wide, unified Parish) the Office of Pastoral Planning held a series of 6 SWOT Analysis meetings. Between April 4th and May 26th meetings were held at St. Michaels, Our Lady of Guadalupe, St. Martin de Porres, St. Anthony, St. Mary (including parishioners from St. Joseph) and St. Stanislaus churches. Each session had between 20 and 30 participants.

Also after each SWOT session the results were transcribed from the flip charts into a multi tab spreadsheet which was then sent to the respective Pastors. The participants were informed of this ahead of time so they could request and circulate the document among other parishioners if needed.

Participants were also given ample time before the start of the formal SWOT analysis to ask questions and express opinions about the Pastoral Plan for the New Haven Catholic community.

Section 2 – Summary of SWOT Outcomes

The results of the 6 SWOT Sessions were compiled into a master document using Affinity Grouping Analysis. This particular method was chosen to uncover common themes that were shared by the parish communities that could be then used as a basis for a data driven set of recommendations. The analysis of the SWOT results produced the following Affinity Group categories and associated data:

- 1) Ethnic Culture
 - a. The participants felt strongly about the value of the different ethnic cultures of the parishes in which they worship. It is interesting to note that some of the parishes have maintained the ethnic identity of the people who founded them (i.e. St. Stanislaus/Polish, St. Martin de Porres/African-American) while others have evolved over time to a blend of ethnicities reflecting the modern population of New Haven. For example, Our Lady of Guadalupe was founded in the 19th century by a predominantly Irish community, but today also serves a large Spanish speaking congregation representing 16 different Central and South American countries. St. Anthony, founded at the turn of the 20th century to serve a rapidly growing Italian population, now also ministers to the Spanish speaking and Catholics of New Haven as well as a growing Catholic community from the Philippines.
 - b. Not only is the history and language valued, but also the corresponding unique cultural traditions that accompany them. Some of these are liturgical (culture specific music, feast day processions, a "style" of worship) while others are more social and community oriented.
- 2) Outreach

- a. In every SWOT session participants expressed an interest in connecting with the greater New Haven community. An interest in greater youth ministry and involvement was common to all the sessions. A particular focus on the college and university communities was mentioned.
 - b. Social Justice outreach was also prominent, both within a parish's local community and the city as a whole. Some of the parishes are involved today, some wished to expand and grow, and some wanted to establish new programs.
- 3) Losses
- a. There has been a decline over decades of the number of Catholics attending Mass and practicing the faith in the entire USA, the State of CT and the City of New Haven. This has been felt at the parish level where smaller congregations have negatively impacted the ability to maintain and continue traditional parish social events, fewer Mass times, and less steady parish financial contributions.
 - b. It was also expressed that some of the parishes are losing members to non-Catholic churches for a variety of reasons.
 - c. There was also concern that parish assets be cared for as parish finances are potentially combined to serve the needs of the greater community.
- 4) Archdiocese of Hartford
- a. Participants consistently voiced a level of frustration with the Archdiocese, particularly as it relates to communications concerning changes in clergy and the Pastoral Plan.
 - b. Many felt like their concerns are not heard and there is a lack of transparency regarding information coming from the Archdiocese.
 - c. Some people also feel that the Archdiocese does not listen to the "voice of the parishioners" – i.e., they do what they think is best regardless of input from the people.
 - d. This has led to a lack of trust and rumors taking the place of actual information, negatively impacting the parishes and greater community.
- 5) Location
- a. As can be the case with urban churches, the location in the city can cause challenges to worship and ministry.
 - b. Most of the participants cited lack of convenient parking near their church as an ongoing concern, and some also cited neighborhood safety issues.
 - c. Due to the age of some of the churches there is not adequate accessibility for those needing the use of wheelchairs, walkers, etc.
 - d. Concerns were expressed that some would not be welcomed in other New Haven parishes due to racial or ethnic discrimination.
- 6) Parish Characteristics
- a. There was concern expressed that in this New Haven Catholic model one church would be emphasized at the expense of the others, and therefore given a disproportionate share of authority and financial resources.
 - b. There is great work being done at these parishes and the participants were rightly proud to speak about it.
 - c. Most had strong Faith Formation programs, serving all ages from youth to adults. Some expressed interest in opening up their programs to other parishes and the New Haven community as a whole.

- d. Many cited a unique quality of their community and worship;
 - i. Focus on traditional music and devotions
 - ii. Availability of daily confession and weekly adoration
 - iii. A wide variety of ministries and groups serving the parishes (i.e. K of C, Ladies Guild, Catechesis of the Good Shepherd, etc.)

Section 3 – Summary

Although each of these parishes has a distinct history and current reality, there are great commonalities between them. Improved and more frequent communication between the parishes can help each to grow in faith and has the potential to have a greater impact on evangelization efforts in the greater New Haven community.