

St. Catharine – St. Margaret Parish Town Hall Meeting
St. Catharine School Auditorium
February 1, 2017

MEETING SUMMARY

Welcome and Opening Prayer

- Fr. Cullen welcomed the 37 parishioners in attendance and thanked them for their participation.
- Attendees joined Fr. Cullen and the Pastoral Council in an opening prayer.

Review and Follow-Up Action from the January 25th Town Hall Meeting

- Pastoral Council member Dr. Jack V. Kirnan introduced each of the 8 Council members in attendance – Maureen Martin, Maureen Liddy, Michael Mastrocola, Joseph Iorio, Susan Marks, Lisa Keefe, and Elizabeth Kelly – and welcomed both those parishioners who attended the January 25th Town Hall meeting and the 15 new parishioners who were present for the February 1st Town Hall.
- Dr. Kirnan then reviewed the follow-up steps from the first Town Hall held on January 25th. 2 charts were shown to attendees – one illustrating parish registrations by age cohort as of January 2017 and another chart providing the parish registration data by geographic location. To simplify the data, it was agreed that parish registrations for Spring Lake and Spring Lake Heights be merged after the meeting into a combined category labeled “Spring Lake/Spring Lake Heights” since some families in Spring Lake Heights use a 5-digit zip code while other families in the town use a 9-digit zip code.
- Dr. Kirnan then reviewed 2 additional charts that summarized the parish strengths and challenges that were discussed by the 6 Break Out Teams during the 1st Town Hall meeting held on January 25th.
- 4 of the 6 Teams cited the number of our priests and Mass offerings and St. Catharine School as signature parish strengths. Three of the 6 Teams also cited the high quality of our committed parishioners, the breadth of our parish ministries, our financial stability, and our music and programs as additional strengths of the parish. In total, the Break Out Teams cited 14 strengths of the parish that will be duly noted as the Pastoral Council develops the new strategic plan for the parish.
- The Break Out Teams also identified a total of 14 major challenges for the parish, with the need to involve more of our youth emerging as the parish’s biggest challenge and one cited by all 6 Break Out Teams. 3 other major challenges were identified by 4 of the 6 Teams including hospitality and community engagement, technology and use of parish data, and the marketing, advertising and overall communications tools we employ as a parish including our use of social media.

- Dr. Kirnan then summarized the 4 major challenges identified by the 6 Break Out Teams and showed how they aligned with 7 challenges the Pastoral Council had identified during the past two years since the Council’s formation.
- Dr. Kirnan then moved to the activity portion of the Town Hall meeting by asking the attendees to once again form Break Out Groups to address the 4 major areas parishioners had identified during the January 25th Town Hall meeting. Attendees for dinner a total of 6 breakout groups with 5 of the 6 teams each containing 6 parishioners and the 6th group including 7 parishioners.
- Each of the 6 Break Out Teams were asked to: 1) develop SMART (Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Realistic, and Time-bound) Goals for each of the 4 challenge areas identified in the January 25th meeting; 2) list specific actions that would support the attainment of each of the stated goals; and 3) assign a Team member to record and present feedback to the entire group of attendees.

Break Out Team Discussion of Goals and Actions to Support Goals

- The 6 Break Out Teams shared their Goals and Action Steps for each of the 4 Major Challenge areas with the broader audience which are noted in the following tables:

**ST. CATHARINE – ST. MARGARET PARISH
4 KEY CHALLENGE AREAS
YOUTH INVOLVEMENT**

TEAM 1	
GOALS <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Target and develop programs for our youth with the group being defined as those receiving the sacrament of Confirmation through the age of 25 years old. • Set a target goal for 50-75 youth to attend this type of program. 	ACTIONS TO SUPPORT GOALS <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create a youth-focused Mass on Sunday evenings with the sermon and music geared to youth needs. • Develop a forum to discuss topics of interest to our youth such as peer pressure, bullying, college, etc. • Use focus groups to solicit input from our youth. • Develop more discussion-based programs during our youth’s confirmation years. • Develop more discussion-based programs during the post-Christmas period when there is less competition from sports and youth are home from college.

TEAM 2	
GOALS <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To bring our youth closer to God and to become more Christ-like. • To increase youth participation in Mass. • To increase youth participation in our parish ministries. 	ACTIONS TO SUPPORT GOALS <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have our parish families bring up gifts at all Masses. • Have our youth take up collections to the altar. • Develop a Guitar/Folk Mass for our youth. • Have a daily text message with a thought or reflection of the day using our social media tools. • Consider a parent/child dance. • Develop specific youth ministries targeted for both our 12-14 year olds with a separate group for our 15-18 year olds. • Sponsor focus groups to solicit input from our 12-14 year olds and another focus group for our 15-18 year olds. • Review the best practices across our 4 cohort parishes.

TEAM 3	
GOALS <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To help our youth grow in their faith as they transition into adulthood. • To build and grow programs for youth that can sustain their long-term engagement within the parish community. 	ACTIONS TO SUPPORT GOALS <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use our parish data by age group to target specific programs for our youth. • Determine which of our Church locations are safe, functional, and most accessible for holding our various youth activities. • Develop well-trained leaders for all youth programs with our older youth leading our younger ones. • Sponsor youth activities that can link parent involvement with each youth activity.

TEAM 4	
GOALS <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase youth attendance at Mass. • Create a ministry of Youth Services. 	ACTIONS TO SUPPORT GOALS <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Initiate a late afternoon/early evening Mass on Sundays centered

	<p>on youth needs with music and sermons relevant to their lives.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop several youth-based ministries with different missions – Therapy Kids to visit seniors in nursing homes; a Social Needs group to visit the sick of the parish; and a Good Deeds group who can help with specific requests from parishioners.
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TEAM 5	
<p>GOALS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Target youth from the ages of 13-18 with the goal of increasing their active participation in Mass. • To help our youth grow in their faith as they move into adulthood. 	<p>ACTIONS TO SUPPORT GOALS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make one of our weekend Masses a Folk Mass for our youth. • Include our Youth as Lectors, Sacristans, and Musicians in the Folk Mass. • Show faith-based movies with opportunity for discussion. • Consider offering dance night on weekends with youth bands providing music. • Have our youth promote random acts of kindness in their neighborhoods. • Link parent involvement with each of our youth activities.

TEAM 6	
<p>GOALS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage our youth to build and grow in their faith. • Form a youth group for high school students to align with the already established middle school youth group. • Foster greater involvement of parents in each of our youth programs and activities. 	<p>ACTIONS TO SUPPORT GOALS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Build on the success of our current middle school youth group to help them transition into a newly created high school youth group. • Use technology and our social media platforms to enhance communication for all youth groups and activities. • Use technology and social media to encourage parent engagement in all youth-based groups and activities. • Develop a youth-focused Mass on

	<p>Sunday evenings that would be followed by social gatherings and opportunity for discussion.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collaborate with successful youth groups at St. Marks and St. Rose cohort parishes. • Examine other best practices for youth within the Diocese of Trenton.
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St. Catharine – St. Margaret Parish
4 Challenge Areas
Hospitality and Community

TEAM 1	
<p>GOALS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recognize the limitations of our physical space – i.e., the parish has no real gathering area for our parishioners to congregate after each Mass with the added challenge of our parishioners attending Mass at 2 separate locations. • Increase the frequency and consistency of greeting and welcoming our parishioners as they arrive at each of our church locations and include our ushers, lectors, priests, and altar servers in the process. 	<p>ACTIONS TO SUPPORT GOALS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have our celebrants welcome new parishioners during each Mass and have each parishioner greet those around them at each Mass. • Our parish has a stereotype of being largely Irish, white, and wealthy. So an extra effort will be needed to welcome those visitors who may come from a different socioeconomic environment.

TEAM 2	
<p>GOALS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To make all parishioners feel very welcome. • Create a neighborhood like environment for our parish. 	<p>ACTIONS TO SUPPORT GOALS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Survey parishioners periodically on what would make them feel more comfortable. • Have Greeters at all Masses. • Develop a welcome package for new parishioners. • Encourage all parish groups and ministries to make their members feel welcomed and recognize that

	<p>each group's specific needs may be different.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Invite experts to discuss topics of interest to our youth like college education and SAT prep. • Sponsor lectures on relevant topics to parishioners such as depression, anxiety. • Create a veterans group ministry. • Consider sponsoring a Program on marriage counseling and/or marriage retreats.
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TEAM 3	
<p>GOALS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To be a welcoming community and reach a much larger percentage of our parish community. 	<p>ACTIONS TO SUPPORT GOALS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have Greeters at every Mass including adults and youth. • Have a Meet & Greet for all Masses not just the 12PM Mass at St. Margaret Church. • Create a Welcome Packet for new parishioners. • Have the pastor make a personal phone call to welcome new parishioners. • Staff more of our youth to answer the phone at the rectory especially in evenings. • Formally welcome and introduce our new parishioners during Mass.

TEAM 4	
<p>GOALS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To identify and welcome new parishioners. • To identify and welcome back inactive parishioners. • To enhance community spirit among our existing parishioners. 	<p>ACTIONS TO SUPPORT GOALS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create a Welcome Packet for our new parishioners. • Assign an existing parish family to mentor each new parish family thereby creating a new ministry for the parish. • Highlight new parishioners in the Parish Bulletin like we currently do for wedding announcements. • Consider offering the Come Back

	<p>Home programs to address our inactive parishioners.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Look through our weekly collection envelopes to help identify inactive parishioners. • Highlight a ministry every month in the Parish Bulletin and on our Parish Website to enhance community spirit among our existing parishioners. • Broaden the Meet and Greets to every Mass.
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TEAM 5	
GOALS	<p>ACTIONS TO SUPPORT GOALS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a consistent time appropriate schedule of Meet & Greets to cover more Masses – i.e., a monthly schedule with alternating Masses so we could capture a given Mass 2 times per year. Meet & Greets could be held in the Convent, the rectory or St. Margaret’s Hall. • Have Greeters at the doors of both Churches for every Mass. • Consider including discount coupons and small family gifts from local merchants for a Welcome basket for new parishioners.

TEAM 6	
GOALS	<p>ACTIONS TO SUPPORT GOALS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue offering the many successful parish events and activities begun under Fr. Cullen’s leadership. • Consider placing a tent outside St. Catharine once a month so parishioners could be welcomed after weekend Masses. • Consider doing what St. Rose does once a month with a Meet & Greet offering a hot meal.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reconsider the convent as a potential meeting area. • Consider the Wall property as a community gathering space. • Consider addition of a Triangle space with glass walls to be created at St. Catharine. • Encourage our priests and Mass participants to be visible both before and after Mass. • Encourage our congregation to say hello to each other before Mass begins. • Have teenagers staff a 5pm-9pm shift on weeknights. • Set up tables outside of Mass with relevant parish information. • Create a new parishioner directory including photos.
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St. Catharine – St. Margaret Parish
4 Challenge Areas
Technology/Data & Communications/Marketing

TEAM 1	
GOALS	ACTIONS TO SUPPORT GOALS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use our parish data to more effectively target how we market and communicate with our specific ministries and programs. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Parish Bulletin, Parish Website, and all Parish communications need to be accurate, timely, and up to date at all times. • Develop multiple channels of communication to more effectively target specific parish groups and/or our intended audience.

Team 2	
GOALS	ACTIVITIES TO SUPPORT GOALS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use all available tools to create greater awareness of parish 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create a new program that would have teenagers teaching older

<p>programs and ministries including parish email lists, the Parish Website, and all Parish Social Media accounts (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram).</p>	<p>parishioners how to use existing social media platforms.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase our contact with summer visitors by soliciting their contact information during the summer months, particularly their email addresses. • Have volunteers visit parishioners at home. • Evaluate the Best Practices in technology and marketing in our 4 cohort parishes for possible adoption in our own parish. • Encourage in a more proactive way person to person contact throughout the parish community.
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<p>TEAM 3</p>	
<p>GOALS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evaluate parish data collection efforts and look for opportunities to enhance data accuracy. • Identify specific ways we can use parish data more effectively in all communication and marketing efforts. • Clarify the specific parties within the parish who should have access to specific parishioner data. 	<p>ACTIONS TO SUPPORT GOALS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a greater online capability of acquiring parishioner data. • Develop a more effective data collection process that can identify inactive parishioners. • Post more photos in all of our marketing and communication efforts both within and outside of our parish. • Review the Parish Bulletin and look for ways to improve our content.

<p>TEAM 4</p>	
<p>GOALS</p>	<p>ACTIONS TO SUPPORT GOALS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hire a consultant to assess our current communication systems including our Social Media presence. • Create a platform to easily send parish updates to the Coast Star newspaper. • Modify the contents and main elements of the Parish Bulletin and consider using inserts on a regular basis.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a youth-oriented blog. • Spotlight a family, a ministry, or one of our youth groups on a regular basis in the Parish Bulletin.
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TEAM 5	
GOALS <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a social media presence for each of our 28 parish ministries. 	ACTIONS TO SUPPORT GOALS <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop an electronic calendar that would be showcased in both Churches and would include readings, the order of Mass, songs, and a listing of all parish events. • Improve the advertising process by which each of the 28 parish ministries markets their specific events and activities.

TEAM 6	
GOALS <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To bring our parish community more fully into the 21st century. • Hire an outside consultant who could develop an integrated parish database that would include both active and inactive parishioners, St. Catharine school alumni, summer visitors, etc. 	ACTIONS TO SUPPORT GOALS <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assign youth of the parish to specific ministries that can assist Lisa in the day-to-day communication demands of our social media accounts (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram).

Next Steps in the Strategic Planning Process

- Dr. Kirnan concluded the Break Out Team presentations of specific Goals and Action Steps by outlining the strategic planning process the Council will follow over the next several months.
- The Parish Pastoral Council will continue to refine the Parish Mission Statement and create a Parish Vision Statement and a Statement of Core Values.
- The Council has created 3 Working Groups who will work with each other to take all inputs to date including the feedback gleaned from the 2 Town Hall Meetings to develop a detailed Action Plan with specific accountabilities, deliverables, and timelines for each of the major challenge areas with an anticipated completion date of June 2017.

Closing Prayer and Adjournment

- Fr. Cullen thanked all attendees for their participation and offered a closing prayer with adjournment at 9:20pm.

