

Visioning and Planning at St. Francis of Assisi

INTRODUCTION

In June 2009, Fr. Jerome Massimino, O.F.M. engaged the services of Mrs. Peg Garvey-Mitchell, M.S.W., who serves as a consultant to a variety of parishes and dioceses, to assist the pastoral leadership team (PLT) with our strategic planning. In June 2010, the first phase of the planning process was brought to completion at a three-day retreat. Our experience of the process brought to light the rich history and legacy of the friars' ministry at the Church of St. Francis of Assisi. Because of the expertise and experience provided by Peg Garvey-Mitchell, as well as the openness and diligence of the PLT and Friars, a synergy was created that gave the process integrity and honesty.

WORK TO DATE

Much has been accomplished over the past year. The work expanded beyond the PLT to include all directors at St. Francis of Assisi and the friars. The planning process continues to look at foundational issues of identity, communications, and relationships.

Identity:

- What is the Church of St. Francis of Assisi?
- Whom do we serve?
- Who are we as staff at St. Francis?

Communication:

- How do we communicate?
- How can we best use the human, material, and fiscal resources to enhance our ministry?

Relationships:

- How does the entire staff work together?
- What does collaboration with the friar community mean?

Central to what we accomplished was identifying the Church of St. Francis of Assisi as an Urban Ministry Center with three components:

1. A Parish Community;
2. A Shrine Church that offers multiple opportunities for Eucharist, Reconciliation and devotions;
3. A center for outreach to the wider community through our adult education center, Franciscan Center for Spirituality and Direction, immigration center, counseling center and the many self help groups that we host.

St. Francis of Assisi has been growing organically as a parish community. The friars and PLT recognized and embraced this trend. The strategic plan reflects this new understanding.

Other work we have accomplished to date includes:

- The strategic planning process led the staff to evaluate and improve the way we communicate internally and externally.
- A change in companies to better serve our IT.
- Contracting with The Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate (CARA) to complete a study on demographics and needs/view points/trends within our worshiping community.
- Development of polices for weddings and baptisms.
- The bulletin was re-designed and debuted on June 6th.
- Development of job descriptions and realignment of staff responsibilities.
- Planned periodic staff gatherings to build community.

FUTURE WORK

The planning process also included a very important meeting between PLT and the friar community. The friars identified three areas for growth and development:

1. Increasing our outreach to young adults;
2. Growing our outreach to gay and lesbian Catholics;
3. Developing more volunteer opportunities for parishioners of St. Francis of Assisi Church to serve the poor and alienated in a direct way.

The PLT heard the friars' call to develop these areas and work is already underway to move these three forward. To that end, three think tanks were established. These think tanks were comprised of interested parishioners identified by members of the PLT.

Service and Advocacy (led by Stephen Mimnaugh, O.F.M.)

I. Goal

- To develop a service and advocacy ministry (the call for more outreach opportunities).

II. Action

- To transition from think tank to a committee.
- Fall initiatives include: a day of service, opportunity for education in support of advocacy, prayer experience.

Young Adult Ministry (led by Joseph Nuzzi)

- I. Goal
 - To form a ministry to evangelize Catholics in their 20's and 30's.
- II. Action
 - To transition from think tank to a committee.
 - Fall initiatives include: a young adult retreat, meet and greet opportunities, opportunities to feed into our service and advocacy.

Gay and Lesbian Outreach (led by Meredith Augustin)

- I. Goal
 - To develop a LGBT ministry.
- II. Action
 - To transition from think tank to ministry.
 - Fall initiatives to include: a fall gathering with other G/L groups within our HNP, sponsoring a monthly hospitality, meet with think tank 3 times between now and November to help establish leadership for the ministry.

WHERE IS THE STRATEGIC PLAN TODAY?

The plan is not finished. Strategic planning shapes the future of ministry at the Church of St. Francis of Assisi. In addition, this process gives rise to initiatives which are not yet complete including:

- the CARA study
- a parish registration drive
- look toward enhancing stewardship
- the website and the information infrastructure to be completed.

CONCLUDING COMMENTS

The very way the staff operates has changed completely. The process has brought the PLT to a new level of collaboration and integration. It has changed the way we do business. Not only are major decisions made collaboratively, but all of our ministries and areas of responsibility are now woven into an overall, intentional plan of ministry to meet the needs of the people we serve.

All of this is very exciting and great possibilities are open before us. The Church of St. Francis of Assisi aspires to be an embracing community of WELCOME, WORSHIP, and WITNESS. Here in Jesus' name the poor are fed, the estranged are welcomed, the searching are accompanied.

The Franciscan friars, along with the pastoral leadership team and staff stand ready now to bring the Church of St. Francis of Assisi into the future. We will continue to serve and to be an outstanding Catholic community in the heart of New York.

Jerome Massimino, O.F.M.
Pastor and Guardian

Meredith D. Augustin
Director of Music Ministries

Michael Carnevale, O.F.M.
Director of Breadline

Joseph Cavoto, S.A.
Counseling Center

Vincent Laviano, O.F.M.
Friary Vicar and Director of Maintenance

Anthony LoGalbo, O.F.M.
Director of Center for Franciscan Spirituality
and Spiritual Direction

Stephen Mimnaugh, O.F.M.
Director of Service & Advocacy

Joseph Nuzzi
Pastoral Associate

Timothy Shreenan, O.F.M.
Director of Liturgy & Communications

Alan J. Thomas, O.F.M.
Friary Vicar and Administrative Assistant

Kevin Tortorelli, O.F.M.
Director of Adult Education

Edward Trochimczuk
Director of Volunteer Ministry