

# PARISH LIFE

## OVERALL GOAL

To encourage and facilitate “full, conscious and active” participation in the diverse aspects of parish life, as we acknowledge the unique challenges we face as an “intentional” parish

## CURRENT SCENARIO

***“Acknowledging our baptismal rights and responsibilities, inspired by the rich tradition of the Church and enlivened by the Second Vatican Council, we strive with the help of the Holy Spirit to . . .invite all people from diverse walks of life to make community with us; offer comfort to the alienated and marginalized in their faith journey . . .”***

Parish Mission Statement

## GENERAL

Saint Ignatius is a unique parish in that it draws its parishioners from throughout the metropolitan Boston area. Although it has a strong core of geographical parishioners, many of whom have been in the parish for years, it also attracts members who choose to travel on Sunday mornings to worship with this community. A number of factors influence this dynamic. Many come because of their connection with Boston College or other Jesuit institutions. Others from the Brookline and Newton area have come to the parish because of changes in the local parish structure. Some affiliate with the parish because of particular aspects of its parish life: religious education, outreach, spirituality and liturgy. As exciting and encouraging as this principle of attraction is, it also provides a significant challenge in building community and breaking down the isolation that some feel at Saint Ignatius.

The fact that Saint Ignatius is not a neighborhood parish challenges us to find ways to connect and include people in active membership. Although Sunday liturgy is the main

attraction for our membership, we want to facilitate the experience of community in whatever ways we can. The Parish Life Commission is one attempt to articulate a vision of community for our members.

The Parish Life Commission is a recently re-created umbrella organization, bringing together various groups with distinctly different charisms, serving distinctly different persons within the parish community. Each of these groups aspires to create connections and to give support, spiritual and social, among members of the parish community in order to build a stronger sense of community within the diverse parish. Each of the groups has experienced great difficulty in attracting and retaining volunteers to carry out its ministry. Because of the distinctly different nature of each of these groups, it is helpful to identify the ministry and challenges currently faced by each group.

#### PURPOSE FOR EACH GROUP

- Community Care: In the process of being established, this group seeks to give solace to families or individuals struggling with a death, illness or other difficulty, through personal contact such as a card or providing a meal. Currently, the group needs to build a network of information gathering, to identify persons in need of help
- Grief Links: Through personal contact, this group serves as a support and resource for the various needs of grieving parishioners, including attending wakes and contacting the bereaved. Currently, this group limits its activities to monthly meetings, which serve as a support system rather than a business meeting, as well as a special liturgy once a year
- The Martha Guild: By sponsoring receptions following special events (such as concerts, Easter Vigil services, etc.) this group tries to extend a welcome to parishioners and visitors. Currently, this group has just recruited a coordinator, who is working to identify persons to work on events on an ad hoc basis

- Pastoral Care Group: This unique group plans and implements programs and events that appreciate and support those people who selflessly give their time, talent and treasure to serve our parish community and the larger community, including the annual Appreciation Dinner and Pasta & Prayer. Currently, the challenges facing this group are to attract new members and to identify groups in need of their support
- Senior Outreach Ministry: Providing senior parishioners with opportunities for spiritual and social enrichment, this group sponsors a variety of events throughout the year, including a dinner following a performance of “A Dancer’s Christmas” as well as visits to homebound parishioners. Again, this group is in need of more volunteers to help in their mission
- Young Adult Group: Composed of Catholics between the ages of 20 and 39, this group sponsors a variety of educational, volunteer, spiritual and social programs and opportunities, both within the parish and in conjunction with the Archdiocese of Boston, including a monthly potluck supper and an annual retreat. This group faces the perennial challenge of turnover in the leadership group.

**GOAL ONE**

Develop strategies which will assist parishioners in developing a stronger sense of being part of a caring community

**ACTION ITEMS:**

- Renew emphasis on after-liturgy coffee hours as a way of facilitating introductions and interaction among parishioners

- Encourage parishioners in leadership positions and other parishioners to identify members of the parish who would like to become more involved in parish life and to extend personal invitations to them to participate in areas of interest
- Test the "one to one" meeting approach utilized by Greater Boston Interfaith Organization (see Social Ministries section) as a way of helping interested parishioners get to know others in the parish
- Conduct periodic, regular surveys and/or focus groups to assess how parishioners feel about the status of parish life
- Further identify parishioner needs in the area of parish life, prioritize these areas and implement, as possible
- Continue the "Shared Vision" orientation program for new parishioners
- Identify and invite needed people for leadership in organization, facilitation and development of new initiatives for each group.

## **GOAL TWO**

Coordinate with other commissions in educating parishioners about the centrality of caring for others based on the Gospel message

### **ACTION ITEMS:**

- At appropriate times in the liturgical year, encourage homilies on this topic
- Develop awareness of the relationship between being people of faith and acting on behalf of others in the community, through activities and programs sponsored by other commissions, i.e. Spiritual Life, Religious Education, Social Ministries

### **GOAL THREE**

Develop and strengthen the Parish Life Commission infrastructure

#### **OBJECTIVE ONE:**

**Increase the visibility and viability of each of the Parish Life groups**

#### **ACTION ITEMS:**

- Identify lay coordinator and parish staff liaison for Commission (accomplished)
- Set up meetings, bringing together representatives from each group, to coordinate programs and plan for the sharing of resources and supplies
- Establish a procedure for scheduling events, purchasing supplies and requesting assistance from parish staff for running of events
- Strengthen network of communication with other Commissions, to coordinate programs or events and share resources
- Establish a procedure for publicizing the work of each of the groups, to aid in attracting new members and potential leaders for each group.

#### **OBJECTIVE TWO:**

**Determine the short and long range needs for each community served by specific Parish Life groups to avoid overlapping programs**

#### **ACTION ITEMS:**

- Develop systematic method of analysis for ongoing programs and events, to avoid redundant programs aimed at the same segment of the parish

community and to assist in making events more accessible and interesting to members of parish community

- Develop budgeting and reporting systems for each group
- Develop new ideas to keep programs dynamic and attractive to parish community
- Create a unified calendaring system, both for planning and notifying potential participants of programs.

### **BEST CASE SCENARIO**

Called to serve one another, we believe that caring hearts are only activated when the needs of the diverse members of the parish family are recognized. Each of the Parish Life groups, through its ongoing and upcoming programs, seeks to build strong ties among the sundry sections of our parish family. Each of the Parish Life groups will be able to recruit and retain new members, to cultivate leaders and to program events that invite and include all in the parish family.

- Identify and recruit new leaders and members to refresh and expand the ministry of each of these groups
- Each group will utilize all available resources for publicizing its events and programs, including the bulletin, web-site, flyers and posters
- Establish and approve a procedure for scheduling events, purchasing supplies and requesting assistance from parish staff; create a unified calendaring system for event planning and notification
- Create a method for each group to analyze the effectiveness and accessibility of each of its programs and set up a procedure for responding to that analysis, to ensure that programs remain dynamic and attractive to the target audience
- Establish, for each group, a budget and method of reporting on activities to the Commission