

Parish Summary Report



Saint Brigid of Kildare Parish

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“Journeying Together”

Towards a More Vibrant Community of Faith

Executive Summary

Early on, we decided to have our major listening sessions in conjunction with other scheduled parish activities, as opposed to stand-alone events. One of the two major listening sessions was scheduled after our March 20th 11:30 am Mass and the other was scheduled as part of a full-day Lenten Retreat, scheduled on April 2nd. We also chose to have these two listening sessions later in the Synod process (ie in late March and early April) so we would have enough time to plan and advertise the sessions. We used the tag-line “Journey Together towards a More Vibrant Community of Faith.” We also scheduled a special listening session for the high school students during one of their regularly scheduled Sunday evening meetings; a session for our Whole Family Catechesis group and we solicited written feedback from our homebound community. We received feedback from nearly 130 participants. Participants’ response to this initiative was very positive.

Positive insights from the participants’ input included the following:

- Availability of the Sacraments, Traditions and Worldwide Scripture Consistency
- Universal Sources of Catholic Authority (Magisterium)
- Participation in Retreats, Mission and Study Groups
- Friendliness and Personality of Our Bishop, Priests, Seminarians
- Social Activities Such as Couples Group, Emerald Evening and Fish Frys
- Catholic School and Whole Family Catechesis

Main challenges gathered from the participants included the following:

- Church Seen as Judgmental and Too Focused on the Church Rules, Excluding Some Individuals
- Clergy Sometimes Seen as Argumentative or Not Engaged with Parishioners
- Not Welcoming or Not Inviting
- Lack of Adult Faith Formation Opportunities
- Silos (Various Parish Groups and “We vs They” Attitudes)
- Lack of Communication of Parish Activities and Opportunities
- Lack of Support from the Diocese

Potential areas of focus or improvement based on the participants’ “hopes and dreams” toward a more vibrant faith community, include the following:

- Opportunities for “Faith Building” at All Age Levels
- Social Events to Build a “Family Atmosphere” in the Parish
- Re-energize Youth Program and the Involvement of the Youth
- Learn How to Invite, Evangelize and Welcome
- Take Advantage of Alliance with MACC (Midland Area Catholic Community) Parishes
- Eliminate Silos and “We vs They” Attitudes
- Understand Church Teaching Without Being Judgmental
- Recognize the Great Impact We Have of Women Leaders in our Parish Community and Continue to Encourage High Engagement (Parish Council and Committees, Administration Staff, School, Faith Formation, and in Celebrating Our Liturgies)
- Expand Our Reach in Meeting Needs of Our Local Community and Missions

- Have Future ‘Synodal Sessions’ More Frequently in our Parish Focusing on Specific and Relevant Topics

The feedback from our Listening Sessions correlated well with the results from our Disciple Maker Index (DMI) survey taken in early 2021. The DMI survey contained numerous questions regarding the “Personal Beliefs” of the participants with respect to the teachings and tenets of the Catholic Church. Saint Brigid Parish response to ALL these teachings/tenets showed strong support to those beliefs. Therefore, there should be little concern that the parish does not align itself with Catholic teachings. With respect to Opportunities for Potential Improvements, a majority of DMI participants are looking for more opportunities for spiritual growth. Although survey participants were active in Mass Attendance, Individual Prayer Time, Catholic Devotion Involvement and Praying with Someone Outside Mass, the following were areas indicated with low or no involvement in the following:

- Participate in Workshops about Catholic Faith
- Participate in Spiritual Retreats
- Invite a Man to Consider Priesthood
- Invite Someone to Consider a Vocation to Religious Life
- Participate in Pastoral Counseling or Spiritual Direction
- Go to Confession
- Invite Someone to Join Me at a Parish Activity
- Invite Someone to Join Me at Mass
- Share Personal Witness of My Faith with Others
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Parish Process Overview

Early on, we decided to have our major listening sessions in conjunction with other scheduled parish activities, as opposed to stand-alone events. One of the two major listening sessions was scheduled after our March 20th 11:30 am Mass and the other was scheduled as part of a full-day Lenten Retreat, scheduled on April 2nd. We also chose to have these two listening sessions later in the Synod process (ie in late March and early April) so we would have enough time to plan and advertise the sessions. We also scheduled a special listening session for the high school students during one of their regularly scheduled Sunday evening meetings; a session for our Whole Family Catechesis group and we solicited written feedback from our homebound community.

Our first activity was to introduce the Synod Listening Session to key groups of the parish. This was done in order to get those groups on-board and to solicit volunteers as facilitators/table leaders for the upcoming listening sessions. We spoke to the following groups:

- Parish Staff
- Parish Council/Finance Council
- Lay Ministers Group of the Parish

The following timeline was developed for the advertising of the Synod listening sessions:

Week (Mon – Sun)	Week #	Task
24 Jan to 30 Jan	1	Weekly Email Blurb/Bulletin Announcement: Introduction
31 Jan to 6 Feb	2	Weekly Email Blurb/Bulletin Announcement: Fundamental Questions
7 Feb to 13 Feb	3	Weekly Email Blurb/Bulletin Announcement: Same as Week #2
14 Feb to 20 Feb	4	Weekly Email Blurb/Bulletin Announcement: Dates and Times of Listening Sessions Prayers of the Faithful Announcement at End of All Masses (Plevyak) ... Explain Info on Pew Brochure Brochure in the Pews Webpage Published Poster Boards (Church Vestibule and Parish Hall Lobby) Fr Andy Mention in His Bulletin Column
21 Feb to 27 Feb 8 th Sunday Ordinary Time	5	Weekly Email Blurb/Bulletin Announcement/Prayers of the Faithful: Same as Week #4 Brochures in Pews
28 Feb to 6 Mar 1 st Sunday Lent Ash Wednesday	6	Weekly Email Blurb/Bulletin Announcement/Prayers of the Faithful: Same as Week #4 Brochure in Pews Special Mailing to Homebound ... Questions and Return Address Letter
7 Mar to 13 Mar 2 nd Sunday Lent	7	Weekly Email Blurb/Bulletin Announcement/Prayers of the Faithful: Same as Week #4 Special Email from Fr Andy and Plevyak ... Angelina to Send Out Brochures in Pews Zoom Table Leader Training Sessions (M, T, W, R) “Journeying Together” Middle/High School Listening Session (3/13)

Week (Mon – Sun)	Week #	Task
14 Mar to 20 Mar	8	Weekly Email Blurb/Bulletin Announcement/Prayers of the Faithful: Change Message Brochures in Pews Announcement at End of 11:30 Mass (Fr Andy) ... Come Over for the Listening Session “Journeying Together” Listening Session after 11:30 Mass (3/20)
21 Mar to 27 Mar	9	Weekly Email Blurb/Bulletin Announcement/Prayers of the Faithful: Change Message Brochures in Pews
28 Mar to 3 Apr School Spring Break	10	“Journeying Together” Listening Session/Lenten Retreat (4/2) Bulletin Announcement: Thank-You for Participation in Listening Sessions
4 Apr to 10 Apr	11	Bulletin Announcement: Thank-You for Participation in Listening Sessions
11 Apr to 17 Apr Holy Week	12	
18 Apr to 24 Apr	13	Parish Council Meeting ... Preliminary Summary Presentation Thank-You Lunch/De-Briefing/Listening Session with Table Leaders (4/23; 12-2:30)

As seen, our advertising included: bulletin inserts, weekly email distributions, announcements after all Masses on one weekend during the middle of February and pew brochures and posters. We were planning to advertise and invite at the weekly Lenten Friday Fish Frys, however since the Knights were not able to secure a supply of fish, the Fish Frys were cancelled. Therefore, this cut off a significant avenue of inviting non-parishioners, those not now attending Church or non-Catholics.

We decided to schedule in-person listening sessions, with one exception. That exception was to reach out to our homebound parishioners. In mid-February, we mailed a letter from Fr Andy and Joe Plevyak to our homebound parishioners with a request to complete and return (in a postage paid envelope) a form containing the fundamental questions posed at our listening sessions. This letter was sent to approximately 20 homebound parishioners and we received three written replies.

We realized that scheduling in-person listening session ONLY and scheduling the second listening session at the end of Spring Break, we might be losing out on the involvement of our “snow-bird” parishioners and those that would be away for Spring Break. We chose to schedule in-person listening sessions as opposed to Zoom sessions or written input, to take advantage of the perceived benefit of face-to-face interactions and participants getting to know one another.

Although we used the graphic “For a Synodal Church” in our advertising, we decided to use the translation of SYNOD and therefore “JOURNEYING TOGETHER” was our theme of our listening sessions. During the listening sessions, we likened our journeying together as if we were on a camping excursion. In fact, we even served s’mores as a dessert during one of our listening sessions.

Our sessions consisted of two break-out sessions (4-6 participants at each table) dealing with the two fundamental questions, posed by the Diocesan Synod Committee. During the listening session, we

explained the purpose of the listening session, discussed ground rules, conducted the two break-out sessions and concluded with a discussion of what happens next and then closed in prayer. Since both sessions started around the noon hour, a simple lunch was served to begin each session. The following three slides (note the reference to our “camping excursion”) were used during the listening sessions:

“Journeying Together”

The primary goal of our “journeying together” is to be present with one another, to listen and learn with each other, and to grow closer to the Lord and to each other. To foster a more vibrant community of faith.

We are also given the opportunity to provide “our hopes and dreams” for the future of the Church.



“Journeying Together”



BREAK-OUT SESSION #1

- Ice Breaker to Get to Know Those You May Not Know at Your Table
- Quiet Time for Reflection
- Sharing Your Experiences
 - Examples where the Church has assisted you in “journeying together.”
 - Examples where the Church has been an obstacle or road block to “journeying together.”
- Break

“Journeying Together”

BREAK-OUT SESSION #2

- Quiet Time for Reflection
- Sharing Your Thoughts
 - What steps does the Holy Spirit invite us to take in order to grow in our “journeying together” to make our parish better?
 - What are your hopes and dreams for the Church as we “journey together” in terms of communion, participation and mission?



In order to get participants to know each other, we requested that participants sit with those who they may not know that well. For that reason, we “played” an ice breaker for table participants to let others

know something about themselves. Our ice breaker asked participants to use the letters of their first name and come up with an anagram that describes themselves (eg “J” is for joker, “O” is for overseas since I lived in Australia and Hong Kong and have visited over 60 countries, “E” is for eating since I love food and like to cook). Then, during each of the break-out sessions, we gave the participants about 7-10 minutes to silently reflect on the fundamental questions and write in their responses on a “camping journal” provided for that purpose. Those “camping journals” were collected at the end of the listening sessions and compiled as part of our “raw data” document. In addition, table leaders also captured some of the common responses during the listening. Finally, we asked participants to complete an evaluation of the listening session, itself. Those were also collected.

We conducted our high school listening session differently. Instead of breaking out in traditional small groups to discuss the fundamental questions, we posed a number of questions to participants. These questions ranged from fairly easy-to-answer, get-to-know-you questions (eg What is your favorite subject in school?) to more reflective questions, getting at the fundamental questions (eg What is their hope for the Church?). The participants recorded their answers and shared them with other participants.

Periodically, throughout this initiative, the various coordinators from the four Midland parishes meet via Zoom to share plans and best practices with each other. Collectively, an article about the Synod Listening Sessions was published in the Midland Daily News.

In order to be prepared for the upcoming listening sessions, we estimated that we needed between 15-20 table leaders/facilitators. Early on, we asked for volunteers and solicited members of the parish leadership (Parish Council and Finance Council) and Lay Minister community. We had 18 committed table leaders and asked them to act as table leaders for BOTH sessions. To prepare for their table leadership, we held Zoom meetings to introduce how the listening sessions were to be run and the role we expect from them. In order to show our appreciation of their assistance, we hosted a “thank-you” lunch at which we discussed their impressions of the listening sessions.

We asked participants for the two large listening sessions to RSVP for a listening session, however it was not absolutely necessary for them to RSVP in order to attend a session. We found that 20-25 percent of those that attended DID NOT RSVP. Participants could RSVP by calling the church office, responding to a website form or completing a paper form. Most chose to RSVP via the website. The following is the tally of participants at the various listening sessions:

- March 13th Youth Session ... 9 participants and 2 leaders
- March 20th Session ... 49 participants including table leaders
- April 2nd Session ... 51 participants including table leaders and retreat participants
- April 3rd Whole Family Catechesis Session ... 15 participants
- Homebound Survey ... 3 participants

Although we attempted to encourage participants to invite others (including family, friends, neighbors) to attend with them, most participants attended solely or with a spouse. Only one participant was known to bring along three others. It appears that there is a reluctance to personally invite others.

Learnings from our listening sessions include:

- Limit break-out sessions (tables) to a maximum of five people, including the table leader.

- Tighten up all parts of the listening sessions to give the most time for the break-out/listening portions of the sessions.
- Offer “prizes” for those that bring the most people to a listening session.
- Offer several evening listening sessions during the week.
- Space out the listening sessions so a participant from an early session could talk after Mass, about their positive experience and invite others.
- In person was a very positive experience; we met many new parish members, shared ideas for dealing with common challenges, and in a beautiful way we shared our faith journeys with each other; this was very powerful, time to reflect on our own faith journey and hear the witness of how God has touch other’s lives – the essence of evangelization of which we do not do enough.

Narrative from the Listening Sessions

SUMMARY OF THE POSITIVE EXPERIENCES TOWARDS “JOURNEYING TOGETHER”:

As participants shared their positive experiences with the Catholic Church, of foremost mention was the universality of the Roman Catholic Church. The fact that the church is based on the three sources of authority of Scripture, Tradition and Magisterium gives participants comfort that Church is larger than our Saint Brigid Parish or our Diocese of Saginaw ... it is indeed Universal. There is a comfort that one can attend any Catholic church around the world on a given Sunday and experience the same readings and the same liturgy. One can go to any Catholic church and “feel at home.” The Catechism offers a source for Catholic teaching. As head of the Catholic Church, Pope Francis was seen by many to bring a welcomed return to “simplicity” and focus for Christianity. He also was described as bringing a “more human and compassionate face of the Church.” Also, the universality of the church is apparent in times of world troubles (such as the recent War in the Ukraine) as Pope Francis encourages us to pray for peace. Several participants mentioned several pilgrimages to the Holy Land (led by Fr Jose and Fr Andy) or to Rome (22 parishioners in 2006) and how these powerful experiences have left “lasting warmth in (their) hearts and memories.”

The Church offers a variety of worship opportunities/traditions and many of these were mentioned by participants. Among those mentioned were:

- The Sacraments (especially, Reconciliation and Anointing of the Sick)
- Stations of the Cross
- Exposition, Adoration and Benediction
- The Latin Mass
- Lent and the Triduum
- Daily Mass
- The Liturgical Seasons

It was specifically mentioned that Saint Brigid Parish does a good job at having daily Masses and regularly scheduling opportunities for Reconciliation/Confession and Adoration throughout the year, something that may not always occur at other local parishes. Compared to Blessed Sacrament Parish in

Midland, most would say that Saint Brigid Parish Masses are more traditional. Parishioners seem to appreciate more “traditional aspects” of our liturgy, including for example: the ringing of bells during the Consecration; the use of incense more often and not just on special occasions; option of receiving Communion on one’s tongue; kneeling.

However, the largest dichotomy of responses during our Listening Sessions were centered around the Mass, itself. Some participants saw the Mass as more of a “communal celebration” and therefore did not object to the chatter before Mass as parishioners welcomed each other. Nor did they mind the constant movement of children (running off to the bathroom) or the voices of the young parishioners crying out. As one participant stated, “If the church ain’t crying, it is dying.” While others, see the Mass as more of a “personal celebration” and therefore find the noise and movement as distractions. As one participant stated, “Make the Mass reverent again. I could not care less about the homilies. I want to see people show reverence at Mass to Jesus in the Eucharist. The Mass is about JESUS.” And this dichotomy does not necessarily fall along the lines of the age of the parishioner as the first comment above came from a parishioner in his 80s while the second came from a parishioner much younger.

Many participants share wonderful experiences of their Catholic education while others talked fondly of their “Catholic education” through the RCIA program, as they entered the Church as an adult. Overall, families are pleased with the Faith Formation programs and the Whole Family Catechesis program offered at Saint Brigid Parish. In addition, the following were mentioned as positive experiences to continue one’s formation of faith:

- “Christ Renews His Parish” Retreats
- Fr Mike Schmidtz “Bible in a Year” Study
- “Theology of the Body” Program
- “Exodus 90” Program for Men
- Men’s and Women’s Conferences/Retreats
- Diocesan Lay Ministry Program
- MYE Faith and World Youth Day Events
- Bible Study Groups
- Young Couples Group

Several participants share stories of the solicitude that they received from the Church and its members, during times of trial and troubles in their lives. The Church has helped members get through many difficult situations such as divorce, financial hardships, illness or death of a loved one. Prayers are so important and it was noted that Saint Brigid’s Prayer Shawl Ministry provides a sense of hope and caring during these difficult times. In addition, social events within the parish help create a more family atmosphere. Events such as the Emerald Evening and Lenten Fish Frys were mentioned most frequently.

Finally, from a positive perspective, there were a number of comments regarding the welcoming and friendliness of the leadership of both the Parish and the Diocese. Several mentioned that they were delighted with the efforts of the Bishop, including: his First Friday sessions; his written messages; his media presence; his engagement with parishioners on his visits to the Parish; his focus on teaching and spiritual growth for everyone in our Diocese; his focus on unity and eliminating divisions. Specifically at Saint Brigid Parish, the following comments were made:

- Fr Andy’s Excitement with the Children (many like his “fist bumps”)

- Having the Seminarians in the Parish for a Semester and Summer ... leading the “Downtown Discussions” and “Our Lenten Retreat”
- Fr Marc’s “Down to Earth” Homilies
- Seeing the Human Side of Our Priests

How Saint Brigid Parish handled the COVID pandemic was also mentioned as an example of how caring the Church was to its members. With the outside Masses and the inside sanitation efforts, the church was shut down for a minimal amount of time, thereby giving parishioners a “place to gather and worship” when much of the other religious denominations were shut down. By telecasting Sunday Mass on You-tube, it further helped to connect the homebound to the parish.

SUMMARY OF THE POTENTIAL ROAD-BLOCKS TOWARDS “JOURNEYING TOGETHER”:

Our Listening Session next turned to experiences where the Church has been an “obstacle” or “road-block” to journeying together as a community of faith. With respect to the Mass, one participant (in her early 90s) mentioned that she feels we have “lost our sense of joy when we gather” and asked the question, “are we so old in years that we cannot be more childlike at Mass?” She cited the recent experience of having Fr Adam substitute while Fr Andy was away. She described Fr Adam as energetic and full of life as he celebrated Mass. Yet as she looked around the congregation, she commented that we all appeared to be lifeless and completely void of any joy. No doubt that the youth sometimes lament that they are bored at Mass.

A number of the comments from many participants, dealt with becoming a more welcoming or inclusive community of faith. Some of these comments are listed below:

- Lack of parish outreach in the community towards other rites, cultural traditions, etc.
- People are not personally invited to participate.
- Not enough focus on growing the church or bringing back those that have fallen away.
- The words we use (not using “Brothers and Sisters”).
- Left the church for various reasons and no one reached out to me.
- Historically, no girls as altar servers.
- Churches that have a long-standing leadership and don’t listen to other parishioners with new ideas.
- Struggle on how to help my Protestant wife to feel welcome and included in Church.
- As a non-Catholic, it is not welcoming (people not able to take Communion).
- Non-Catholics don’t “like” coming to Mass as the liturgy is not easy to follow.
- Lack of instruction at each Mass about welcoming non-Catholics to come forward for a blessing during Communion.
- Not being invited or asked to serve.
- No letters of welcome or welcoming of new members at Mass.
- Lack of Welcomers/Hospitality Ministers at EVERY Mass.

In addition, several participants discussed experiences of feeling judged by the Church or excluded from activities due to rules or formalities. One participant said, “At times the Church seems more interested in abiding by the rules rather than ministering to people.” Although it is uncertain if the following

examples occurred at Saint Brigid Parish or in the Diocese of Saginaw, these experiences have definitely been obstacles:

- A pregnant girl being kicked out of Catholic High School while the father was allowed to stay.
- Rejected first time for Lay Ministry program in the Diocese.
- Told that I could not be a leader of Religious Education because I was divorced.
- Told that I could not be an altar server because I attended public school.
- Told that I could not help in the kitchen for the Pancake Breakfast since I was not a Knight.
- A non-Catholic being told that they could not attend a “Christ Renews His Parish” retreat or a small faith group, since they were not Catholic.

Obviously, the behavior of our priests can be an obstacle as well. Priests that seem unapproachable or too busy to care or priests that are not seen at any church function, except at Mass may give parishioners a negative feeling. Sometimes there seems to be “too much pomp and circumstance,” especially in the Universal Church which can create a chiasm between the laity and the ordained. Some priests exhibit a lack of respect towards people with questions and can be argumentative rather than instructive. On the other hand, there were comments that some priests will not teach the Church’s truths in an effort to not alienate or upset Church members. Again, there were no indication that these comments were describing any current clergy at Saint Brigid but they remain obstacles that should be eliminated or avoided.

Another “obstacle” topic that was discussed by many participants was that of schooling or faith formation. Although Catholic education was seen as a definite plus, some commented that a Catholic education is financially out of reach for many; there is no bussing to our Catholic school and there is no opportunity for a Catholic high school education in Midland. Concern was also expressed that faith formation/religious education in the Catholic church seems to drop off after Sacramental prep with little opportunities beyond that age, including into adulthood.

At the parish level and especially with the COVID pandemic, there appeared to be very little community building events/activities, beyond Mass attendance. When events actually occurred, many times these were “silo” events focusing on specific groups within the parish (eg. Knights, Catholic school or age groups), as opposed to events for the entire parish to participant in. There were also a number of participants that mentioned that we might simply have a communication problem ... many don’t know who is on the Parish Staff, who are our Parish Council members and what events and activities are planned and available.

Finally, at times the Diocese of Saginaw and its staff can be obstacles or road-blocks, including:

- The VIRTUS organization is chaotic and unprofessional.
- Closure of churches without first trying to increase evangelization efforts.
- Liturgy Office causing division instead of encouraging continued growth and reverent worship. (examples include persecution of parishes making good changes – criticizing efforts to celebrate Corpus Christi with a procession, criticizing the purchase of a processional crucifix to replace a resurrection-a-fix, prohibiting altar servers from wearing cassocks ‘so the congregation does not get them confused with the presider,’ persecuting the Latin Mass rather than seek to help it, creating division between priests and congregation rather than helping diffuse it, even visibly creating division at the Bishop’s First Friday Mass during the procession of gifts)

SUMMARY OF THE STEPS THE HOLY SPIRIT INVITES US TO TAKE IN ORDER TO GROW IN OUR “JOURNEYING TOGETHER” TO IMPROVE OUR PARISH, DIOCESE OR THE UNIVERSAL CHURCH:

Participants felt that the “traditional” nature of the Mass at Saint Brigid Parish needs to remain while attention needs to be given to other aspects of parish life in order to improve our family of faith. Offering more non-Mass social events/activities provides opportunities to invite those who may not regularly attend Mass to be part of the parish community. Many participants in the Listening Session mentioned that it is difficult to invite non-Catholic friends or family members to attend Mass (because they cannot participate in Communion). Non-Mass events provide those opportunities for invitation and participation.

These events can take two forms ... faith building and family building. In order to foster a more vibrant faith community, it is essential that our faith formation must not stop when sacramental prep is completed (usually in the early teen years). We need to continue faith formation in all stages of life. Some ideas that were mentioned include:

- Retreats and/or Workshops at Least on a Yearly Basis with Excellent Presentations and Leaders
- Encourage Membership in Small Faith Groups/Bible Study Groups
- Preaching on the Importance of Prayer
- Seminars on Church Teaching
- Catholic High School in Midland
- Consider Bussing/Transportation and Financial Assistance to Increase Catholic School Enrollment
- More Focus on Our Relationship with Christ, as Opposed to the “Rules”
- Refresher CCD for Adults
- Implementing “Ember Days” (Ember Days refers to three days set apart for fasting, abstinence and prayer)

If Saint Brigid Parish does not have the financial or personnel resources to implement these programs on their own, then we might consider partnering with other parishes within the MACC (Midland Area Catholic Community). The approach of partnering with other parishes should be considered in all aspects of “journeying together” towards the future.

The other aspect of non-Mass events would be related to “family building” or increasing the familiarity between parishioners. These events might be purely social functions or might be approaches to take which have a large aspect of welcoming. Again, some ideas that surfaced include:

- Weekly Meal to Gather as a Church Family
- Weekly or Bi-weekly Coffee and Donuts
- Have Every Family/Individual Take a Turn at Being a Greeter at Mass
- Identify New Members and Recognize Them at Mass by the Presider
- Reach Out by Personal Invitation to Lapsed Catholics
- Re-instate Introducing Yourself (by Name) to Those Around You at the Beginning of Mass
- Bring Back Monthly Birthday and Anniversary Announcements at Mass
- Consider Using Our Facilities for Other Gatherings (eg Card Night in Parish Hall, Open Gym for Basketball, Movie Night in the Parish Hall, etc)

- Quarterly Listening Sessions to Get to Know Other Parishioners and Discuss a Particular Topic
- Yearly Picnic (Maybe with the MACC Parishes)

As we plan these events, we need to make sure we provide not only weekend events but also weekday events and both day and evening times. Volunteers will need to be recruited to plan and run these activities and greeters should be at all events to welcome participants. Also, we need to learn how to invite, evangelize and welcome existing and new participants and be comfortable with these activities. We need to create a warm, joyful and welcoming environment ... not judgmental or focusing on exclusion.

Since the future of the church is with the youth, we must focus on re-energizing youth programs and encouraging involvement in parish events. Events such as the following were mentioned by the Listening Session participants:

- Feed the Fire (Diocesan Event)
- MYE Faith (Diocesan Event)
- Mission Trips
- Youth Group/Programs Strengthened by Cross-Parish and MACC Engagement
- Create Opportunities for the Youth to Volunteer within the Parish or at Mass (eg. Service Projects, Choir Members, Altar Servers, Greeters, Readers, etc)
- Mini-YES (Youth Encounter Service)
- WEEKLY Youth Ministry with Longer Time to Talk and Interact
- More Fun Activities and Games in Youth Ministry
- Continue Hosting "Seminarists" and Have Them Involved with the Youth

From a Universal Church perspective, several participants dreamed of more involvement by the laity and inclusion of women as deacons, homilists and priests. We also need a greater understanding and acceptance of the LGBT+ community, how to best assimilate them into our faith community and to share Church teaching in love rather than in judgment or exclusion.

Up until now, the attention was mostly internal to the parish but an output from our sessions also addressed increasing our focus externally to community/mission projects. As mentioned by one participant, "We need to show our love for others by reaching out and offering help." Another said, "We should not wait for people to come to us but we need to go out to them." Saint Brigid Parish community might want to consider the following:

- Support Those in Need, Especially Adoption Services
- Local Service Projects ... Helping Single Moms, Pregnant Women, Handicapped, Seniors
- Continue Downtown Discussions and Invite Passer-by to Attend
- Offer Ecumenical Services at Saint Brigid to Welcome and Include Others in the Community
- Services to the Elderly (eg leaf-raking, shopping, errand-running, etc)
- Reactivate Homebound Ministry and Visiting the Homebound/Elderly
- Increased Participation in Local Ministries (eg Open Door, Senior Services, etc)

CORRELATION TO THE DISCIPLE MAKER INDEX (DMI) SURVEY:

The feedback from our Listening Sessions correlated well with the results from our Disciple Maker Index (DMI) survey taken in early 2021. The DMI survey contained numerous questions regarding the “Personal Beliefs” of the participants with respect to the teachings and tenets of the Catholic Church. Saint Brigid Parish response to ALL these teachings/tenets showed strong support to those beliefs. Therefore, there should be little concern that the parish does not align itself with Catholic teachings. With respect to Opportunities for Potential Improvements, a majority of DMI participants are looking for more opportunities for spiritual growth. Although survey participants were active in Mass Attendance, Individual Prayer Time, Catholic Devotion Involvement and Praying with Someone Outside Mass, the following were areas indicated with low or no involvement in the following:

- Participate in Workshops about Catholic Faith
- Participate in Spiritual Retreats
- Invite a Man to Consider Priesthood
- Invite Someone to Consider a Vocation to Religious Life
- Participate in Pastoral Counseling or Spiritual Direction
- Go to Confession
- Invite Someone to Join Me at a Parish Activity
- Invite Someone to Join Me at Mass
- Share Personal Witness of My Faith with Others

DESCRIBE THE LISTENING PROCESS AND HOW PARTICIPANTS AND LEADERS REACTED TO THE EXPERIENCE OF THE PROCESS:

We conducted two large Listening Sessions both connected to another parish “event.” One session was immediately after our 11:30 am Mass and the other was part of our a full-day Lenten retreat. Both of these sessions were well attended with approximately 50 participants at each session. In addition, we ran mini-sessions for the youth, our Whole Family Catechesis group and solicited written feedback from our homebound parishioners. In total, nearly 130 people participated in our Listening Sessions. The responses were very favorable and many participants enjoyed getting to know others a bit better and having the opportunity to shape their parish, Diocese and the Universal Church. In fact, many mentioned that this process of gathering and listening should become a regular event.

DESCRIBE WHAT CHANGES WILL OCCUR IN THE PARISH BASED ON THE OUTCOME OF THE LISTENING SESSIONS:

It is too early to say what specific changes will occur at Saint Brigid. The Parish Council and other church leadership will need to study the output from our Listening Sessions and make plans for implementing specific initiatives.

Potential areas of focus or improvement based on the participants’ “hopes and dreams” toward a more vibrant faith community, include the following:

- Opportunities for “Faith Building” at All Age Levels
- Social Events to Build a “Family Atmosphere” in the Parish

- Re-energize Youth Program and the Involvement of the Youth
- Learn How to Invite, Evangelize and Welcome
- Take Advantage of Alliance with MACC Parishes
- Eliminate Silos and “We vs They” Attitudes
- Understand Church Teaching Without Being Judgmental
- Recognize the Great Impact We Have of Women Leaders in our Parish Community and Continue to Encourage High Engagement (Parish Council and Committees, Administration Staff, School, Faith Formation, and in Celebrating Our Liturgies)
- Expand Our Reach in Meeting Needs of Our Local Community and Missions
- Have Future ‘Synodal Sessions’ More Frequently in our Parish Focusing on Specific and Relevant Topics

Regardless of not yet having a specific plan for change-implementation, the process of gathering and listening has already helped to form closer ties and relationships within our parish community and was well worth the time of both planners and participants. We continue to “journey together towards a more vibrant community of faith” at Saint Brigid Parish.

APPENDIX A:

Saint Brigid Parish Disciple Maker Index Survey Results Summary

The Disciple Maker Index (DMI) is a survey tool, created by Catholic Leadership Institute, that allows parishioners to reflect on their spiritual growth and discipleship, provide input to Bishop, pastors, and parish leadership to make decisions on ways to support that growth in the future, and to create a sense of opportunities for the improvement of parish life. Saint Brigid Parish participated in the survey in early 2021 and this summary is provided of an analysis of the results.

Saint Brigid Parish Demographics:

As compared to the other parishes in the national survey, Saint Brigid Parish is considered a medium-size parish (450-1,200 registered parishioners). The survey collected responses from 252 individuals/families or 32 percent of the estimated 800 registered individual/families at Saint Brigid Parish.

Compared to all the parishes participating in the DMI survey in 2021, Saint Brigid Parish is a somewhat younger parish. Approximately 77 percent of the survey participants are over 45 years of age with 23 percent between the ages of 18 and 45. By comparison, Blessed Sacrament Parish is an “older” parish with almost 90 percent of their membership greater than 45 years old and only 10 percent are between the ages of 18 and 45. Data for the participating parishes in the Diocese of Saginaw show similar results to Blessed Sacrament Parish with 88 percent greater than 45 years old and 12 percent between the ages of 18 and 45.

With respect to parish loyalty, 43 percent have been members of Saint Brigid Parish for over 20 years, compared to 59 percent of parishioners in the Diocese of Saginaw being members of their respective parishes for over 20 years. Saint Brigid Parish also leads other parishes in the Diocese with relatively “new” members with 30 percent of survey respondents being members of Saint Brigid Parish for 5 years or less.

The majority of members are women making up about 61% of the congregation. Saint Brigid Parish is not a very diverse community with predominantly Caucasians comprising about 93 percent of the parish while African, Asian, and Hispanic Americans make up the remaining 7 percent of the parish.

In terms of parish support, about 25 percent of respondents report donating about 10 percent of their income, about 55 percent donate less than 10 percent, while nearly 20 percent donate more than 10%. This distribution is very similar to the total responses from all participating Diocese of Saginaw parishes. However, at Blessed Sacrament Parish, the percent of parishioners contributing less than 10 percent of their income was reported as 40 percent (as compared to 55 percent for Saint Brigid Parish) while both parishes showed about 20 percent of their respondents contributing greater than 10 percent of their income.

Caution may be necessary in extrapolating the results of the DMI Survey to Saint Brigid Parish as a whole. Firstly, as stated above, only 32 percent of registered individual/families participated in the survey.

Secondly, of those participants, 56 percent reported to sending their children to Catholic School. This response shows a bias towards younger families with school aged children.

Top Favorable Survey Responses for Saint Brigid Parish:

Most survey items provided participants a choice of five responses ranging from “Strongly Agree, Agree, to Disagree and Strongly Disagree.” Favorable answers are deemed to be the sum of the percent “Strongly Agree plus Agree” responses.

The DMI Survey contained numerous questions regarding the “Personal Beliefs” of the participants with respect to teachings and tenets of the Catholic Church. Saint Brigid Parish responses to ALL these teachings/tenets showed strong support of those beliefs. Therefore, there should be little concern that the parish does not align itself with Catholic teachings. The particular survey items are listed below:

Topic	% Agree
I Personally Believe in Jesus' Moral Teaching for My Life	86
I Personally Believe in the Teaching Authority of the Church	83
I Personally Believe Jesus Died and Rose for My Salvation	90
I Personally Believe That My Most Important Responsibility is to Have My Children Know Jesus	98
I Personally Believe That Scripture is the Word of God	88
I Personally Believe That Church is Critical to My Relationship with God	85
I Personally Believe That Eucharist is the Real Body and Blood of Jesus	87

Building on these very supported “Personal Belief” responses, the following are the top six overall favorable responses for Saint Brigid Parish:

Topic	% Agree
I Would Recommend My Parish to a Friend	92
I Would Recommend My Parish's Religious Education to a Friend	90
I Would Recommend My Pastor to a Friend	88
I Would Recommend My Parish's Catholic School to a Friend	97
My Parish Makes Information About the Parish Easy for Me to Find	92
My Parish Provides Transparent Information About Financials	85

Opportunities For Potential Improvement at Saint Brigid Parish:

An interesting survey question asked participants, “What is the Pace of Your Spiritual Growth?” A majority of Saint Brigid Parish participants are looking for more opportunities for spiritual growth, with 41 percent describing their “Spiritual Growth as Growing But Wanting More” and 11 percent describing it as “Stalled”. The following results from the survey showing low areas of agreement, supporting the desire for more spiritual growth opportunities (stated above):

Topic	% Agree
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My Parish Connects Me with Small Faith Group	38
My Parish Provides Retreats, Workshop to Help Me Figure Out My Life's Purpose	42
My Parish Teaches Me How to Share My Personal Witness of Faith	39
My Parish Teaches Me How to Read and Pray with the Bible	44

In addition to the Areas of Potential Improvement mentioned above, there were two other areas indicated by the survey results:

Topic	% Agree
My Parish Involves Me in Decisions Affecting the Parish Future	46
My Parish Has a Good Bridge/Relation Between the School and Parish Families	20

Involvement of Participants in the Life of the Church at Saint Brigid Parish:

Although survey participants were active in Mass Attendance, Individual Prayer Time, Catholic Devotion Involvement and Praying with Someone Outside Mass, the following were areas indicated with low or no involvement by survey participants. These provide other potential areas of improvement:

How Often Do I ...	% At Least Monthly
Participate in Workshops About Catholic Faith	16
Participate in Spiritual Retreats	1
Invite a Man to Consider Priesthood	0
Invite Someone to Consider a Vocation to Religious Life	0
Participate in Pastoral Counseling or Spiritual Direction	2
Go to Confession	8
Invite Someone to Join Me at a Parish Activity	7
Invite Someone to Join Me at Mass	13
Share Personal Witness of My Faith with Others	14