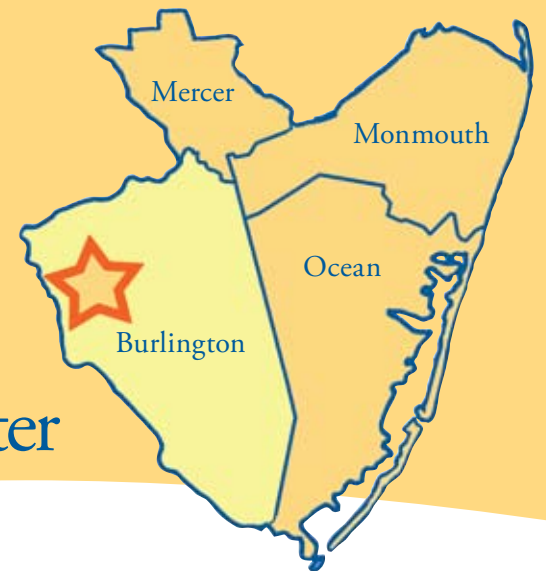


Parish Study Update

Southern Burlington Cluster



Parishes involved in the Southern Burlington Cluster Study include:

Christ the Redeemer,
Mount Holly

Our Lady of Good Counsel,
Moorestown

Our Lady Queen of Peace,
Hainesport

Sacred Heart,
Mount Holly

St. John Neumann,
Mount Laurel

Important links

Parish Study site, including video:

<http://www.dioceseoftrenton.org/diocese/parishstudy.asp>

Parish Study Blog:

<http://dioceseoftrenton.typepad.com/parishstudy/>

Diocesan Video Site:

<http://www.dottube.org/>

Parish Study process reveals shared goals and challenges

Reported by Mary Morrell

Communications Consultant for Pastoral Projects

Representatives developing preliminary scenarios

The Southern Burlington Cluster Study represents an ongoing, proactive initiative by the Diocese of Trenton to redefine the way parishes serve their communities in these challenging times. The process has moved beyond its research and analysis phase and entered into its deliberation and discussion phase, with a Study Group, comprised of pastors and two parish representatives from each of the five parishes, continuing to meet monthly to discuss how parishes can respond to new realities in the diocese. Those realities include changing demographics and populations, a declining number of priests and religious, the secularization of Catholics and the pressures of a faltering economy.

The most recent work of the Parish Cluster Study Group has included considering new models for ministry and growth, referring to statistics, demographic information and parish surveys. Team members were asked to consider new configurations to accommodate population growth and ministry needs.

Parishes involved in the Southern Burlington Cluster Study include Christ the Redeemer, Mount Holly; Our Lady of Good Counsel, Moorestown; Our Lady Queen of Peace, Hainesport; Sacred Heart, Mount Holly, and St. John Neumann, Mount Laurel.

A brief history

Beginning in the fall of 2008, all necessary demographic and financial data were collected from the parishes and surveys were provided and completed by parishioners. Core Teams of

parishioners were identified by their pastors and provided with appropriate resources, including maps of the region, parish statistical reports and demographic material.

The first of 11 planned monthly meetings began in January, with a welcome to pastors, clergy, religious and Core Team members by Msgr. Gregory D. Vaughan, diocesan vicar general and moderator of the curia. Father Jeffrey E. Lee, director, and Michael Fabian, associate director of the diocesan Office of Expansion and Restructuring, have guided the process from its inception. (This office has since been aligned under the Office of Pastoral Planning, headed by Terry Ginther, director. Father Lee will continue this work as chairman of the Commission for Parish Expansion and Restructuring.)

In the spring, the Study Group began meeting monthly to develop concrete recommendations for Bishop John M. Smith. Parish Core Teams continue to meet monthly in their parishes to support the work of the Study Group and disseminate information to the wider parish community.

Next, parish teams were invited to develop Big, Hopeful, Audacious

Goals (see related article) which would serve as 20-30 year benchmarks to evaluate each parish's success in achieving its mission. Study Group members then presented their parish goals which highlighted both the many similarities of parishes seeking to fulfill the mission of Christ, as well as the challenges parishes face in serving the people in their unique communities.

As the dialogue and evaluation continued into the summer, initial proposals were presented by the Study Group for potential models of parish structure that would enable parishes to remain viable and vibrant while meeting new challenges as they arise.

See **Collaboration** | P8

Goals of the Study

- Insure vibrant parishes.
- Address the needs of all Catholics in Southern Burlington County.
- Evaluate and restructure parishes
- Develop new plans for ministry in light of the current and future realities within the county and the Diocese of Trenton.



Parishes of the Southern Burlington Cluster

Christ the Redeemer, Mount Holly
(established 1976)



Statistical Snapshot

(Source: 2008 Parish Profiles unless otherwise noted)

- Registered households – 250
- Seating capacity – 160
- Average/weekend attendance – 350
- Baptisms – 17
- Communion – 15
- Confirmations – (number not provided)
- Marriages – (number not provided)
- Funerals – (number not provided)
- Religious education students – *47

*2007 statistics

Our Lady of Good Counsel, Moorestown
(established 1879)



- Registered households – 5716
- Seating capacity – 650
- Average/weekend attendance – 3000
- Baptisms – 93
- Communion – 205
- Confirmations – 185
- Marriages – 26
- Funerals – 59
- Religious education students – 1345
- School enrollment – 428

Our Lady Queen of Peace, Hainesport
(established 1944)



- Registered households – 1592
- Seating capacity – 240
- Average/weekend attendance – 1150
- Baptisms – 35
- Communion – 27
- Confirmations – 27
- Marriages – 3
- Funerals – 26
- Religious education students – 295

Sacred Heart, Mount Holly
(established 1848)



- Registered households – 3624
- Seating capacity – 550
- Average/weekend attendance – 2800
- Baptisms – 130
- Communion – 128
- Confirmations – 111
- Marriages – 20
- Funerals – 45
- Religious education students – 900
- School enrollment – 275

St. John Neumann, Mount Laurel
(established 1978)



- Registered households – 3100
- Seating capacity – 750
- Average/weekend attendance – 2100
- Baptisms – 77
- Communion – 100
- Confirmations – 112
- Marriages – 19
- Funerals – 45
- Religious education students – 667

Meet your neighbors...

Christ the Redeemer Parish is the only bilingual, multicultural parish in Burlington County. Established more than 30 years ago to address the spiritual needs of the area's Spanish-speaking community, all key members in parish leadership and ministry roles are fully bilingual, including the pastor. While serving the Hispanic community, the parish boasts a congregation comprised of varied

ethnic backgrounds. Ongoing formation is provided which fosters strong family values, a rich Catholic heritage, liturgy, devotions, catechesis, theology, and evangelization. The parish strives to keep a Eucharistic focus and integrates the rapidly-growing Hispanic population into the Church in their native language, while respecting their cultural values and religious traditions.

Our Lady of Good Counsel Parish has roots trailing back to a time in the early 19th century when Mass was an occasional event celebrated by a priest who traveled on horseback to the farm of the first Catholic who settled near Moorestown. Today the parish serves more than 5,000 families. Mass is celebrated daily and eight times each weekend, with Lauds prayed each weekday.

Parishioners are an essential part of 42 ministries and support 36 outside charities. The religious education program passes on the faith to 1,500 children weekly, including those with special needs. Our Catholic school educates nearly 500 children in the

nursery through eighth grade levels. Parish life is also enriched by an active youth group and young adult ministry. Our Lady of Good Counsel also serves as a resource center for adult faith formation.

The bereaved, homebound and those in hospitals and nursing homes are not forgotten, nor are the needy; the parish assists those less fortunate through Catholic Charities and an extensive parish Social Outreach Ministry, offering resources as needed: food, rides, vouchers and job searches. Through our mission work, we twin with a school in Jamaica, and assist with six missions of the Missionaries of the Poor worldwide.

Our Lady Queen of Peace Church may be known as "the little white church" on the corner, but it's big in heart and spirit. The quaint and intimate church is home to a vibrant Christ-centered parish community where young and old work together to strengthen spirituality and form a community of faith. The parish offers many forms of community outreach, including such initiatives as a food pantry, bread and produce delivery, school supplies for children and a parish bus which transports parishioners who otherwise could not attend Sunday Mass. Spiritual

ministries also abound, all under the guidance of a devoted staff consisting of both clergy and lay personnel. Together we envision a future that maintains our intimate spirit while expanding to accommodate our need for growth and development. This parish community expresses a willingness to confront the financial and creative demands required for growth, believing that Our Lady Queen of Peace Parish is a good place to grow in love and fellowship as People of God – today, tomorrow and in the future.

Instituted in 1978, **St. John Neumann Parish** is administered by the Cistercian Fathers of Our Lady of Fatima Monastery. This association with an active monastery provides members with a unique perspective and opportunity for spiritual growth. The parish serves 3,100 families and educates over 725 students through their religious education program. Ongoing spiritual offerings include daily Mass, weekly adoration, and the Rosary rally twice each year.

Volunteers bring the faith alive in more than 19

ministries serving the parish and community at large. The Social Concerns Committee serves the needy by organizing Thanksgiving and Christmas food baskets, weekly food pantry deliveries and collecting needed supplies for numerous charitable organizations. The youth group and religious education classes are involved in a number of service projects that provide funds for local families or children in need, as well as faith-formation activities and worship opportunities such as Children's Stations of the Cross.

Sacred Heart Parish, serving Mount Holly and surrounding areas, is a welcoming community that is culturally, ethnically and economically diverse with strong historical roots. The parish's people draw strength from their diversity with a shared sense of purpose and tradition, as witnessed by the flourishing Filipino American community, military families and others. Empowered with the gifts of the Holy Spirit we enthusiastically serve others in our church and neighborhood. We prayerfully submit our lives to the ongoing invitation of the Spirit.

We are a faith-based community dedicated to living the Gospel message and passing on this tradition

through our school, religious education program and adult faith formation. We are committed to the full spectrum of our area's needs such as programs responding to all ages in addition to our hospital, homebound and prison ministries, our ministry to the poor through the Society of St. Vincent de Paul and our participation in local ecumenical activities.

Our parish offers spiritual nourishment to all through the gifts of the Holy Spirit by sharing the Sacraments, fellowship, education and service. Our parish recognizes the Eucharist as the source and summit of our lives leading us to both service and prayer.

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BHAGS— Big, Hopeful, Audacious Goals

The Parish Study Group and Core Teams were asked to develop BHAGS, which were then presented at a Study Group meeting. While the goals of each parish reflected the hopes of their unique faith community, a number of shared goals emerged. Among them were:

- a new evangelization effort which would increase the numbers of registered parishioners attending Mass and being actively involved in parish ministries
- building more vital ministries for youth, young adults and single parishioners
- increase participation in an enhanced religious education program that addresses the needs of parents as those who pass the faith on to their children
- expanded ministries, especially to the sick, elderly and imprisoned
- exceptional facilities for worship, religious education and expanded ministries
- improved communications and use of technology in each parish, between parishes for collaboration, and throughout the local community to evangelize
- build a strong sense of community

As parishioners see it . . .

In the fall of 2008, in preparation for the study process, surveys were provided to parishioners at weekend Masses. Some 8,000 surveys were completed, after which each parish was provided with a six-to-eight page analysis of their survey data, in addition to the raw data gleaned from the survey

Parish surveys, and the information they revealed, were designed to serve as a resource to the study groups. The results have underscored that certain elements of parish life hold similar value in all parishes. Highly valued elements included: a strong experience of community; a well-maintained physical plant with adequate space for the unique needs of the parish, hospitality and respect for life issues.

Also evident from the surveys was the fact that those who attend Mass regularly are older than the general population. Most parishes surveyed had 18-24 percent of respondents over 70 years of age, but less than 15 percent under 40 years of age. This information confirmed for the study team the importance of outreach to youth. As a result, the study team is looking into ways to collaborate on youth ministry and evangelization. Additionally, some parishes are making parishioners aware of survey results through various methods of dissemination.

Collaboration: key to moving forward

Continued from P1

The preliminary scenarios sought to address ministry needs, reduce the number of pastoral administrations and provide for future needs.

In September, the Study Group and Core Teams will come together for a presentation by Study Group representatives. After the September meeting, parish representatives will present the recommendations to their parish communities in Town Hall Meetings. The October meeting is planned for making final adjustments to the recommendations before making the presentation to Bishop Smith in December.

The value of collaboration

Throughout the Cluster Study process, as shared goals and ministries were discerned, parish representatives frequently noted the value of collaboration, discussing various ways in which parishes could share resources and collaborate in ministry efforts. Collaboration, especially in the areas of youth ministry and lifelong faith formation, was a suggestion that surfaced frequently in the analyses of parish surveys returned to each parish.

In service to that goal, Sacred Heart Parish Core Group developed a suggested list of collaborative services,

including: funeral services, youth ministry, care of the poor, care of the sick, ministry to young adults, ministry to divorced and separated, publicity of all outreach programs in all parishes, rotation of daily Masses and publicity of schedule, interconnected websites, and a collaborative leadership board with representatives from each parish.

Sharing Perspectives

Study Group representatives recently addressed the following questions:

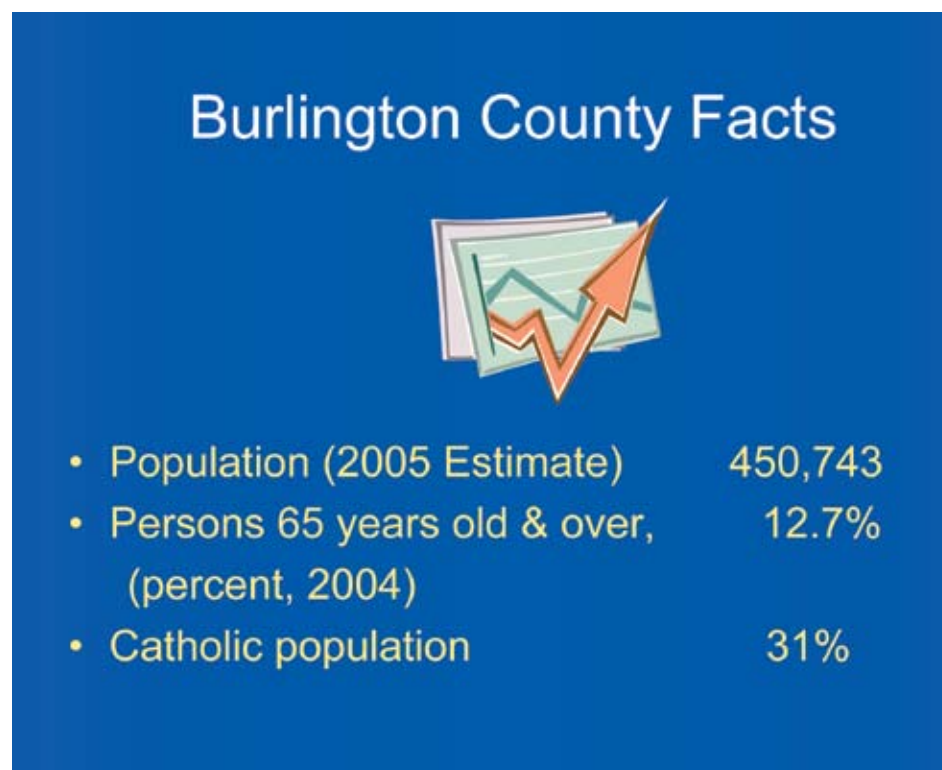
What strengths do you see in parishes outside of your own?

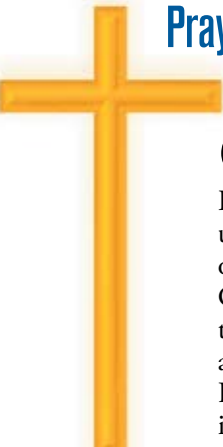
Parish representatives responded that centrality of worship and nourishing liturgies were a common strength, as well as parish identities providing a strong experience of hospitality and welcome. In addition, representatives noted the strength of providing prayer and comfort in the language of parishioners, and the growing diversity within all parishes.

What ministries need to be initiated or expanded in this region?

Responses to this question generally focused on expanding ministries through collaboration. These ministries included outreach to seniors, including transportation to Sunday Mass; religious education programs for students with special needs, and the RCIA process for children. Representatives also discussed the value of sharing deacon services, developing an integrated website and coordinating nursing home volunteers.

Did You Know?





Prayer for the Southern Burlington Cluster Study

Gracious God and Heavenly Father, you call us, the people of the Catholic Church of Trenton, to proclaim and advance the Kingdom of God in Burlington County.

We are your people, embraced by your love, united by our baptism in Christ. With Jesus our Lord, with our Holy Father, Benedict, and with our bishop, John, you call us, as you called St. Peter, to look ahead, to "put out into the deep," confident that our nets will be filled.

Inform our dreams of a renewed church. Because our work is in the cause of the eternal Kingdom, we must set our hand to the plow. Though our history is one of pride and accomplishment, open our eyes to the reality of the present and fix our gaze toward the future.

Lead us to a spirituality of Communion. Give us the courage to go forward in hope, straining to what lies ahead, in faith that the Risen Lord accompanies us on our way.

We pray in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, One God, forever and ever. + Amen

We should presume that those with whom we differ are acting in good faith. They deserve civility, charity, and a good-faith effort to understand their concerns.

Cardinal Joseph Bernardin