



# Diocese of Bridgeport Parish Self-Assessment and Planning Questionnaire

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## Saint Philip Church

### Pastoral and Sacramental Life:

#### Prelude: Parish Mission Statement promulgated in 1997:

St. Philip Parish, a welcoming Catholic community, strives to love, honor, know, and serve God. As a family, we gather to celebrate liturgy, perform good deeds, share our faith, and bring all to Christ. St. Philip, lead us to Jesus.

1. What are the signs of growth and vibrancy in your Parish?

*St Philip Church, Norwalk, as stated in the mission statement above, is a welcoming Catholic Community that strives to love honor and serve God. Signs of growth in our Parish are the activities and programs that live out this mission statement. The participation by our Parish members in these activities is very vibrant. The Parish has active Liturgy and Music programs, a Youth group and Seniors group. Our trend on the chart, provided by the Office of Pastoral Planning, displaying data for Sacramental and faith formation has our numbers increasing in most categories. There are many people involved in the various Parish activities. There is good response to our annual Stewardship campaign for time, talent and treasure, as well as to the Annual Catholic Appeal. The Parish has a growing Hispanic membership, which mirrors the increasing Hispanic population in our City.*

2. What is the greatest strength of your Parish?

*Active, participating and financially contributing Parishioners.*

*Our Clergy are asking and looking for the Parishioners' active participation and involvement in the Parish. The Parish wants the Parishioners to be involved as ministers and in decision making roles for many aspects of the Parish. Our Parish is not just top down control, fortunately.*

*It is a People's Parish, offering the following:*

*Faith Formation program and religious education programs (both young & adult).*

*Food pantry, serving up to 60 households a week!*

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*The annual 30 Hour Famine for 13 years and regular attendance at National Catholic Youth Conference. (The only Parish in the Diocese of Bridgeport to attend the last 4 conferences).*

*Seniors Group – monthly activities including luncheons which have many involved both in serving and enjoying.*

3. What are the greatest concerns or challenges facing your Parish now and in the projected future?

*In the near future our pastor is expected to retire and our associate priest is expected to be reassigned in June 2018. Our Youth Minister is retiring in 2016. So there are pending major leadership changes that will impact the Parish significantly.*

*In addition, the City of Norwalk has expressed strong interest in our property (former school building) for use as a new school due to their expanding education programs. The City has expressed interest in the purchase of the school building and Youth Activities Center, the former Mansion Carriage House. Without additional rental revenue from that building/facility the financial condition of our Parish will continue to be difficult. Our present lessee, Carousel Nursery and Day Care, is negotiating to rent additional storage space. **So, can St Philip Parish continue to sustain itself financially and remain independent?***

*A general concern/challenge is that many young people have a reduced interest in “Church” participation. We struggle with that, and hope to keep them involved as they mature.*

4. Which of these challenges do you feel the Parish can address or has been addressing? How?

Youth Involvement:

*The Parish has worked to get our young people involved, and encouraged them to stay active in their faith. It is a difficult challenge with some success, as is true in all Parishes.*

*Examples: 30 Hour Famine  
Youth Activity Center  
Attendance at regional, national and international venues  
Increased number of youth participation in ministries (readers, Eucharistic Ministers, etc.)*

Finances:

*The Parish to date has worked hard, with great success, to keep our financial position (balanced budget, reduced loan principle, positive cash flow, and stable balance sheet) is as positive as possible.*

*Examples:*

*When faced with a loss of a tenant in the school building a few years ago, a committee was formed that worked actively with Carousel Nursery and Day Care to expand their use of the building to its current level to provided the needed revenue.*

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*Funds were secured and with some renovation of the former mansion/convent building, it was converted to be a place for Parish events and an artist colony – Saint Philip Artist Guild (SPAG) consists of thirteen artists with studios and six associates. It provides some expense reimbursement and it freed more space in the school.*

5. Which challenges seem beyond the ability of the Parish to adequately address with your current resources?

*The appointment of new pastor and associate priest.*

*The consolidation of Parishes in Norwalk is a real possibility.*

## **Financial:**

6. Based upon your review of the Parish financials, do you believe that the Parish is financially sound and sustainable for the next five years? What factors lead you to this determination?

*The finances of St Philip have improved over the last five years with the approval of non-negative budgets that had occurred in previous years. This was mainly achieved by staff reductions through attrition and more use of volunteers for repairs and maintenance. St Philip has also been able to cut its debt from nearly \$500,000 to under \$125,000 during the past five year period mostly due to a two year rental of the school. We have also found that when the replacement of the boilers in both the School and Church became necessary, the members of the Parish stepped up and provided the funding for the projects.*

*While the finances of St Philip have stabilized, we are still operating on a fine line and unable to address many of the maintenance needs of an aging campus (two of the building are over 100 years old) (see questions 8 and 9). It is expected that over the next five years there will be additional staff changes that will challenge the Parish to continue operating at its current level given the present funding.*

7. How does the Parish plan to address any financial challenges that exist or may emerge?

*St Philip continues to look for new sources of funding to help improve its financial status and reduce the burden on its members. Numerous groups have shown an interest in renting the school including the City of Norwalk but no concrete offers have been made, thus far.*

## **Buildings and Facilities:**

8. What is the current condition of your Parish buildings? (Please consider such areas as the roof, windows, boiler, floors, lighting, interior finishes, etc.)

*While all the buildings on the St Philip Campus are fully functional, due to their age there are many areas that will need addressing in the near future. Roofs have been repaired or replaced on the Rectory, School and Mansion. Boilers have been replaced in the School and Church. The main*

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*parts of the parking lot have been partially repaired. Listed below are some known repairs for our campus.*

## **Church** (built 1967)

**Roof**                    *The rubber membrane was installed in 1984 with a 20 to 25 year life. It has been recoated several times to extend its life but will soon need total replacement.*

**Exterior**                *The exterior of the church needs a waterproofing masonry sealer to be reapplied to reduce water infiltration.*

**Lighting**                *The inter track light system is out of production making the finding of replacement parts increasingly difficult. We currently have the services of a retired electrician to replace and repair, which is difficult due to the height and shape of the ceiling.*

**Doors**                    *The exterior doors and windows of the church are in need of replacement with energy efficient units.*

**Air Conditioning**    *The air conditioning is original to the building and while there are no signs of problems, it is nearing the end of its life span.*

## **Rectory** (built 1967)

**Chimney**                *The chimney is cracked and needs to be rebuilt.*

**Paint**                    *The exterior needs to be painted.*

## **School** (built 1953)

**Pointing**                *The brickwork of the school has several cracks and missing mortar. It is in need of pointing to prevent further damage and or structural failure.*

**ADA Compliance**    *The offices and main floor of the school are not handicap accessible. There are also no handicap accessible bathrooms.*

**Painting**                *The offices need painting and old water damage needs repairing.*

## **Mansion** (built 1912)

*The St Philip Mansion was built in 1912 and is in relatively good shape for its age. But due to its age, there are many things that will and should be addressed soon.*

**Plumbing**                *Most of the plumbing is original to the building and showing its age. Some repairs have been made as needed but **MAJOR** work still needs to be done.*

**Masonry repairs**    *Many of the window sills and the large columns are in need of masonry repairs to prevent further damage.*

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**Heating system**     *The boilers are over 38 years old and extremely inefficient. The system is a steam system that was designed when the building was built and totally outdated compared to today's standards.*

**Air Conditioning**     *Only a few rooms have window air conditioners with the remainder of the building not covered, limiting its use in the summer months.*

**Hazardous materials**     *Due to its age, there is lead and asbestos throughout the building which is currently undisturbed and not posing an immediate threat. However, it will need to be addressed if major work is undertaken in the building.*

**ADA Compliance**     *The Mansion is not handicap accessible. There are also no handicap accessible bathrooms.*

## **Grounds and Parking**

**Parking lots**     *Our grounds supply more than sufficient parking spaces. Last year repairs were made to some sections of the parking lot with the most damage, but there is a large section that, while in relatively fair shape, needs to have the cracks sealed.*

## **Other Parish Buildings – Youth Activities Center** (built 1912)

*The Youth Activities Center was part of the original estate and like the mansion was built in 1912. It has limited use and so most maintenance has been deferred. The furnace was cracked and it has been replaced; but there are many roof and gutter leaks that have caused considerable water damage to both the interior and structure of the building.*

9. Are there any special capital repairs to any buildings that you anticipate in the next five years?

*Church roof replacement.*

*The status of youth center building is pending.*

10. Do you have any buildings, and/or land, which have the potential to be rented or used in an adaptive manner? If so, how many and in what fashion can they be used?

*As indicated above, the school building was rented for two years to a private school while their new school was under construction. This experience has shown us the importance of using our facilities to financially support the Parish. There have been several other private schools that have looked at the building but no offers were made. Last fall, the City of Norwalk looked at the building and while they did show an interest, it was one of several options they were considering and no decisions have been announced. If the City does make an offer for the building, it would require the sale of the building to them as they are unable to get State reimbursement if they do not own the building. This would also require the relocation into a yet to be determined space of the Parish offices, social gathering space with full kitchen, and the Faith Formation program.*

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## Community:

11. How do you see your Parish collaborating with other Parishes in the future? Are there Parishes within your town/community that you currently collaborate with?

*Currently our Youth group works with St Jerome and St Thomas on some joint projects, in particular the 30 hour Famine during Lent.*

*The clergy of St. Philip occasionally help the neighboring Parishes with Masses. Local Parishes also help us when we are in need.*

12. What is your hope for your faith community in the coming years?

*While we are aware of the many challenges facing Saint Philip and the Diocese, we pray that with the guidance of The Apostle St Philip, the Parish will continue to play an active part in the Norwalk community in future Diocesan plans.*