



# Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary Catholic Parish

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Dear Parishioners,

I am happy to present you with this initial report from our listening sessions, which also includes feedback from those who participated in our online survey or sent in emails.

A member of our pastoral planning team has compiled all the responses and attempted to organize them into various categories for clarity and to help illuminate trends and areas of consistency. To keep you apprised of our process and in a spirit of transparency, we are making copies of this completed report available both as hard copies at the entrance of the Church and online.

Our pastoral council members have been reviewing the feedback and are using it for insight into developing our pastoral plan for the next few years.

Once again, thank you all who participated and I'm looking forward to our next few years together!

God bless!

In Christ,

Fr. Nicks

## 2022 Assumption Church Listening Session Report

During each session and through an online format, parishioners were invited to share their thoughts on multiple areas pertaining to the parish, with a focus on strengths, vision, obstacles, and strategies.

This document is a compilation of notes taken at the sessions, a review of the sheets that were turned in at each session, any emailed comments, and any online form submissions. They have been organized by each topic - *Building & Grounds*, *Spiritual Life & Worship*, *Faith Formation*, and *Evangelization/ Social Outreach*. From there, the comments were further sorted by common trends. As requested by the Pastoral Council and where appropriate, responses were weighted, or numbered, so if you see a number in parentheses, that indicates the number of comments were made regarding that topic.

On the following page you will find a table of contents. If you are reading this document online those sections are linked, so you can click on a section and the document will jump to that page. You will find that some areas have a lot more comments than others. The number of submissions is included at the top of each section.

Father Nicks asked that a link to the un-weighted or what we are calling “raw data” be provided. That document is a similar format, but not as organized. That document can be accessed here:

<https://wwcatholic.org/documents/2022/assumption-listening-sessions/notes.pdf>

## Table of Contents

### Buildings & Grounds - p. 3

- Strengths - [p. 4](#)
- Vision - [p. 4-5](#)
- Obstacles - [p. 5-6](#)
- Strategies - [p. 6-7](#)

### Spiritual Life & Worship - p. 8

- Strengths - [p. 8](#)
- Vision - [p. 8-9](#)
- Obstacles - [p. 10](#)
- Strategies - [p. 10-11](#)

### Faith Formation - p.12

- Strengths - [p. 12](#)
- Vision - [p.12](#)
- Obstacles - [p. 12-13](#)
- Strategies - [p. 13](#)

### Evangelization/Social Outreach (ESO) - p.14

- Strengths - [p. 14](#)
- Vision - [p. 14](#)
- Obstacles - [p. 14](#)
- Strategies - [p. 15](#)

## **Buildings & Grounds (B&G)**

*Total Comment Sheets Collected: 28 – Online comments: 2 – Emailed Comments: 2*

### **B&G Strengths: How would you describe Assumption Parish in this category?**

- **Good Church esthetics** - stained glass; flowers inside and out; railing out-front; handicap accessible; inviting; always clean; Skylight above altar
- **Liturgically a good space** - large visible crucifix; Tabernacle in center easily identifiable; actual confessionals, kneelers, baptistery at entrance; layout of the church - plenty of space and inviting and easy for all to see the sanctuary; Adoration chapel
- **Building in good condition** - heating and air are in good condition; excellent parish hall with TV; decent lighting and sound; Adoration chapel; library; accessible bathrooms; “cry” room available; nice large kitchen
- **Decent Property** - large parking lot; garden; outdoor stations; large grounds to walk around
- **Good Location** - easy access, but secure; close to the school building and playground; water right established;
- **Good community** - various ages/families/etc.; library available;
- **Financially** - not in debt
- **Security** – code on the door for after hours; secure adoration

### **B&G Vision: Where do we want to be or be like in 2025 and what are the elements of that vision?**

- **6 or more Comments**
  - *Small room/Meeting Space (11)* - addition of small meeting room/space; dividers for meeting space; need space for small gatherings; provide counseling space;
  - *Parking Lot (11)*: better lighting in the parking lot; repair the parking lot; resurface parking lot; better lines in the parking lot; snow removal in the winter; paint more Handicap parking spaces; better lines in the parking lot; what is under the parking lot?
  - *Choir (6)*: improve and move choir space; move choir space to back; swap cry room and choir space; sound system for choir
  - *School building comments (6)*: better communication about what their plans are for their facility; AC in school; When the school moves, what will we do??
- **3-5 Comments**
  - *Entrance (5)*: fix/repair outside entrance; outdoor decorations; add Handicap sign to door; repair front steps; welcoming entrance

- Stained Glass (4): improve stained glass on side of building; images that represent the faith; add decals to current stained glass
- Landscaping (4): landscape near east side/parish hall; landscaping in parking lot; more outdoor landscaping; landscaping for seasons/holidays
- Sound System in the Hall (4): sound system in hall; better use of multimedia
- Cry Room (4): update cry room; more soundproofing in cry room; childcare space
- Lighting (3): updated lighting; better lighting; leave lighting on at all times
- Sanctuary (3): enhance sanctuary; remove carpet from sanctuary; add sanctuary rail; purchase adoring angels for either side of the tabernacle
- Educare (3): update/revamp educare
- pews (3): kneelers need repair; pews need new stain and repairs (missing bolts); more seating for limited mobility individuals
- paint (3): paint behind the crucifix; re-paint Mary & Joseph
- **Less than 2 comments**
  - General Maintenance (2): Improve overall maintenance inside and outside; more consistent upkeep/maintenance
  - Garden (2): maintain garden; hire grounds keeper
  - "updates" (2): clean carpets; hang artwork (saints)
  - traffic flow (2): develop a way to funnel people outside after Mass and for fellowship
  - New floor in hall (2): remove carpet in hall; repair dance floor
  - Bathrooms (2): update bathrooms; fix water pressure in men's bathroom
  - Furniture (2): better tables for the hall (round); child's size tables and chairs in hall
  - Ceiling Repair (1): refinish ceiling
  - Fence outside the hall (1): fence area for children play outside hall
  - larger office space (1)
  - sewer/city hook up (1)
  - long term plan (1): master plan to drive projects
  - bolster savings (1)
  - Cross on top of Church building (1)

### **B&G Obstacles: What hinders this vision from coming to life?**

- **Resources** - funding; broken tools in garden area; lack of community involvement; lack of music ministry leader; Not many volunteers; organizers for fundraisers

- **Mindset** - let go of past; has to be achievable; can't please everyone; agreement of the powers that be; getting max number of people involved; pleasing many people/tastes; Things take time; Pre-COVID activities have not all resumed
- **Communication** - from priests; uncertainty with school moving; needs to be clear; what opportunities are out there for involvement?
- **Logistics** - no water in parking lot for plants; permits; getting volunteers; upgrades needed (electrical, etc.); what is under the parking lot?; availability of space; concern over the future of the school; student enrollment; no master plan

**B&G Strategies: What specific actions need to happen in order to give life to this vision?**

- **6 or more Comments**
  - *Communication (14)* - advertise use of hall; publish funds we would have if everyone tithed a certain percentage; publish the needs of the parish; publicize what is going on; regular communication to parish; gather/organize info/data for parishioners to review; invite parishioners to be a part of the plan; inform parishioners to gain excitement; be transparent; inform parishioners of projects and their progress; tour/explain what is happening and why; be honest about what needs to be done; "hard sell" from the pulpit; Visual presentation of plans (like they did at St. Pats)
  - *Volunteers (10)* - ask for parishioner support on projects; find the right people to lead the projects; ask what people would like to help with; Assumption Women take on a project; involve everyone; Parish work parties – what can we do on our own vs. hiring it out?; parish resource list for services; Use Eagle Scouts for projects; host a drive for volunteers; as DeSales fro specific help
  - *Fundraising (9)* - Annual Parish Appeal; asking for funding for specific projects; tithe; be smart about it so as to not conflict with the school; expect/ anticipate generosity; have funds before beginning to avoid going into debt; allow families to sponsor projects (pay to refinish a pew for example); be honest about cost and value; Inform parishioners on what is possible with people tithing 5%,1%,10%;
  - *Long Term Planning (8)* - meet architect to see what is possible; When school moves to DeSales property, use land to build Catholic Senior Housing – would generate constant income that could go to parish and school; may be a correlation in long term projection of enrollment between schools and parish plan for what is achievable, plan for success; one thing builds on another; have a large plan

- Planning (6) – Take one project at a time; continue planning sessions; establish a committee/task force; questionnaire/what are people’s priorities; walk through of the parish/hall/etc. to get input;
- **3-5 Comments**
  - Small meeting Rooms (3) - enclose the space between the church and the hall to make meeting spaces; enclose the small garden area to create meeting space; Use dividers in hall to make smaller meeting space
  - Choir Move (3) - Flip the baptistery and choir spaces, could potentially bring in more musicians who are weary of being so close to altar; move choir to where cry room is;

[Back to Table of Contents](#)

## **Spiritual Life & Worship (SL&W)**

*Total Comment Sheets Collected: 28 – Online comments: 2 – Emailed Comments: 2*

### **SL&W Strengths: How would you describe Assumption Parish in this category?**

- **Community** - Good participation; Friendly parishioners; Good bulletin; Women's group; lots of children; school attached; Tri-Parish; many families have been members for generations; wide range of ages
- **Leadership** - Great priests; Good pastoral leadership; great bishop; designated pastor; enthusiastic priests; approachable priests; priests have respect for the liturgy and adhere to the doctrine; humorous priests; Holy Pastor; priests are willing to participate in functions and parishioner's lives
- **Liturgical** - Mass is awesome; Eucharistic Adoration for many years; School Mass; Tabernacle; Reception of communion (hand or tongue); Saturday evening Mass; Daily Mass option; Confession on Saturday; Triduum; Father waiting for final verse before exiting sanctuary; beautiful artwork to aid prayer; beautiful crucifix, tabernacle, flowers, stained glass to aid in prayer; music at 10:30 Mass, hearing devices available; good participation in the Mass; sloping pews offer a good view; Scriptures supported, homilies offer support of faith and ideas for how to support spirituality
- **Resources** - Educational materials available – formed, library, apps; Catholic radio; parish missions; volunteers who take care of the sanctuary; parish bulletin

### **SL&W Vision: Where do we want to be or be like in 2025 and what are the elements of that vision?**

- **6 or more comments**
  - *Bible Studies/Small Groups (9)* - more men's groups; parish missions or classes; reminders about RCIA; Bible studies/catechism classes; explain sacraments and Mass; men/women Bible studies; more Bible studies;
  - *Teen activities (9)* - more involvement of our HS & college kids; students visiting/hosting coffee call; Youth ministry dances; more youth outreach/activities; teen Mass; Friday Night activity for teens 1x a month; recreational sports on weekends (volleyball/basketball); teen talks and activities;
  - *Socials w/faith component (7)* - Ask Father Anything Night; Catholic Objection event (night/coffee call); Dinner for "8" casual engagement; more get togethers; apologetics talks; group gatherings; presentations on different faith topics
  - *Increase Participation/Attendance (7)* - more parishioner involvement; increase/support for young families; greater family participation; "Fill



the Church!"; by 2025 return to pre-covid numbers; more outreach into our community to help others; welcome the curious and needy

- Adoration (6) - Open Eucharistic adoration; reverence for the sacred; more devotion to Our Lord; larger space for Adoration; reverence & love for sacred; set sanctuary apart as a space for the sacred
- Music/Choir (6) - stronger music program; music at all Masses (Saturday Vigil); visiting musicians; more involvement in choir; expand size of choir; use only Catholic Hymns - the hymns in our book are protestant
  
- **3-5 Comments**
  - Mass Options (5) - more daily Mass options and an emphasis on them; more early Sunday Mass options;
  - Better use of the space/resources we have (5) - more daily use of hall for activities; Catholic radio; use of rosary garden and outdoor stations; Increased library seating for reading; use social media apps
  - Outreach (4)- identify non-catholic church goers; engage in more lay interaction other than friend groups; ride sharing for older parishioners; check on people who are not coming
  - Volunteers (3)- more volunteers; need more greeters
  - Families (3) - more families;
  - Children's Liturgy (3) - offer a children's Mass; 1-min homilies for kids; pray over them
  - Schools (3) - transparency about parish support to the schools; student thank yous to the parish; sporting event schedules in bulletin
  
- **2 or fewer comments**
  - Kneelers (2) - kneelers for receiving communion
  - Conventions/Retreats (2) - provide a bus to take parishioners to retreat
  - Stations of the Cross (3) - more visually pleasing stations; stations of the cross that can be understood; relocate stations to one side of the church
  - Unity (2)- develop unity;
  - Young Adult Ministries (2) - develop program for singles in their 30-50s;
  - Reception of the Sacraments
  - Confession - more confession times;
  - more votive candle holders
  - project responses and songs on the wall
  - continue to cultivate male altar servers
  - Church accessibility

### **SL&W Obstacles: What hinders this vision from coming to life?**

- **Community** - no outreach for fallen away Catholics; tri-parish diluted loyalties; not able to let go of the past; division between Latin Mass and English Mass; parishioner/priest pushback; unorganized; Sunday obligation is the only reason to come; Tri-Parish organization hurt us; lack of lay leadership; lack of inclusion; lack of commitment; emphasis on Catholic schools when we have public and homeschool families in parish
- **Liturgical** - 4pm Vigil; prayers of the faithful do not include current events; apathetic congregation; lukewarm faith; TV Mass hindered Mass attendance in person; few weekday morning Masses; too few confession times; not knowing how to greet each other at the sign of peace; fewer Masses; music upfront, distracting; music; stations are not easily visible; hymnal is full of protestant songs; the sanctuary is a sacred place, many people don't know this and just walk/run through the area
- **Resources** - lack of education; Library too small, not welcoming to sit and read; lack of volunteers for children's activities; lack of lay involvement; Lacking a "flag carrier"; lack of new furniture/facilities; inertia?; lack of interest; waiting for someone else to do it; lack of a central information center; lack transportation for some; no new opportunities;
- **Spiritual Life Outside of Mass** - technology dominates our lives; Stations of the Cross difficult to know what is happening; lack of spiritual priority; lack of time; "We are too rules and rituals focused and not enough effort expended on grace and becoming more loving, Christ-like in our lives. Love isn't 'seen' enough amongst us."

### **SL&W Strategies: What specific actions need to happen in order to give life to this vision?**

- **Community** - Mixed social groups at events; couples groups, singles groups, etc.; Meet in each other's homes; Encourage our HS & College kids to bring their friends, provide an atmosphere of mentorship; develop unity; Establish a mentor/buddy system for young adults/teens; Attempt to involve younger generation and children; increase welcoming environment; start ride sharing to help people get to Mass; priest presence at all activities; include all families in parish activities (WWCS, public, and home)
- **Communication** - add an "interests" page to bulletin about things going on in the parishes; use polls/surveys to get parishioner input about Mass times/youth activities/music/library use; Explanation of ministries in the bulletin; communicate to those in need; regular announcements at Mass from lay members about activities
- **Liturgical** - priests explain liturgy one section at time/each week; ; clear training for ministries (usher, lector); 24/7 Adoration; celebrate feast days, more celebrations; move votive holder to north wall, light a candle and

kneel in the front pew; move statue of Blessed Mother; teach people the examination of conscience; Add more confession times; Bring back children's liturgy; purchase new stations; include current events in prayers of the faithful; use Catholic hymns; instruct the faithful on the purpose of the sanctuary/altar/baptismal font location, etc.

- **Resources** - Be open to new ideas; Hold a strategies meeting to determine how to increase attendance and fellowship; boost savings; emphasis on social justice involvement in Mass'
- **Spiritual Life Outside of Mass** - become a prayerful community; Train people who would like to leaders/educators/volunteers/greeters; educational talks on Sacraments, history of Mass, Liturgy of the Hours, etc.; keep our goal in mind - to sanctify the world; host events/concerts for our younger parishioners; bring back VBS; Parish Mission for our younger parishioners; Opportunities for community prayer and silence, vespers; offer retreats for the community at a different location

*[Back to Table of Contents](#)*

## **Faith Formation (FF)**

*Total Comment Sheets Collected: 21 – Online comments: 2 – Emailed Comments: 2*

### **FF Strengths: How would you describe Assumption Parish in this category?**

- **School** - presence of Catholic school; Church supports the school; school teaching the faith
- **Parish Faith Formation** - Homilies always offer deeper meaning ideas to live and support faith; library; strong group of priests in the area; solid congregational base; lots of resources available (Formed, Amen, etc.); prayer time;
- **Misc.**- Dry, formal??(Not sure why this was a strength...)

### **FF Vision: Where do we want to be or be like in 2025 and what are the elements of that vision?**

- **6 or more comments**
  - *Bible Studies (12)* - understanding what a soul is; new moderators; more Bible studies; scripture; catechism; group learning from laity and clergy; tri-parish faith formation offerings; use of media we have available at home and in hall; RCIA refresher; Well rounded faith building/community building events
  - *Speakers (10)* - parish missions; speakers; Q&A with priests; Dynamic Catholic; outside speakers; Share links for speakers or books online that can be discussed
  - *Mass (8)* - music ministry; children's homily; get youth involved; continue with one pastor for each parish
  - *Prayer Outside of Mass (8)* - weeknight rosary; prayer; love for Jesus; more participation; use of resources at home; stream Liturgy of the Hours; 24/7 Adoration
  - *Communication (9)* - communicate with younger families; keep parishioners in the loop; email; students provide bi-weekly news
- **3-5 comments**
  - *Retreats (3)* - parish retreats

### **FF Obstacles: What hinders this vision from coming to life?**

- **Faith Formation** - lack of volunteers to lead studies/classes; lack of childcare support for studies/classes/talks; No men's group for young fathers/young men; no continuous faith formation; busy lives; apathy; uncomfortable in our own knowledge of the faith

- **Misc. Comments** - no Catholic store close by and no one who could/would start one; Leadership, courage, encouragement, planning; Poor, not fresh or exciting. Mostly focused on babies, diapers, abortion; lack of enthusiasm; no communication outside of bulletin; how to communicate between old/young couples

***FF Strategies: What specific actions need to happen in order to give life to this vision?***

- **Faith Formation** - utilize our resources better (Formed, Hallow, Fr. Baron, etc.); re-evaluate our vision in a year; have a lead who can make things happen; add another Mass on Sunday morning; List of resources on the website; Hire music director; education from our priests - tidbits of why we do what we do; Parish retreat; Lay people announce/share things they have done that have impacted them (Formed, Catholic Radio, Hallow app, etc.); Assumption Family Hour - a time when families and children can walk through the church and have people explain the different parts of the church; scavenger hunt or activity guide - have this event be weekly; Bring Sunday school back; Laity involvement in planning, leading committees, and project
- **Misc. Comments** - use teachers and students to set up electronics? Have a coordinator for each event; network for leaders - people who want to help but feel overwhelmed when they don't know what to do; More opportunities to serve, shorter time frame perhaps to increase the ability of people being able to participate; research how to start a small Catholic store

[\*Back to Table of Contents\*](#)

## **Evangelization/Social Outreach (ESO)**

*Total Comment Sheets Collected: 21 – Online comments: 2 – Emailed Comments: 2*

### **ESO Strengths: How would you describe Assumption Parish in this category?**

- **Community Evangelization** - Aware of pro-life activities; welcoming; Support to Catholic Charities, SVDP, Diaper drives, food drives, .;
- **Parish Evangelization** - BBQ; Coffee Call; plenty of opportunities for involvement; priests visit the homebound; Assumption Women's ministry

### **ESO Vision: Where do we want to be or be like in 2025 and what are the elements of that vision?**

- **6 or more comments**
  - *Parish Outreach (6)* - outreach to new people; Calls to check on people who are not coming; students involved in Mass (lector, usher, etc.); welcoming committee
- **3-5 Comments**
  - *Community Outreach (5)* - Have strong Catholics who can go out into our community; Be leaders in our community; Be involved with Catholic Charities, and joining to help other social service organizations; cooking at Christian Aid
  - *Support Groups (3)* - COVID-recovery group; grief group; Legion of Mary
- **2 or fewer Comments**
  - *Social Concerns (2)* - included in Mass; added to intentions
  - *Volunteer Ministry* - a list of people we can call when something is needed;
  - *Homebound* -
  - *Homeless* - address homeless ministries
  - *Prison* - address prison ministries
  - Catholic Store in town

### **ESO Obstacles: What hinders this vision from coming to life?**

- **Evangelization** - lack of outreach during/after Mass; Not sure what is occurring outside of concern for abortions; Seems in the past, how it has always been (ex. Assumption Women there are no meetings outside of the traditional work day, from st Patrick's, women of light there were many opportunities to connect and support one another); value of group seems lacking, social concerns/justice; disable parishioners cannot come to Mass

**ESO Strategies: What specific actions need to happen in order to give life to this vision?**

- **Evangelization w/in parish** - more people helping with Coffee Call; communion to the homebound; ministry fair with breakfast after Mass; more communication from parish council; hand out holy cards; lay announcements with volunteer opportunities; Hearts AFire program - keep the same 3-4 parishioners as leaders for continuity. Include social justice homilies/events during Mass; work with/train ushers to welcome people; secondary notification system - something other than the bulletin; Keep politics out of The Church; Childcare for events; organize more activities - bible studies, fellowship, dinner/dances; contact people who have left; Hospitality meetings, opportunity for prayer, reflection, updates on ways to serve need in the community
- **Evangelization w/in community** - “re-tool” the terms “Social Outreach” and “Evangelization”; bring like-minded people together in groups; priest’s announcements; Volunteer ministry “Joseph’s workers” – a list of people and their talents so when someone needs help we can provide; tap into those strengths to achieve some of these goals’ Evangelism is about looking for the lost sheep; host events to invite the community 'in'; Encouragement to serve and volunteer in our community; community agency reps sharing with church members, needs and how we could support

*[Back to Table of Contents](#)*