



DESIGNING YOUR PARISH LIFE SURVEY

1) Forming a **self-study committee** (optional)

Many parishes choose to have a self-study committee or working group oversee the Parish Life Survey process. Not only does this ensure that the work will not fall on too few persons, but it also increases the number of persons with a stake in seeing the process through to completion. The committee members should have a comprehensive vision of the parish and its mission. This committee should contact all parish staff members, parish council members, and other parish leaders for input into what topics should be covered in the questionnaire.

2) Review the **sample** survey.

*What priority do you give the following **parish needs**?*

1 2 3 4

- 46. Children's religious education/formation.
- 47. Youth ministry.
- 48. Adult religious education/formation.
- 49. Additional ministerial staff.
- 50. Small group prayer opportunities.
- 51. Retreat opportunities.
- 52. Outreach to inactive Catholics.

There is a sample survey included with the materials you received titled, *Typical Survey Format with Some Frequently-Used Questions*. Notice that the nationally-tested CARA style is to provide a user-friendly cluster of questions that quickly explores all facets of one aspect of parish life (such as the abbreviated example to the left).

3) When you are ready to move forward with a survey, **contact** CARA Associate Mary Ellen Fise (mef@georgetown.edu; 443-416-1804). She will send you a letter of agreement with CARA and our Compilation of Question for a Parish Life Survey which includes many more questions to consider.

4) **Select** an initial set of questions for your Parish Life Survey. You should plan on having about 100 questions total for your Parish Life Survey, slightly fewer if you are including open-ended questions. (Details about open-ended questions are included in the *Including Open-Ended Questions* document in this packet.) In the end, your questionnaire must fit on two sides of a single page. It is very important that you keep several things in mind:

- The items you include should have terms that are easily recognizable by those who will be completing the questionnaire. For example, items evaluating specific parish programs should use the name of the program that parishioners are most familiar with. Therefore, the wording for each question should be carefully reviewed.
- You may select any of the questions from the *Compilation of Questions for a Parish Life Survey*. If a topic is not covered there, you may ask CARA to create questions about that topic or write the questions yourself.

- When selecting questions, try to choose ones that are *actionable* for the parish, that is only select questions about issues that the parish is able and willing to address. If, for example, you have no intention of building a new parish center, do not include a question about that. Asking about issues you do not intend to address is likely to only create frustration among those who feel strongly about that issue.

5) **Send** a list of the items you select to CARA Associate Mary Ellen Fise so that we can begin constructing your Parish Life Survey.

Please type out the numbers of the questions from the *Compilation of Questions for a Parish Life Survey* you wish to have included. Please note any alternative wording to any of the items on the *Compilation* with that list. If there are additional topics to be covered that are not included on the *Compilation*, please type them and include them as well.

Email the list of items to Mary Ellen Fise, CARA Associate at: merf@comcast.net. In a back-and-forth process with Mary Ellen, your parish will create a final version of the questionnaire that will meet the distinct needs of your parish. You should also include in that communication the type of report (Comparative Report or Narrative Report) the parish would like to order. (See description of both types of reports in *CARA Parish Life Surveys Services & Prices*.)

If you have questions on completing any of the above steps, please email or call Mary Ellen directly (telephone: 443-416-1804).

