

Parish Self-Assessment Report  
We Walk By Faith

Church of the Good Shepherd  
300 Smithfield Boulevard  
P.O. Box 840  
Smithfield, VA 23431

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## I. Introduction

### Mission Statement (Revised, May 2007)

In thankfulness to God, we, the Church of the Good Shepherd, gather at the Lord's Table, welcoming all, renewing our Catholic Faith, and worshipping together through meaningful liturgies.

We embrace life-long catechesis to grow spiritually and serve as an example to our children. We commit ourselves to sharing the teachings of Jesus Christ.

As good stewards and followers of the Lord, we open our hearts to all, sharing our God given talents and treasures.

### Demographics

The Church of the Good Shepherd is located in the town of Smithfield, in Isle of Wight County. Members of the parish and other Mass attendees are drawn from nearly all of Isle of Wight County, a good portion of Surry County, and some northern areas of the City of Suffolk.

Our Census	97-98	98-99	99-00	00-01	01-02	02-03	03-04	04-05	05-06	06-07
Men (18-30)	22	15	14	24	19	30	34	33	36	43
Men (31-59)	88	98	85	87	100	117	122	116	130	136
Men (60+)	23	24	25	29	35	36	37	40	40	43
<b>Total Men</b>	<b>133</b>	<b>137</b>	<b>124</b>	<b>140</b>	<b>154</b>	<b>183</b>	<b>193</b>	<b>189</b>	<b>206</b>	<b>222</b>
Women (18-30)	26	19	24	29	25	30	31	36	46	45
Women (31-59)	118	124	115	125	150	169	182	169	177	187
Women (60+)	31	28	31	39	44	46	44	49	51	55
<b>Total Women</b>	<b>175</b>	<b>171</b>	<b>170</b>	<b>193</b>	<b>219</b>	<b>245</b>	<b>257</b>	<b>254</b>	<b>274</b>	<b>287</b>
Children (<1)	4	2	4	5	7	4	4	7	6	3
Children (1-5)	36	39	34	36	32	49	60	52	48	58
Children (6-12)	96	96	87	91	108	106	114	81	92	99
Children (13-17)	42	45	55	55	68	86	89	91	96	92
<b>Total Children</b>	<b>178</b>	<b>182</b>	<b>180</b>	<b>187</b>	<b>215</b>	<b>245</b>	<b>267</b>	<b>231</b>	<b>242</b>	<b>252</b>
<b>Total People</b>	<b>486</b>	<b>490</b>	<b>474</b>	<b>520</b>	<b>588</b>	<b>673</b>	<b>717</b>	<b>674</b>	<b>722</b>	<b>761</b>
<b>Households</b>	<b>167</b>	<b>177</b>	<b>174</b>	<b>185</b>	<b>214</b>	<b>235</b>	<b>251</b>	<b>247</b>	<b>271</b>	<b>286</b>

Many of the people moving in to the county are Catholic. In two mature local developments, of 250+ homes each, more than 10% of the residents are Catholic.

### History

In March, 1984, a meeting of area priests, a representative of the Bishop and about 80 potential parishioners was held at the American Legion. As a result of that meeting, the Catholic Community of Smithfield was formed as a mission of St. Mary's Church in Suffolk. Rev. Christian Haydinger was given pastoral responsibility for the new community.

Christ Episcopal Church offered the use of its facilities for meetings and worship. Our first Mass was celebrated there with Father Haydinger on July 21, 1984. From 1984 to 2000, the pastor of St Mary's in Suffolk was also appointed pastor at Good Shepherd.

From the beginning, plans were laid toward obtaining our own church. By, 1989, enough progress had been made to allow Rev. Thomas Nee, who had succeeded Fr. Haydinger, to ask that we be named a diocesan parish. The parish's name, Church of the Good Shepherd, was chosen by the Bishop from a list submitted by the parishioners.

Ground was broken in February 1992, for the first phase of construction, and on September 27, 1992, the new church was consecrated with a Mass celebrated by Bishop Walter F. Sullivan. Isle of Wight County had its first Catholic Church 358 years after its founding.

Since June 2000, Good Shepherd has had an appointed pastoral coordinator, Joanne R. Gordon. Initially, there was an assigned priest, first from St Mary's in Suffolk, then from the Basilica in Norfolk. Since June 2005, Good Shepherd has been using a combination of retired priests and military chaplains to be the sacramental priest at our Sunday 9:00 am mass.

The new worship space was added and consecrated in June 2005 by Bishop Emeritus Walter F. Sullivan.

Our church has grown from fifty families in 1984 to 286 families currently, and we are continuing to flourish.

## **II. Word**

### Strengths

1. Children's Liturgy is a great opportunity for the children to participate and understand the readings and sermon.
2. Youth participation and support of the Mass is strong and visible through the youth Masses, and participation in all the liturgical ministries.
3. One Mass time helps bring all of the community together at one time, allowing a greater sense of community.
4. Weekly bulletin is an excellent resource sharing all of the upcoming activities in the parish and some of the regional activities as well.
5. Liturgy Committee does an excellent job supporting the liturgy and environment in which we worship to make our faith experience in the parish stronger.

### Needs

1. Adult formation exists right now, but attendance is low. Need to look at ways to increase adult participation by trying ideas that make the opportunities more relevant and timely for participants.
2. Make available library resources.
3. Make parish more aware of the availability of reconciliation services, and other opportunities.
4. One Mass time limits the choice of parishioners and removes flexibility to attend Mass at different time.

### **III. Worship**

#### Strengths

1. Having many volunteer lay ministers allows for a variety of Eucharistic Ministers, Lectors, Altar Servers, Ushers, Children's Liturgy of the Word Leaders at Mass, as well as bread bakers.
2. One Mass allows the entire community to worship at one time enjoying the same homily and Eucharistic experience.
3. The strong sense of community at Mass brings the whole parish together as one family.
4. Different priest presiders give the parish a variety of homilies and influences from different priestly perspectives, increasing our experience at Mass.
5. Strong pastoral coordinator model shows the sacramental priests, the parish, and the diocese that the pastoral coordinator model will work in the future of the church.
6. The new worship space was designed to be wheelchair and handicap accessibility, including the sanctuary (encompassing the altar, ambo, chairs, etc.)

#### Needs

1. Parishioners have requested a more definitive explanation of the interaction and responsibilities of the sacramental priests, canonical pastor, and pastoral coordinator.
2. Make parish more aware of the availability of reconciliation services and opportunities. Publish times of parish reconciliation and neighboring parish reconciliation for those that desire it.
3. Having our own permanently (or regularly) assigned priest was a comment in the diocesan surveys completed during Mass.
4. Need to find way to better communicate with parishioners to ensure all avenues are taken to ensure all are informed.

## **IV. Community**

### Strengths

1. Very high level of volunteerism in the parish, with many sharing their time, talent and treasures.
2. The strong Youth Group interaction in the parish brings the community together.
3. Our participation in numerous joint/ecumenical services (Good Friday; Easter Sunrise Service; Thanksgiving; Prayer for Christian Unity) builds a strong relationship between our parish and the Christian community of our town.
4. Strong social outreach to community—visible through our interaction with the Christian Outreach program and services provided in rebuilding area homes affected by disaster.
5. Strong RCIA program—participants and facilitators bring and come away with a strong sense of welcome and family—helping our newest adult Catholics to know and feel that they belong.

### Needs

1. Organize faith based groups for all age groups (including young, single adults and widowers) to give Catholics in the parish a common social outlet to further experience their faith and spiritual foundation.
2. As the parish continues to grow, the parish will need to focus on maintaining its sense of community and family feel as we increase in numbers.
3. Look at expanding the type and levels of communication to the parish. Although various forms of communication are being utilized (email, bulletins, bulletin boards, announcements, internet), there are still parishioners not getting all the information they need.
4. Ensure that the community, both internal to the parish, and external, is aware of the opportunities for both youth/children and adult religious education.

## **V. Service**

### Strengths

1. Open recognition of all the different groups of volunteers helps to create awareness and interest in parish volunteerism.
2. Yearly call for parishioners for stewardship (including time and talent-not just money) has been received positively by the parish resulting in goals being met for offertory, building fund, and diocesan collections.
3. Level of participation per family is high and very visible.
4. Youth Group service to the church is evident through helping out with community projects and cleaning the church.
5. Ministries and Leaders; Ministry Fair; New Member Registration

### Needs

1. Although volunteerism and participation is high, it is still desired to further increase our levels with the desire of having everyone involved to some extent. Additionally, a better sense of volunteer coordination to ensure all of the parishioners' time, talent and treasures are being utilized.
2. Improve fundraising activities to ensure that we minimize overlap and competing between internal organizations for the parishioners' time and money. Also, need to better coordinate with the community calendar of events so as to minimize the overlap when involvement with the outside community is desired.
3. Improve promotion of Respect Life in the parish.

## **VI. Plans for renewal and meeting parish needs**

### Word

1. 1 year plan will be to better communicate and “market” adult formation to bring better awareness and participation to adult formation. The 5 year plan will be to have a more formal process and program and to have books for sale on each topic to increase buy-in from participants, to get input from those that attend adult formation, and to look at combining the social and spiritual avenues.
2. 1 year plan will be to promote the Well Retreat Center for library resources. The 5 year plan will be to have a volunteer(s) to coordinate this and also to see what the Diocese has to offer.
3. Publish times of parish reconciliation and neighboring parish reconciliation for those that desire it. This is a communication issue to the parish. 1 year plan will be to list the local services on a dedicated reconciliation section of the bulletin board.
4. Make parish aware of Mass times at nearby parishes, as one Mass time is all that is needed or currently feasible. The longer outlook as the parish grows will be to look at a second Mass, although this is premature at this point.

### Worship

1. Create handouts to highlight roles of the pastoral coordinator, canonical pastor, and sacramental priests. Post on the bulletin boards. Also for both the short and long term, need to continue to educate the parish on the shortage of priests in not only the diocese, but the entire country. Need to ensure we are looking at stressing the vocations of religious service (lay, ordained, and religious.)
2. Availability, times, and locations of reconciliation services continues to be a communication issue to the parish. 1 year plan will be to list the local services on a dedicated reconciliation section of the bulletin board.
3. Need to continue to grow as a parish and to pray for the health of the retired and military priests that preside at the sacraments for us every Sunday. As in item (6.) we need to continue to educate the parish on the different roles of pastoral care that exist in our diocese, and that all are guided by Canon Law, and our bishop.
4. Although there are multiple avenues of communication being utilized (announcements, bulletins, emails, and website), not all the parishioners are getting information. It is inherent that the leadership continues to use the current modes of communication and to strive to find and promote new venues to communicate with the parishioners. Ways to address this include: expanding the website, expanding the bulletin, giving ministry updates at Mass, continue to update the directory, and continue to encourage attendance at parish functions and council meetings.

### Community

1. Create and organize faith based groups for all age groups (including young, single adults and widowers) to give Catholics in the parish a common social outlet to further experience their faith and spiritual foundation.

2. Look at expanding the type and levels of communication to the parish. Although various forms of communication are being utilized (email, bulletins, bulletin boards, announcements, internet), there are still parishioners not getting all the information they need.
3. Advertise RCIA program in local paper twice a year to alert outside community to finding out more about the Catholic faith.

#### Service

1. Have a volunteer coordinator that gives the parish a better understanding of the volunteer coordination process, and how the names and talents are shared with the ministries.
2. Continue to work with setting up a grand/master plan for activities (scheduled in May of each year), and try to continue to capture the attention and the interest of the parish to participate.
3. Continue to have social outreach ministry continue to promote Respect Life and additionally have them interface with Diocese and Local parishes to ensure we continue to maintain current practices and ideas on this important topic.

### **VII. Diocesan Support**

1. Promote what services and opportunities of interest to the parish that the diocese has to offer.
2. Diocesan visits by subject matter speakers.
3. Provide suggested/standard programs (worship, community, service)

### **VIII. Conclusion**

The We Walk By Faith (WWBF) process has been an excellent tool to look internally at ourselves as a parish and evaluate how we are meeting our duties and responsibilities as a parish. Just prior to the WWBF document being issued, our parish had already begun a process of pastoral planning as we began to look at the immediate, as well as the future, needs and concerns of the parish. The initial work in our pastoral planning has overlapped and meshed well with the four areas emphasized in WWBF and the plans for renewal and meeting parish needs that resulted. Our goal is to combine the efforts and direction of both processes as we move forward.

Every parish needs some kind of pastoral plan, which guides the congregation as it works to fulfill the mission of Christ. A sound pastoral plan will help us formulate our priorities in the face of the changing times, needs, and circumstances.

After soliciting feedback from the congregation, five priorities presented themselves, those include:

- (1) Greater participation, or volunteerism, from all parishioners of all ages.

- (2) Continued efforts toward social justice.
- (3) Ministering to the diverse spiritual needs of Good Shepherd.
- (4) Organization and operation of our ministries, committees, groups, and clubs.
- (5) Increased generosity and participation as we work to quickly pay off our mortgage and face increased operating costs.

The Church of the Good Shepherd has become more aware of itself, its faith, spiritual and community needs and direction through these processes. As we move forward and begin implementing our plans, the whole parish, the community and the diocese will become more enriched.