



Paulist Center August Community Meeting Synthesis

Who is present in our Paulist Center community and who is missing?

Who is Present?

- A community deeply rooted in faith with a strong commitment to meaningful liturgy
- Devoted long-time parishioners and families who have journeyed together for years
- Catholics looking for:
 - Community
 - A more-inclusive Church (e.g. leadership of women and inclusion of LGBTQ members)
 - Acceptance despite disagreement with Church teachings
- Demographics of community members include:
 - Older long-term members in their 60s/70s, those living alone, growing number of families, highly educated, white collar workers, white

“Who shows up on the weekday and who shows up on the weekend is completely different - the weekday community is very different from the weekend community.”

Who is Missing?

- Demographics of those who are missing from the Paulist Center include:
 - A diversity that fully reflects the makeup of the city we serve, people of color, families that were involved pre-covid or online during covid, single YAs, 20-somethings, young professionals, the poor/low-income, persons with disabilities, more conservative in worship form but with progressive ideas (i.e. women, lgbtq+, diverse), immigrants, children, people who live in downtown Boston/Beacon Hill, diverse perspectives, those who used to be Catholic but have left the Church

Key Quotes

“How can we thoughtfully and effectively grow our community in a way that honors and includes new voices, without alienating current members or tokenizing those who are underrepresented?”

What and/or where is our “mission field”?

1. Serving those better within the existing community
2. Families that were involved pre-covid or online during covid, those across greater Boston (30-40 mile radius)
3. Residents of Beacon Hill/Downtown/West End community, weekday business people, transient individuals who are in Boston for a short time, including: students, professionals in transition, and individuals in a season of searching
4. Those interested in social justice and liturgy, those looking for a Vatican II church
5. People who feel alienated by the church, those who are feeling alienated from their traditional parish or who have left the Catholic church, women, LGBTQ community, those in need of healing, the lonely (elderly and young people)
6. The spiritual but not religious audience, spiritually curious



Key Quotes

"Should our mission field be focused primarily on getting more people into the pews (attending liturgy) or into other types of programs and social justice initiatives? Or can it be both and we focus more on what it means for our community to adopt a missionary spirit and missionary approach outside our chapel doors?"

"Support and nurture our own community so we can bring in more members."

"We have to figure out 'what is our Vietnam War'". A movement that can energize the Paulist Center.

"Mission Field: People who feel on the margins of the church (but we have a LOT of competition in that regard from other parishes - St. Cecilia, St. Ignatius, St. Katherine Drexel, and St. Anthony Shrine most notably)."

How has that mission field shifted over the past 10 years? What are the 'signs of the times' to respond to today?

- Public life has changed to be more divided, polarized
- Institutional religious life has changed to be less necessary for many people; increase in disaffiliation from religion
- Downtown Boston has changed with more college students and young professionals moving in as well as a decrease in downtown occupancy of financial district post COVID
- The Archdiocese of Boston has changed in that diocesan parishes have become more social justice oriented and more inclusive liturgies
- Spiritual hunger remains: growing hunger for connection, belonging, and spiritual grounding. Increased search for spaces to reconnect with community, rediscover the sacred, receive support through personal and spiritual struggles
- People want more opportunities for prayer
- People more comfortable with online practice of faith and online access to so much faith/spiritual content

Key Quotes

"It used to be that if you were liberal and Catholic it used to mean that you were the only game in town. We are not 'ahead of the curve' anymore"

"Don't have a lot to say about mission field because internally we are struggling...AND dealing with the issue of uncertainty about our future given the decline in the Paulist clergy"

"Need to look internally in the community to look at those who are suffering in the community. We sometimes miss those internally."

"The signs of the times, I think, are that not as many people want to leave their homes to venture to Boston on a Sunday, and many more young people now identify as "nones," with no religious practice. We are also no longer the only Catholic church with a welcoming, inclusive and progressive bent - worshipers looking for those qualities have choices now that they didn't decades ago."

"One of the signs of the times is that young people are attracted to the transcendence and beauty of God that they discover in a personal encounter. This is because it is an antidote to the loneliness, anxiety, and mental health issues that the youth have...This might be different than the pastoral needs of older generations..."