

ANALYSIS, INTERPRETATION, APPLICATION

What's Your Parish and Community Story? Using MissionInsite in Your Planning

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If you've been planning at your parish for a while or are just deciding to start a new planning journey, data should play a significant role in the planning process.

Data available to you and your team can provide valuable insights and paint a clearer picture of what is going on in your parish and surrounding community. By analyzing, interpreting, and applying data, you can create your parish and community story for your planning. We have a planning process flow to help you with planning, and using data is built into that process. It can give you a snapshot of your community, along with insight into trends, and Determine Your Starting Point, making it easier to reach your goals and vision.

In your parish, you have so many sources of data to help create your story, such as membership and attendance numbers, sacramental vibrancy, financial data and facility analyses, and, of course, demographic data for parish members and your surrounding community. You may ask, "Why should we use community data – we're more concerned with data about our parish members." But given our missionary focus – to go and make disciples, to invite others in – we need to educate ourselves on who lives in our community and what opportunities there are to invite them in, to build relationships with them, build a relationship with Jesus, and finally make more disciples!

One source of data, specifically demographic data, is MissionInsite. MissionInsite is an online demographic software tool that compiles data from the Census and other sources to describe your community and parish members. In some categories of data, it provides trend data back to 2000 and out into the future to 2030, basically a 10-yr projection. This resource is provided to parishes in our archdiocese at no cost to the parish.

So how do you determine what is relevant to your planning? Start by considering what you need to know about your community:

-) What type of households are in your area?
-) Are the neighborhoods growing?
-) What is the diversity of your community?
-) What is the economic status in your community?

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MissionInsite has standard reports that can be run in a few minutes to give you that information. A good start to understanding your community is to look at four categories of data in the MissionInsite reports:

-) Population trends, and population by age groups
-) Household structure
-) Economic data
-) Race/ethnicity data.

After interpreting your data, the application of it can help give your parish team direction in your missionary planning process. Start asking questions – this may be an opportunity to communicate your findings with a larger group, such as your pastoral council or ministry teams, and start small group discussions.

But before you start with questions, review the vision for your parish – where do you want to be, or what do you want your parish to look like in five years? How will this data help you get there?

To review some specific examples of MissionInsite reports, along with ideas on how to interpret and apply the reports' data, listen to the recording of my presentation at the recent Gigs, Geeks and God Conference in January. The link to the presentation is available on our [MissionInsite web page](#). Scroll to the bottom of the page, and click on the PowerPoint Presentations drop down box.

Using data can help guide you in your missionary strategic planning process – all toward accomplishing our one mission of making more disciples.

Let me know how I can help you analyze, interpret, and apply the data you've collected for your planning process. I invite you to contact me at engell@archmil.org. And, if you are not already registered to use MissionInsite at your parish, I can help with that, too.

March 2021