

GRAND HAVEN DEANERY KEY FINDINGS (Updated November 6, 2009)

The following facts and observations are drawn from a review of demographic data, parish data, school data and interviews with pastors and lay leaders. The findings do not reflect the totality of all the information received or all the information needed to shape a plan. They are intended to serve as a starting point for a discussion about the future. These findings will be supplemented by the input at the deanery meetings and other information as needed.

A. Community Demographics

Deanery Demographic Profile Ottawa County

Census		Estimate		Projection	Change 2000 to 2020	
1990	2000	2008 ¹	2008 ²	2020	Number	Percent
187,768	238,314	261,387	260,364	393,643	155,329	65%

¹ 2008 Census estimate

² State of Michigan, Dept. of Energy, Labor and Economic Growth estimate

1. Population in the deanery is projected to increase modestly from 2000 to 2020 by approximately 7,770 persons per year. The primary townships where the increases are estimated include Holland (34,282), Georgetown (26,916), Allendale (19,269), Park (13,401), Grand Haven (10,663) and Zeeland (9,125).

The population of Holland and Hudsonville cities is projected to increase from 2000 to 2020 compared to other cities or villages. The populations of the cities of Grand Haven and Spring Lake are being seen as remaining relatively stable.

2. Ethnically/racially the deanery will remain much like it has been. The Hispanic population will increase as a percentage of the total population, especially in the Holland area. County-wide this population will grow from 7% of total population to 8.4% from 2000 to 2010.
3. County population is aging with decreases to stable percentages projected for the 0 to 4, 5 to 17 (school age) and 25 to 44 (family formation) year old age groups from 2000 to 2013. Increases are expected in the 45 to 64 (empty nest) and 65+ year old age groups. The presence of college/university attendees in the county helps stabilize the 18 to 24 year old age group and prevent some of the “brain drain” occurring in other areas.
4. The recent economy has impacted many communities. The May 2009 unemployment rate for Ottawa County was 12.9%, compared to 13.9% for the state at that time.
5. A 2008 estimate of the percentage of the total county/deanery population that is registered Catholic in a parish was 7%. This was based on the number of registered parish households and the average household size in the county.
6. Public elementary school enrollment decreased by 3% from 2004 to 2008, compared to an average enrollment decline of 18% in the five Catholic elementary schools in the deanery for the same time period.
7. The economy has hit many communities hard. The loss of jobs and lack of jobs has caused younger families to leave. A common sentiment is “this is not an economic environment in which families will stay.” The unemployment rate in Ottawa County in May 2009 was 12.9%.

B. Parish Demographics

1. Pastors and parish leaders are very committed to providing a meaningful experience of parish community life for all parishioners.
2. Registered households have increased overall in the deanery from 1994 to 2008, averaging around 6,800 to 7,000 households in recent years. Parishes range in size from 118 households to almost 1,600 in 2008.
3. The age profile of parishioners in the deanery shows the overall aging trend. However, the largest age groupings are in the family formative years (approximately 25 to 49 years). This aging trend, combined with a growing Hispanic population (which is, on average, younger than the general population) provides a challenge and opportunities for age-appropriate parish ministries and faith formation.
4. Parishes have been very parochial in many ways over the years. Pastors and parish leaders are now realizing the importance of building collaborative relationships with one another to make parish life and ministries more available, accessible and enhance overall quality compared to the past.
5. There are 30 weekend Masses in the deanery, an average of approximately 3 Masses per parish. The number celebrated each weekend ranges from 1 to 4 Masses. In some cases there are more Masses than may be needed given the weekend attendance and availability of priests.
6. As the Hispanic population grows in the deanery, the need for more bilingual capability is evident to effectively serve both the new residential and migrant families. There will be a need for additional Masses and sacramental and ministry opportunities in Spanish.
7. Pastors and parish leaders recognize that given community and Catholic demographics, a reorganization or realignment of parishes will be necessary.

2008 Parish Statistics

Parish	City	2009 Data				2008 Data					
		Number of Households	Number of Parishioners ¹	2009 Weekend Mass Attendance ²	% Attending Mass	Baptisms	Eucharists	Confirmations ³	Marriages	Funerals	K-8 Religious Education
Our Lady of the Lake	Holland	1,596	5,397	2,314	43%	50	87	95	12	17	530
St. Anthony (Mission)	Robinson Twp	120	220	194	88%	6	1	2	1	2	13
St. Catherine	Ravenna	220	281	247	88%	3	8	0	4	1	12
St. Francis de Sales	Holland	1,200	2,570	1,891	74%	174	150	166	20	31	197
St. Francis Xavier	Conklin	118	155	135	87%	3	5	0	0	4	26
St. Joseph	Wright	314	834	402	48%	15	19	15	9	6	62
St. Luke University	Allendale	382	481	577	120%	3	0	0	0	0	13
St. Mary	Marne	410	1,150	574	50%	22	24	29	7	15	144
St. Mary	Spring Lake	1,225	3,402	1,412	42%	37	56	50	13	31	218
St. Michael	Coopersville	386	1,145	561	49%	18	20	17	14	19	105
St. Patrick	Grand Haven	1,209	4,281	1,318	31%	25	60	35	31	31	385
Total Deanery		7,180	19,916	9,625	48%	356	430	409	111	157	1,705

¹ From parish data form

² From diocesan data

³ In some cases, Confirmation is celebrated every other year.

8. Multi-ethnic parish communities are growing in the Holland area which increases the need for culturally-aware ministries, bilingual capability and integrating various peoples into a vibrant parish community.

C. Clergy/Priests

1. Priests are increasing in age and decreasing in number, with a potential loss of 22% by 2020 and another 18% from 2020 to 2030.
2. Pastors expressed they would rather be spending time on pastoral concerns and less time on administrative issues. Some do not feel well-trained in business areas and have to learn on the job.
3. Pastors are sometimes uncomfortable with delegation. They may be afraid of mistakes or feel qualified laity are not available and willing.
4. Priests express a feeling that the laity can have unreasonable expectations of their time and availability.
5. Changes in pastors can disrupt the continuity of parish ministries or the development of programs. This is more acute when the priest is the only staff providing pastoral care.
6. There is a need to identify and communicate what a pastor needs to do as the parish leader/administrator and what qualified and professional staff can do to share in a pastor's leadership.

D. Leadership

1. Due to the parochial nature of the parishes, there is a high level of duplication in parish-administrative tasks that could be shared (e.g., Business Manager) and a lack of ministry leadership due to lack of resources, funding, etc. (e.g., Youth Ministry Director, Director of Religious Education). There are opportunities for parishes to explore where collaborative planning efforts could provide vital ministries and services for all parishioners at some place or time.
2. There is a need to prepare and educate all parishioners for a possible future of a shared pastor/priest, or another model of parish leadership. Some parishioners are still deeply tied to a perceived need for a full-time pastor.
3. The potential for reinitiating and developing deacon leadership was raised by many.
4. Parishes often do not have staff to plan and lead programs beyond religious education and basic church functions. Parishes generally do not have finances to hire lay staff or even to pay another religious or clergy person.
5. Enhancing and expanding lay leadership in parishes with quality, qualified and well-trained professional and volunteer personnel is essential to the sustainability of parishes.
6. Parishes are challenged to attract well-trained personnel for pastoral ministry to rural areas because of pay, low interest in living there, or difficulty justifying a full-time position.
7. Laity are sometimes discouraged to take responsibility by the manner in which the local parish and the diocesan offices operate.

E. Mission and Ministry

1. There is a deep commitment to the faith expressed in each parish. This is apparent in participation in Eucharistic liturgy, active outreach ministries, and close-knit communities.
2. A parish needs a sufficient number of parishioners to provide and sustain a variety of essential and vibrant ministries and community life.
3. Evangelization was voiced as a primary mission of the parish, but there was an expressed need for direction, assistance and resources to help them develop programming and ministries in this area.

Outreach to and education of youth, young adults and older adults was expressed as a major concern and need.

4. The larger parishes have well-developed ministry and outreach programs, both within the parish, at times between parishes, and with the larger community in which they reside and serve. Smaller parishes have some outreach programs but are limited due to available resources, local leadership and participants.

Several parishes have a working relationship with other church communities or agencies for a variety of local initiatives or programs.

5. Most parishes are sharing or collaborating with one another to some degree, though all pastors and parish leaders agreed more could and should be done. Potential areas of greater collaboration include: shared professional personnel, joint liturgical and prayer celebrations, joint ministry programs, staff development, youth and adult education, among others. It will be imperative to provide direction and training to ensure any/all collaborative efforts are effective and truly meet the needs of the parish communities.
6. Striving to bring pastors, parish leaders and parishioners to become more aware of and convert to a stewardship way of life is a priority expressed by parish leaders. They think it should be modeled at the diocesan level and then integrated throughout all parishes.
7. With a growing Hispanic population that is Catholic, the number of staff and leaders with ministerial training and language skills to serve these communities needs to be addressed.

F. Catholic Education Ministry

1. Each parish has a program of religious education for elementary-age children (grades K to 8). There are high school-age young adults involved in youth ministry from each parish as well. Some parishes share religious education programs at the grades K to 6, grades 7 to 8 and high school youth ministry levels.
2. From 2006 to 2008, the number of elementary school- age children enrolled in a parish religious education program in the deanery increased 5% to 1,705 children. The number of high school-age students enrolled in youth ministry/religious education remained stable with 469 young adults in 2008.
3. In 2009, there are 16.1 full-time equivalent parish professional staff in 8 of the 11 parishes leading the Christian formation/religious education programs in the deanery. There are many deeply committed volunteers who are actively involved as catechists in the religious education programs.

4. Administrators, faculty, staff, parents and many parishioners are highly committed to these Catholic schools.
5. There is a strong sense of parochialism in some schools that limits collaboration and/or change.
6. School demographics and enrollment:
 - K to 8 enrollment declined 31% from 2003-04 to 2009-10. Total enrollment went from 619 to 425 during that time period. Enrollments range from 35 to 168 students.
 - Every school is operating at less than optimal enrollment capacity, ranging from 29% to 61%. Current enrollment capacity of the five schools is 45%, leaving 524 seats available.
 - Kindergarten enrollment has declined 45% from 2003-04 to 2009-10. This will impact future overall enrolment significantly.
 - 97% of the students in the five elementary schools of the deanery are Catholic, compared to 93% diocesan-wide.
7. One parish school, St. Joseph, operates with a stewardship lending model. In other schools, tuition increases from 2003-04 to 2008-09 ranged from 13% to 114% in that time period, an average of approximately 54%.
8. While pastors and parish leaders see the value of Catholic school education and are supporting it in most cases, some expressed concerns:
 - A declining enrollment trend raises the issues of sustainability.
 - Pastors say they are not able to hire professional parish staff or support some parish ministries due to the level of subsidy to a school.
 - The schools depend heavily on parish subsidy for support. In some cases, parishes are using endowment fund principal or savings to support the school programs.
 - Ever-increasing tuition rates and less-than-sufficient financial assistance are making Catholic school education less accessible for most of the schools.

G. Facilities

1. Churches are well-maintained and attractive for the most part, though some are aged or aging.
2. Parish and school facilities, with the exception of the St. Joseph School facility, are in compliance with the ADA handicap access requirements.
3. The St. Patrick-St. Anthony Parish community has a well-developed, comprehensive master plan for parish facilities that is forward-looking and integrates the two communities into one. The plan is ready for approval and implementation.
4. St. Luke University Parish's main priority is to plan and construct permanent parish facilities.
5. St. Francis de Sales, a growing and multi-ethnic parish, is landlocked with no room for any future expansion if needed.
6. Office, meeting and storage spaces in several parishes are less than adequate to meet their pastoral and ministerial needs.

H. Finances

1. Ordinary revenue (offertory) in the deanery had increased from 2003-04 to 2007-08 by 11%. However, as a result of the recent economic downturn, giving decreased by just over 1% from 2007-08 to 2008-09.

Three of the ten parishes had an increase in offertory giving from 2006-07 to 2008-09 (St. Luke University Parish was not open in 2006-07, but has had an increase in giving the past two years).

2. While some communities consider themselves “stewardship” parishes, there is a need to educate parishioners on what living a life of stewardship means in order to bring about such a lifestyle conversion.