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Evaluation of Parishioners' Knowledge of the Franciscan Collaborative Ministries

Fall 2007

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Co-Minister of the Franciscan Church of the Assumption: Brother Joseph Freitag

Research Team: Asher Epstein

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Jonathan Frank



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COLLABORATIVE MINISTRIES

Executive Summary

Introduction

This report presents data collected from the parishioners of the Franciscan Church of the Assumption in Syracuse, New York. The information collected from this study will be used by the Franciscan Collaborative Ministries (FCM) to assess the parishioners' knowledge of programs and participation with the FCM.

Methods

The data for the study were obtained through a survey given to the attending parishioners of the Assumption Church on Oct. 6, Oct. 7, Oct. 13, and Oct. 14, 2007. During each Mass an announcement was made requesting that parishioners fill out a survey to help inform church leaders. Surveys were handed out and collected following each service. As parishioners entered for mass they were handed the survey. They were then asked to return the completed surveys before they left. The Assumption Church has roughly 418 active members. Over two weekends 145 surveys were completed.

The target population consists of all active parishioners of the Assumption Church. A total of 145 surveys were collected out of the 418 active parishioners making the response rate 35%.



Executive Summary

Findings

1. 87% of respondents say that they have heard of the Franciscan Collaborative Ministries. (n=145)
2. 70% of respondents “agreed” or “strongly agreed” that they understand the mission of the FCM. (n=122)
3. 97% of respondents are familiar with the Food Pantry operated by the FCM. (n=132)
4. 85% of respondents do not volunteer to work at any of the FCM programs. (n=137)
5. 77% of parishioners who volunteer at any FCM programs, work at either the food pantry or the medical center. (n=21)
6. 54% of respondents who help with the FCM programs volunteer four or more times a month. (n=22)
7. 55% of respondents contribute money to specific FCM programs. (n=110)
8. 62% of parishioners who contribute money to FCM programs donate to the food pantry. (n=60)
9. 60% of respondents consider neighborhood economic development to be a priority. (n=133)
10. 53% of respondents would like to learn more about the FCM. (n=121)
11. 59% of respondents say that a newsletter is the best means of communicating information to them. (n=124)





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Acknowledgements

Researchers with the Community Benchmarks Program would like to thank those who cooperated with and provided data for this project.

We would especially like to acknowledge:

- Brother Joseph Freitag, the Co-Minister of the Franciscan Church of the Assumption, for his continuous assistance.
- Parishioners of the Franciscan Church of the Assumption, for their willingness to complete the surveys.
- Dominic Robinson, Director of Programs for the Franciscan Collaborative Ministries, for his assistance with the survey design.
- Elana Tenenbaum, for her contribution of photographs used in this report.



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INTRODUCTION

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Introduction

This study examines what members of the Franciscan Church of the Assumption, founded in 1845, know about the Franciscan Collaborative Ministry's programs. In 1997, the Assumption Church was granted Conventual Church status by the Diocese of Syracuse, New York. This change allowed for the creation of the FCM as the Church's vessel for enacting change and restoring peace and reconciliation to the Northside of Syracuse, where the church is located.

The Northside was once an illustrious community, but is now in a state of poverty and despair. According to the US Census of 2000, 20% of individuals live below the poverty line where the national average is 12.4% (Factfinder, 2000). Over the past decade, the Assumption Church has gone beyond serving its parishioners and made it part of its primary mission to, "reinvigorate and renew the Northside of Syracuse." It has done this through economic development and the following programs:

- Food Pantry
- Legal Clinic
- Youth Programming
- Peace Camp
- Medical Center
- Northside Collaboratory

This report can be used by the FCM to gauge the attitudes of the members of the Assumption Church and will serve as a benchmark to future endeavors.



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METHODS



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Data Collection

Instrument Design

The survey instrument was designed by researchers with the Community Benchmarks Program (CBP). Brother Joseph Freitag, the Co-Minister of the Franciscan Church of the Assumption, worked with the research team on Sept. 11, 2007 to discuss potential questions that could be incorporated into the final survey. After a meeting with Brother Joseph and Dominic Robinson, Director of Programs of the FCM, the CBP team created the final survey. Brother Joseph then piloted the survey to the Parish Council on Sept. 30, 2007. The purpose of the survey is to collect information about the knowledge parishioners have of the programs operated by the FCM and the volunteer opportunities that are available.

The CBP researchers attended two masses over two weekends. This occurred on Oct. 6, Oct. 7, Oct. 13, and Oct. 14, 2007. During each Mass an announcement was made requesting that parishioners fill out a survey to help inform church leaders. Surveys were handed out and collected following each service.

Target Population and Sample

The target population are all 418 active parishioners of the Assumption Church. A total of 145 responses (sample) were collected at four masses from the attending parishioners, making the response rate 35%.



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Data Collection

Method of Contact

The CBP researchers attended a total of four Masses: Oct. 6, 2007 and Oct. 13, 2007 at 4PM and on Oct. 7, 2007 and Oct. 14, 2007 at 9AM. Prior to Oct. 6, 2007, Brother Joseph Freitag made an announcement during Mass that researchers from Syracuse University would be coming for the next two week-ends to survey the congregation.

The parishioners were supplied with pens and handed surveys upon entry to the church by the CBP researchers. They were also given a brief explanation of the purpose of the survey. Most parishioners were aware of the survey and only a few had questions. Many of the parishioners filled out the survey before Mass began or when it ended. At each Mass the CBP researchers attended, Brother Joseph Freitag made another announcement during the service to tell the parishioners what the survey was intended to do and to remind them to fill it out before they left Mass. Parishioners who entered after the service began, picked up a survey when Mass ended at a table the CBP researchers set up in the middle of the Church. CBP researchers were available to answer any questions before and after Mass.

Data Quality

Accuracy

A lack of clarity in some of the questions may have been a problem. Even when there were clear choices, some respondents would write in answers to questions. Sometimes, the written responses would be a synonym for one of the offered choices or a completely new response was created. This could have been due to poor wording of questions or incomplete choices.

Mistakes in recording information could also have been made. After the surveys were collected, the data was inputted into a survey program to produce accurate percentages and sample graphs and charts. During this process, some data may have been lost or incorrectly added.

Representativeness

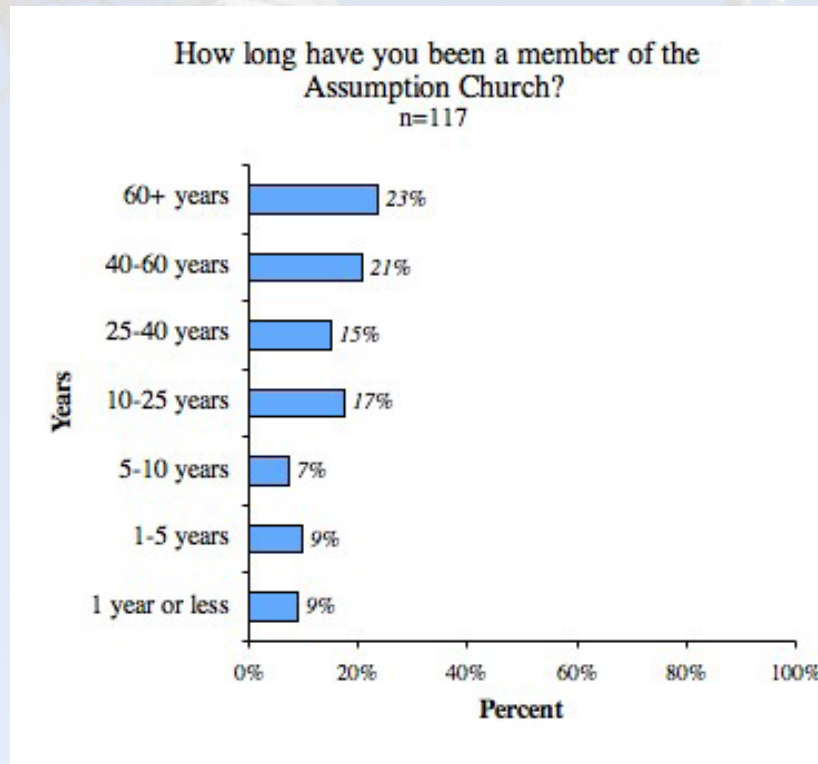
Because there is no demographic profile of the 418 active parishioners, it is not known how representative the sample is of the target population.

The survey asked four demographic questions. These questions and responses are used to inform the reader of the sample. The following four figures help explain who the respondents are.



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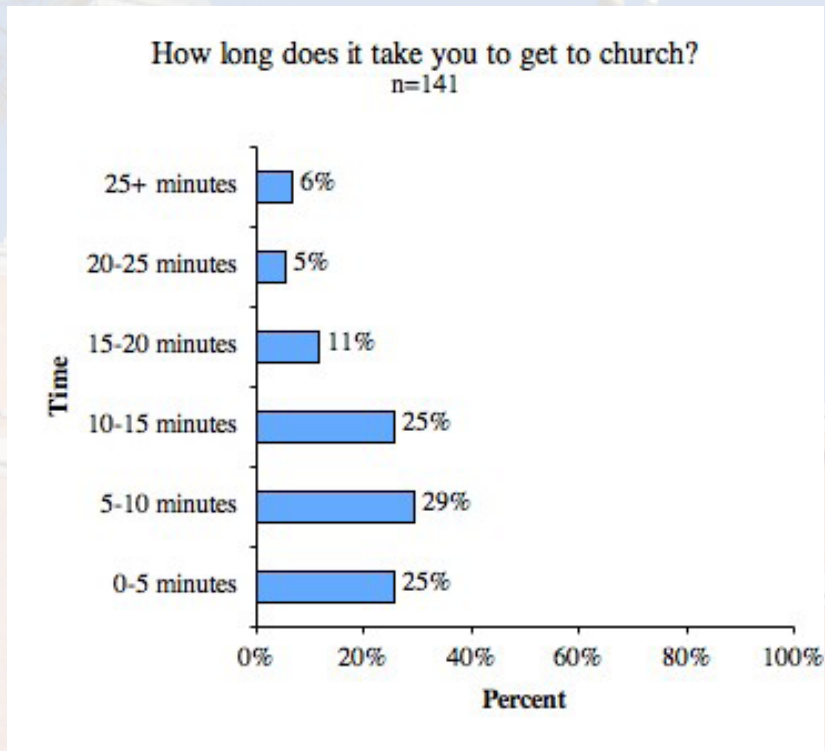
Figure 1



Source: Data collected at the Franciscan Church of the Assumption by researchers from the Community Benchmarks Program, Syracuse University, October 2007.

Comments: This information was collected so the church could gain a better understanding of what there membership looks like. 44% of the parishioners have been members of the Assumption Church for over 40 years.

Figure 2

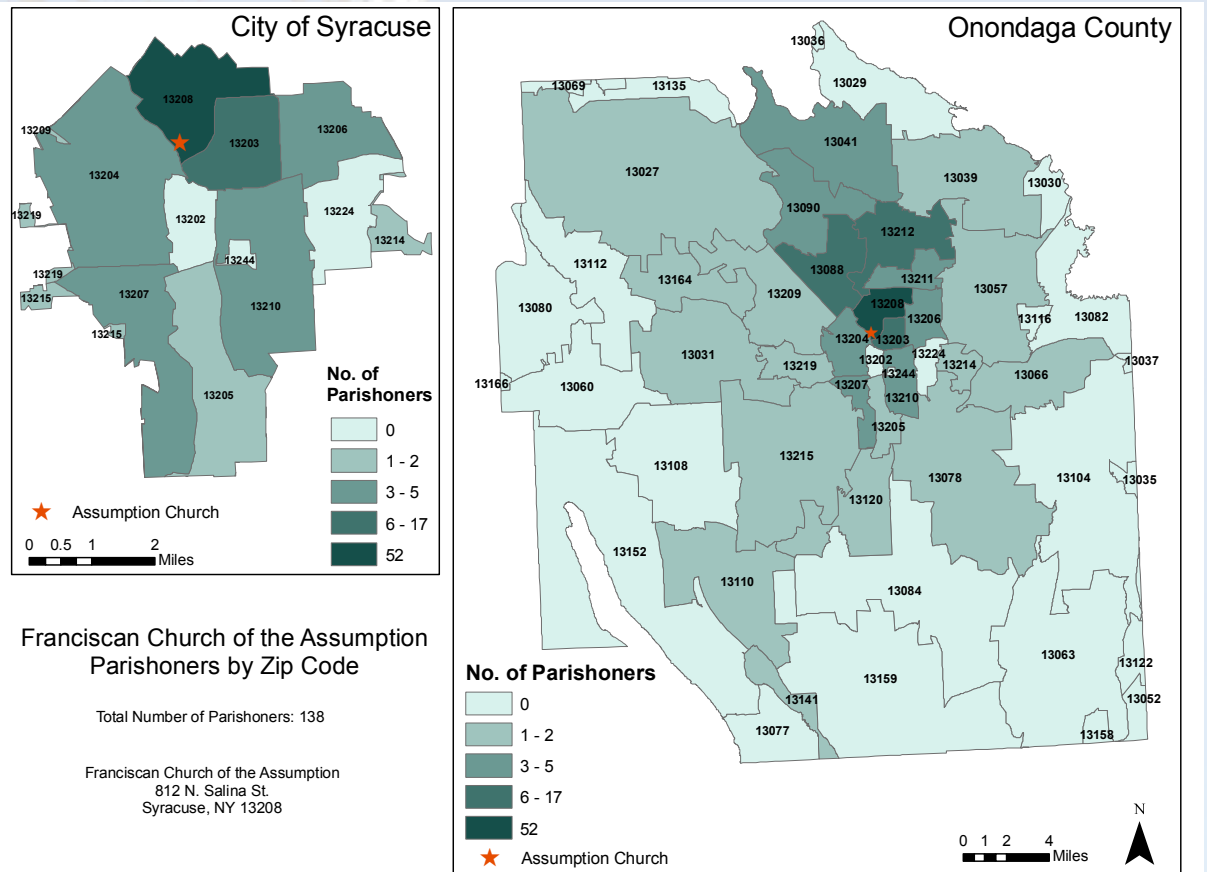


Source: Data collected at the Franciscan Church of the Assumption by researchers from the Community Benchmarks Program, Syracuse University, October 2007.

Comments: This figure explains how long it takes for parishioners to get to Church. As shown from the graph, 79% live within 15 minutes of the church.



Figure 3

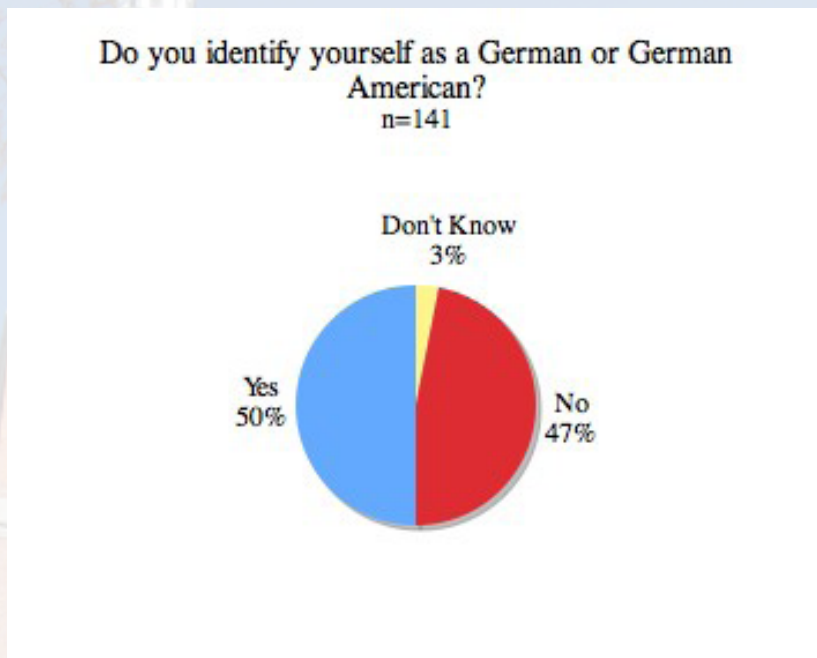


Map created by the Syracuse University Community Geographer

Source: Data collected at the Franciscan Church of the Assumption by researchers from the Community Benchmarks Program, Syracuse University, October 2007.

Comment: This figure shows where the parishioners live. This map contains the zip codes of 138 parishioners because not every parishioner chose to provide their zip code. 38% of the parishioners live in the 13208 zip code, where the church is located.

Figure 4



Source: Data collected at the Franciscan Church of the Assumption by researchers from the Community Benchmarks Program, Syracuse University, October 2007.

Comment: 50% of the parishioners identify themselves as German or German-Americans. This information was gathered to update and inform the church of these parishioners who identify themselves as German or German-Americans. Historically, the Assumption Church was started by German immigrants in 1845 and for centuries they have been the majority of active parishioners. This graph shows that the demographic has changed over the years.



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SURVEY FINDINGS



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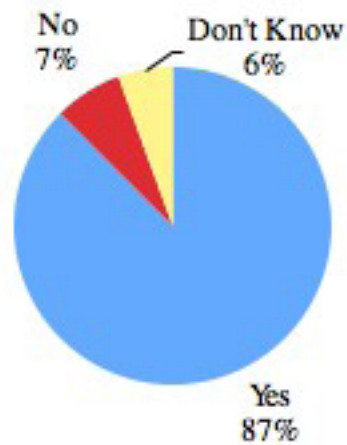
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Finding 1

1. 87% of respondents say that they have heard of the Franciscan Collaborative Ministries. (n=145)

Knowledge of the FCM
n=145



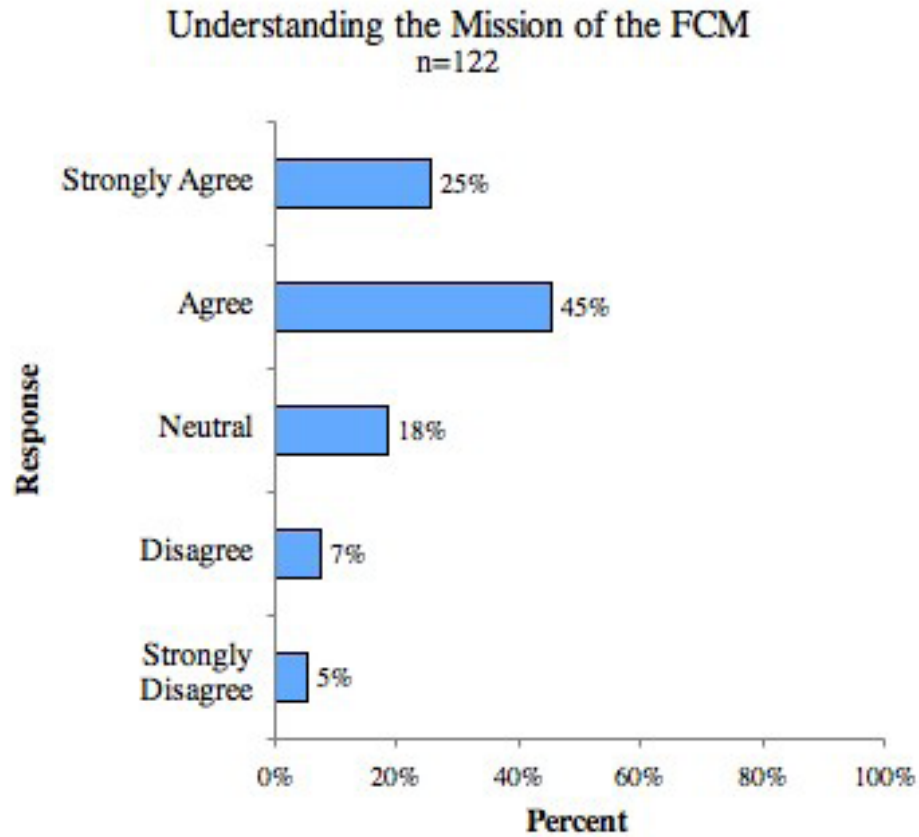
Source: Data collected at the Franciscan Church of the Assumption by researchers from the Community Benchmarks Program, Syracuse University, October 2007.



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Finding 2

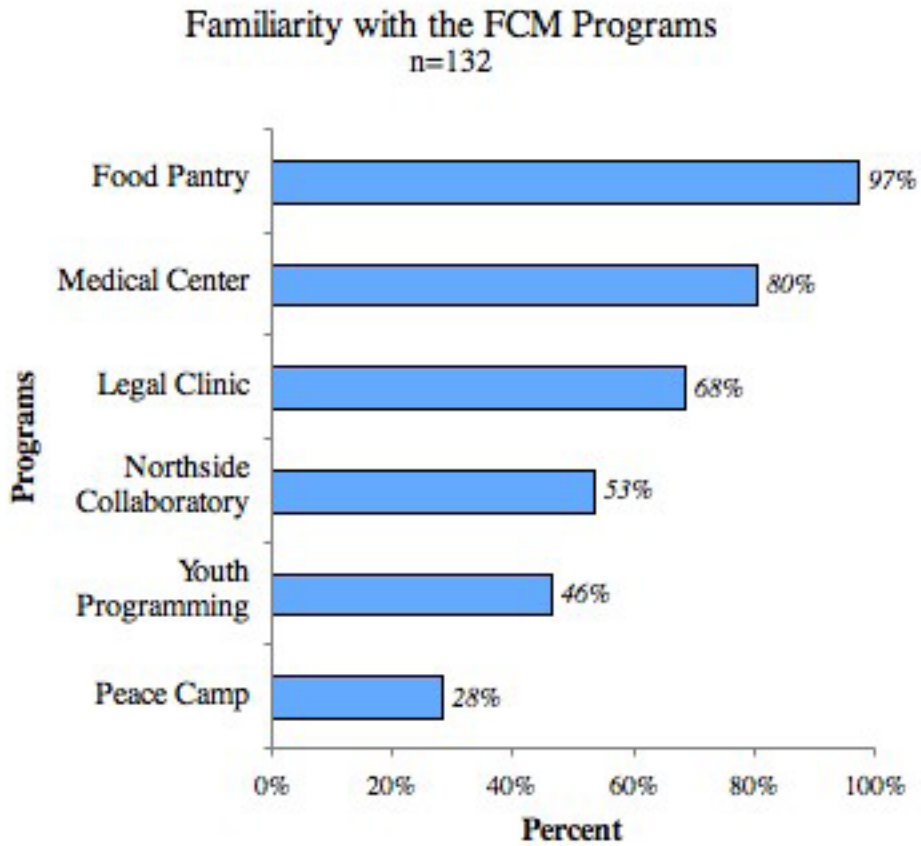
2. 70% of respondents “agreed” or “strongly agreed” that they understand the mission of the FCM. (n=122)



Source: Data collected at the Franciscan Church of the Assumption by researchers from the Community Benchmarks Program, Syracuse University, October 2007.

Finding 3

3. 97% of respondents are familiar with the Food Pantry operated by the FCM.
(n=132)



Source: Data collected at the Franciscan Church of the Assumption by researchers from the Community Benchmarks Program, Syracuse University, October 2007.

Comment: Percentages add up to over 100% because respondents could select more than one response.

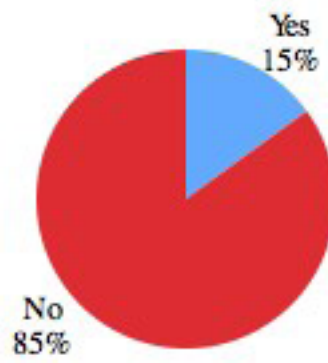


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Finding 4

4. 85% of respondents do not volunteer to work at any of the FCM programs.
(n=137)

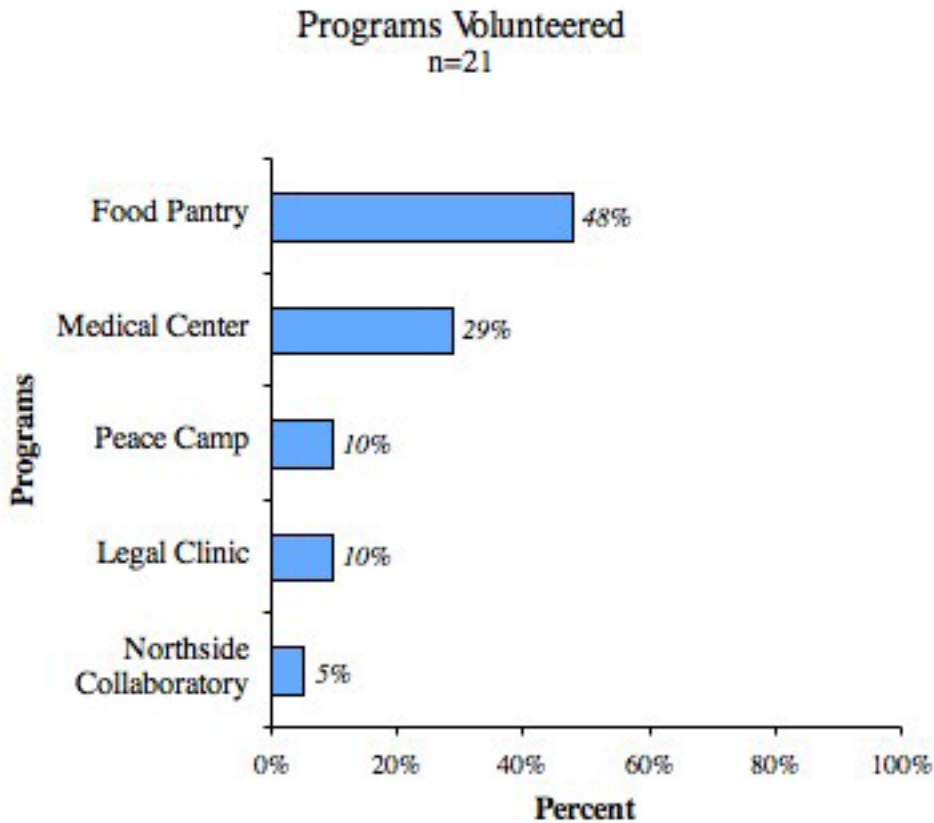
Volunteer
n=137



Source: Data collected at the Franciscan Church of the Assumption by researchers from the Community Benchmarks Program, Syracuse University, October 2007.

Finding 5

5. 77% of parishioners who volunteer at any FCM programs, work at either the food pantry or the medical center. (n=21)



Source: Data collected at the Franciscan Church of the Assumption by researchers from the Community Benchmarks Program, Syracuse University, October 2007.

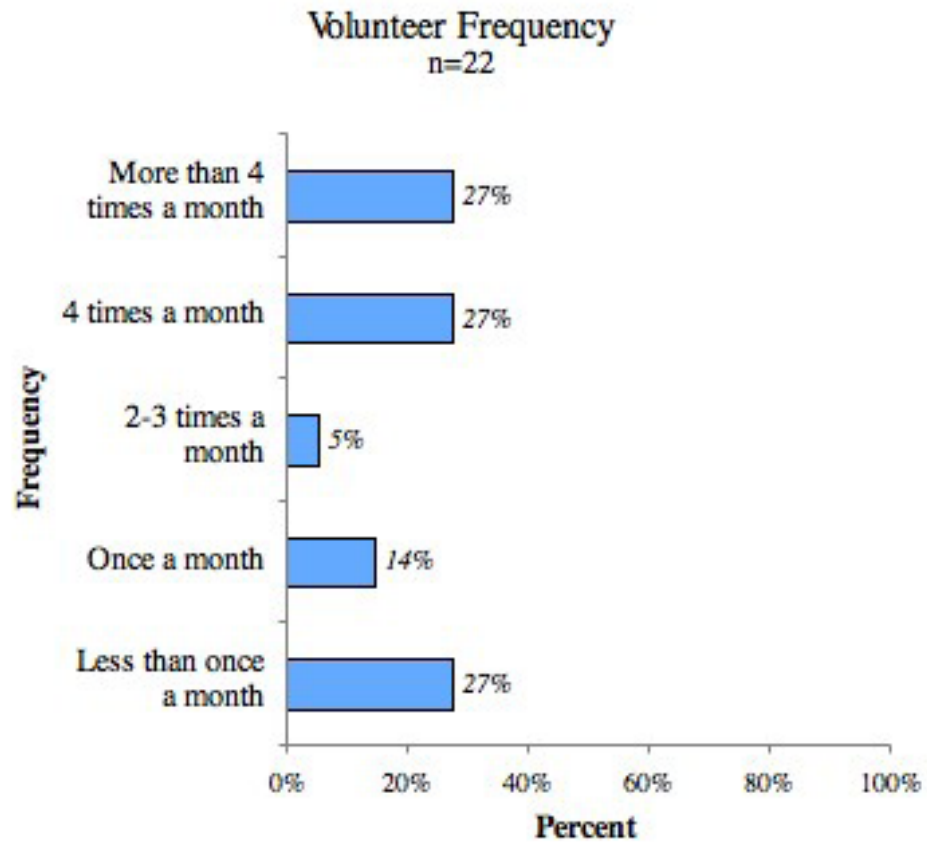
Comments: Percentages add up to over 100% because of rounding to the nearest whole number. The reason for the small “n” is because a small percentage of the respondents volunteer.



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Finding 6

6. 54% of respondents who help with the FCM programs volunteer four or more times a month. (n=22)

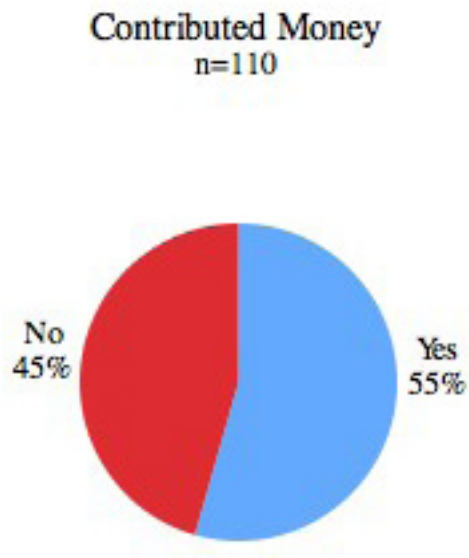


Source: Data collected at the Franciscan Church of the Assumption by researchers from the Community Benchmarks Program, Syracuse University, October 2007.

Comment: The reason for the small “n” is because a small percentage of the respondents volunteer.

Finding 7

7. 55% of respondents contribute money to specific FCM programs. (n=110)



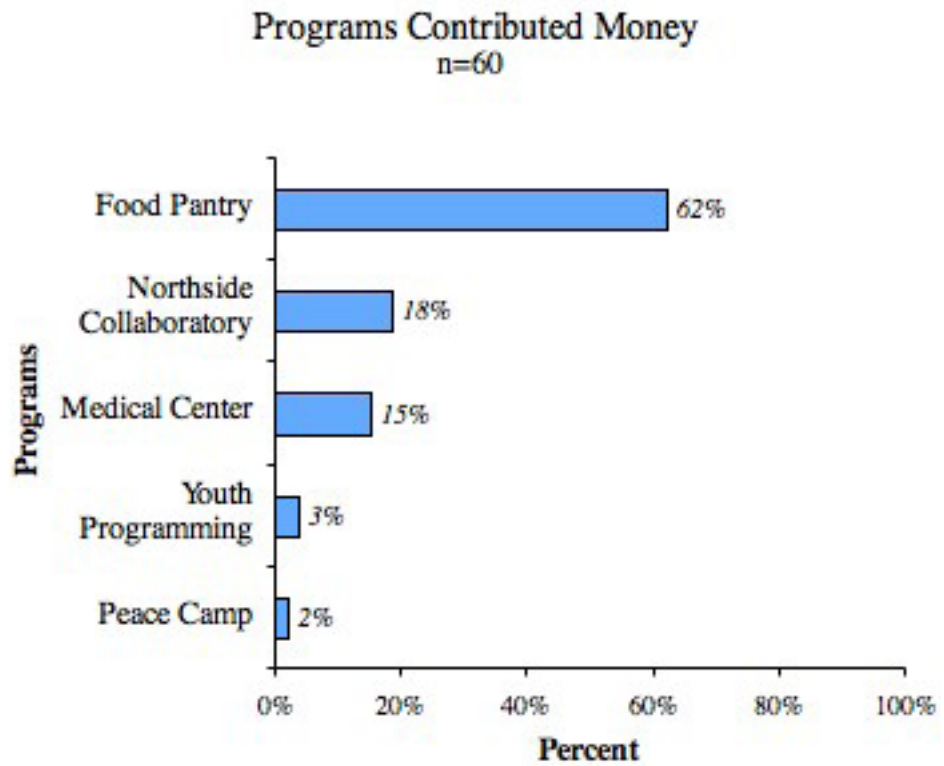
Source: Data collected at the Franciscan Church of the Assumption by researchers from the Community Benchmarks Program, Syracuse University, October 2007.



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Finding 8

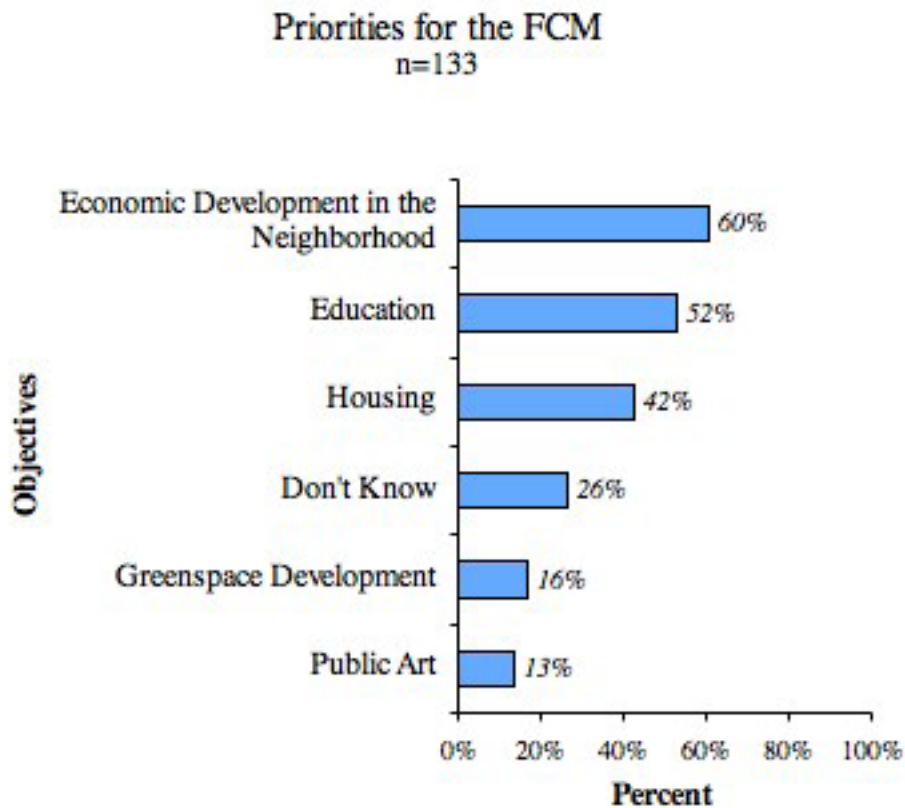
8. 62% of parishioners who contribute money to FCM programs donate to the food pantry. (n=60)



Source: Data collected at the Franciscan Church of the Assumption by researchers from the Community Benchmarks Program, Syracuse University, October 2007.

Finding 9

9. 60% of respondents consider neighborhood economic development to be a priority. (n=133)



Source: Data collected at the Franciscan Church of the Assumption by researchers from the Community Benchmarks Program, Syracuse University, October 2007.

Comment: Percentages add up to over 100% because respondents could select more than one response.

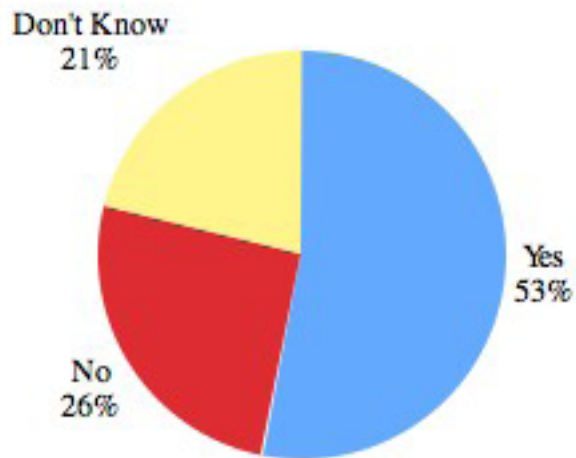


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Finding 10

10. 53% of respondents would like to learn more about the FCM. (n=121)

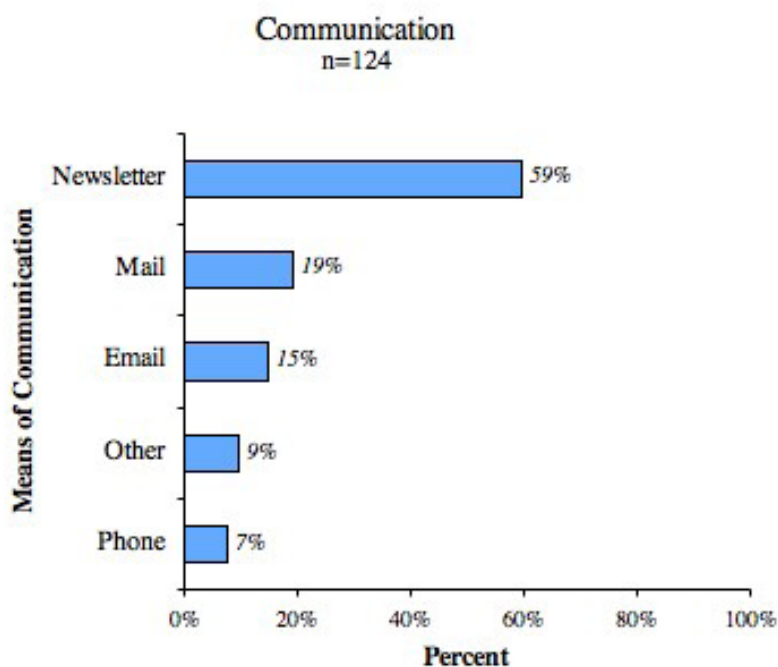
Desire to Learn More About the FCM
n=121



Source: Data collected at the Franciscan Church of the Assumption by researchers from the Community Benchmarks Program, Syracuse University, October 2007.

Finding 11

11. 59% of respondents say that a newsletter is the best means of communicating information to them. (n=124)



Source: Data collected at the Franciscan Church of the Assumption by researchers from the Community Benchmarks Program, Syracuse University, October 2007.

Comments: Percentages add up to over 100% because respondents could select more than one response. The “other” category was omitted in this finding but had 11 responses. Respondents could select one or more responses.

Other means for communication	Number of responses
TV	1
Newspaper	1
Church	3
Homily	1
Catholic Sun	1
Assumption Bulletin	4



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PARISHIONER'S PERSPECTIVE



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Parishioner's Perspective

On the back page of one survey a parishioner wrote their feelings about the Franciscan Collaborative Ministries. It read as follows:

“I totally support the goal of FCM. That being said I do have considerable concern. While all those involved in FCM are deeply immersed in the work and goals you need to understand that the average parishioner is clueless as to how it all fits in with the parish and vice versa. There has been a lack of education despite what may be perceived as attempts to do so. I have never seen a serious attempt to involve the parish as a whole in FCM. This, I know, will be upsetting to those who believe this has been done. It's really all in the perception!

Also there seems to be a lot of activity in many new directions without a lot of coordination, which even has those of us who understand and support the FCM shaking our heads. Many parishioners wonder what's happening on the parish level. For example: At the dinners some people feel that they are not only being encouraged but actually being discouraged. There needs to be some better communication and understanding on both sides.”

Comment: This quote was taken verbatim.



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WORKS CITED



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Works Cited

United States Census Bureau (2000). United States Census. Accessed on Nov. 13, 2007 from <http://www.census.gov>

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APPENDICES



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Appendix I: Parishioner Survey

Assumption Church

1. Have you heard of the Franciscan Collaborative Ministry (FCM)?
☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Don't Know
2. If yes, do you agree that you understand the mission of the FCM?
☐ Strongly Disagree ☐ Disagree ☐ Neutral ☐ Agree ☐ Strongly Agree
3. Are you familiar with any of these FCM programs? (Please check all that apply)
☐ Food Pantry ☐ Legal Clinic ☐ Youth Programming
☐ Peace Camp ☐ Medical Clinic ☐ Northside Collaboratory
4. Do you volunteer to work at any of the programs listed in Q3?
☐ Yes (If Yes, please list which programs) _____
☐ No
5. If yes, over the course of a typical month, how frequently do you volunteer?
☐ Less than once a month ☐ Once a month ☐ 2-3 times a month
☐ 4 times a month ☐ More than 4 times a month
6. Have you ever contributed money to support any of the programs listed in Q3?
☐ Yes (If Yes, please list which programs) _____
☐ No
7. Among the stated objectives of the Northside Collaboratory, which do you consider to be priorities for FCM? (Please check all that apply)
☐ Economic Development in the Neighborhood ☐ Education
☐ Housing ☐ Public Art
☐ Greenspace Development ☐ Don't Know
8. Would you like to learn more about the FCM? ☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Don't Know
9. What is the best means of communicating information to you?
☐ Newsletter ☐ Email ☐ Phone ☐ Mail
☐ Other: (Explain) _____
10. Have long have you been a member of the Assumption Church? _____
11. How long does it take you to get to church? _____
12. What is your zip code? _____
13. Do you identify yourself as German or German American?
☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Don't Know

Appendix II: Original Parishioner Survey with Frequencies

Assumption Church

1. Have you heard of the Franciscan Collaborative Ministry (FCM)?
127 Yes 10 No 8 Don't Know
2. If yes, do you agree that you understand the mission of the FCM?
6 Strongly Disagree 8 Disagree 22 Neutral 55 Agree 31 Strongly Agree
3. Are you familiar with any of these FCM programs? (Please check all that apply)
128 Food Pantry 90 Legal Clinic 61 Youth Programming
37 Peace Camp 105 Medical Clinic 70 Northside Collaboratory
4. Do you volunteer to work at any of the programs listed in Q3?
21 Yes (If Yes, please list which programs) _____
120 No
5. If yes, over the course of a typical month, how frequently do you volunteer?
6 Less than once a month 3 Once a month 1 2-3 times a month
6 4 times a month 6 More than 4 times a month
6. Have you ever contributed money to support any of the programs listed in Q3?
60 Yes (If Yes, please list which programs) _____
50 No
7. Among the stated objectives of the Northside Collaboratory, which do you consider to be priorities for FCM? (Please check all that apply)
80 Economic Development in the Neighborhood 69 Education
56 Housing 17 Public Art
21 Greenspace Development 35 Don't Know
8. Would you like to learn more about the FCM? 64 Yes 32 No 25 Don't Know
9. What is the best means of communicating information to you?
81 Newsletter 20 Email 10 Phone 26 Mail
11 Other: (Explain) _____
10. How long have you been a member of the Assumption Church? N/A _____
11. How long does it take you to get to church? _____ N/A _____
12. What is your zip code? _____ N/A _____
13. Do you identify yourself as German or German American?
70 Yes 66 No 5 Don't Know



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Appendix III: Codebook

COLUMN	FIELD NAME	DEFINITION
A	HEARD	Respondents Heard of FCM
		1= Yes
		2= No
		3= Don't Know
B	MISSION	Understand mission of FCM
		1= Strongly Disagree
		2= Disagree
		3= Neutral
		4= Agree
		5= Strongly Agree
C	FAMILIAR	Respondents familiar with certain FCM programs
		1= Food Pantry
		2= Legal Clinic
		3= Youth Programming
		4= Peace Camp
		5= Medical Center
		6= Northside Collaboratory
D	VOLUNTEER	Respondents volunteer at FCM programs
		1= Food Pantry
		2= Legal Clinic
		3= Peace Camp
		4= Medical Center
		5= Northside Collaboratory
		6= No
E	OFTEN	How often respondents volunteer per month
		1= Less than once a month
		2= Once a month
		3= 2-3 times a month
		4= 4 times a month
		5= More than 4 times

Codebook

COLUMN	FIELD NAME	DEFINITION
F	MONEY	Contributed to specific FCM programs
		1= Food Pantry
		2= Legal Clinic
		3= Peace Camp
		4= Medical Center
		5= Northside Collabratory
		6= No
		7= Yes (non specific)
G	PRIORITY	Respondents consider priorities of FCM
		1= Economic Development in the Neighborhood
		2= Education
		3= Housing
		4= Public Art
		5= Greenspace Development
		6= Don't Know
H		LEARN
		Respondents desire learning more about FCM
		1= Yes
		2= No
		3= Don't Know
I	CONTACT	Best way to communicate to respondents
		1= Newsletter
		2= Email
		3= Phone
		4= Mail
		5= Other
J	MEMBER	How many years a member of Assumption Church
		1= Year or Less
		2= 1-5 years
		3= 5-10 years
		4= 11-25 years
		5= 26-39 years
		5= 40-59 years
		6= 60 years



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Codebook

COLUMN	FIELD NAME	DEFINITION
K	TIME	Distance of respondents from church
		1= 0-5 minutes
		2= 6-10 minutes
		3= 11-15 minutes
		4= 16-24 minutes
		5= More than 25 minutes
L	GERMAN	Respondents identify as German or German American
		1= Yes
		2= No
		3= Don't Know

* No Code Book was used for Zip Codes

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