



Lifelong Faith

the theory and practice of lifelong faith formation

Volume 7.1

www.lifelongfaith.com

Spring 2013



INNOVATIONS *in* **FAITH FORMATION** 2013

"Celebrating the Treasure" Mary Southard, CSJ • Congregation of St. Joseph of LaGrange • Courtesy of www.marysouthardart.org

Lifelong Faith

the theory and practice of lifelong faith formation

Volume 7.1

www.lifelongfaith.com

Spring 2013

Innovations in Faith Formation 2013

- 2 **All Ages:** Innovation on the Hillside: The Ministry of the FiveLoaves.com
Tom Tomaszek
- 7 **All Ages:** The Generosity Project
Linda Staats
- 13 **All Ages:** The Center for Spiritual Resources
Robbin Whittington
- 17 **Adults:** Good News People
Katherine Feely, SND
- 22 **Children & Youth:** Can a Congregation Imagine ‘Something New’?
Karen Gieseke
- 26 **Family:** Renaming and Reclaiming a Faith Practice
Debbie Streicher
- 31 **Leaders:** A Coaching Approach to Spiritual Vitality
Jim LaDoux
- 35 **Young Adult:** Taking a Coalition Approach to Young Adult Ministry
Kate Hine, SND & Margaret Vogel
- 39 **Youth:** A “Community of Communities” Approach to Youth Ministry
Ken Johnson-Mondragon with Ed Lozano



LifelongFaith Associates

40 Brighton Road, Naugatuck, CT 06770
www.LifelongFaith.com

Copyright © 2013

Lifelong Faith is published quarterly by
LifelongFaith Associates, LLC.

ISSN #1939-5299.

Managing Editor: John Roberto
Cover Design: Brian Parda



On-going faith formation without leaving home!

Design Your Own Learning Plan

Are there topics that are particularly important or timely for the adults in your parish, cluster, or deanery? Your catechists, parents, Bible study group, or committee members? With a minimum enrollment of 15, you can request a course or workshop that suits your needs and schedule. To view all our course and workshop offerings, visit our [website](#). For more information, contact us at c21online@bc.edu

Upcoming Courses and Workshops

Christian Faith and Moral Character

April 10 - May 8

In this four-week course, examine the meaning of character and its significance for the moral life, as well as moral freedom, human sinfulness, and the nature of conversion.

The Gospel of Mark

April 10 - April 24

Explore the Gospels of Mark, Luke, or Matthew in these two-week workshops.

The Gospel of Luke

May 1 - May 15

The Gospel of Matthew

June 12 - June 26

A Sacramental People

June 19 - July 3

This two-week workshop provides guided discussion around the Spring 2012 issue of *C21 Resources*, focusing on the sacraments of baptism, confirmation, reconciliation, anointing of the sick, and marriage.

The Eucharist: At the Heart of Catholic Life

July 10 - July 24

This two-week workshop provides guided discussion around the Fall 2011 issue of *C21 Resources*, focusing on the meaning of the Eucharist, the theme of real presence, Eucharist as sacrifice, and the connection between Eucharist and justice.

For more information on these courses and workshops

www.bc.edu/c21online



www.facebook.com/c21online

FAITH FORMATION RESOURCES

Like church, your home is also your sanctuary. Vibrant Faith Ministries wants to help you connect faith and home by giving you easy and accessible ways to become more intentional in your faith practices.

Our **ONLINE RESOURCE**, VibrantFaith@Home, has all of the resources you need to build a strong Christian household. Our goal is to equip and empower families to:

- **TALK** with each other about their faith
- **PRAY** together in ways that are comfortable and comforting
- **RITUALIZE** the important milestones—no matter how big or small
- **REACH OUT** in service and support to others in the community



Scan the QR code or visit
vibrantfaithathome.org
for unlimited access to our
FREE family resources—
and so much more!



Faith Formation Resources from Morehouse Publishing



9780819228314 | \$20.00

Faith Formation 4.0

Introducing an Ecology of Faith in a Digital Age

JULIE ANNE LYTLE

“How do we become Christian in the 21st century? Dr. Lytle offers an ecology of faith in which everything – story, relationships, and context – work together. This model provides roots for church leaders born in the digital age, wings for digital skeptics, and a much-needed bridge for ministers of Christian formation.”

– Day Smith Pritchatt, Executive Director,
the Evangelical Education Society of the Episcopal Church

“This book is essential reading for contemporary church leadership. Much like a ‘build your own adventure’ the content is organized to encourage readers concerned about evangelization and/or faith formation in a digital age to enter the rich conversation through multiple doors. Grounded soundly in scripture, theology, history, sociology of religion, human development, and learning theory, Julie describes the complex ecology of being church today.”

– Lisa Kimball, Ph.D., Interim Associate Dean of Students,
Director, Center for the Ministry of Teaching, and Professor of Christian
Formation and Congregational Leadership, Virginia Theological Seminary

“Let this book be your guide to this exciting new era for faith formation.”

– John Roberto, author of *Faith Formation 2020:
Designing the Future of Faith Formation* and Editor, *Lifelong Faith Journal*



Click 2 Save

The Digital Ministry Bible

ELIZABETH DRESCHER AND KEITH ANDERSON

A hands-on strategy guide for religious leaders who want to enrich and extend their ministries using digital media like *Facebook*, *Twitter*, *YouTube*, and church or personal blogs.

9780819227744 | \$20.00



Tweet If You ♥ Jesus

Practicing Church in the Digital Reformation

ELIZABETH DRESCHER

A timely resource dealing with communication, leadership and community formation in the age of digital social media.

9780819224231 | \$20.00

Sign up online to receive our eNews! Books are also available as eBooks for your reader. Follow us on  



Innovation on the Hillside: The Ministry of FiveLoaves.com

Tom Tomaszek

The people are hungry,” He said. “We should feed them.” “Where are we to find bread for this many? A year’s wages would not be enough!” they replied. “What do you have?” came the challenge. Overwhelmed, and no doubt hungry themselves, the disciples looked around for what they had to offer. Then, a young person came forward with five barley loaves and two fish—not much for so many. Yet, on that day, miracles happened.

Then, as now, the people are spiritually hungry. In our always-online yet disconnected world, spiritual hungers abound—for meaning and purpose, to make sense of mystery, for healing, for a word of encouragement, challenge or direction; a hunger for life. He asks the same of us, “*What do you have?*” When we look around for what we can offer, as pastoral ministers, do we feel equally overwhelmed and hungry ourselves? How do we respond in our current cultural milieu? How do we reach the people sitting on the “edge of the hillside” as many surely were that day?

There are hungers in spite of the wonderful and good work that is accomplished through our churches and faith formation efforts. My purpose here is not to comment on current practice but to focus on the innovations needed to develop new practices and approaches that may be needed to feed the spiritually hungry.

Tom Tomaszek is Pastoral Director and co-founder of The Five Loaves. Tom is an author, composer, educator, and liturgical musician. He is a sought after presenter for national and regional events and retreats. Tom’s experience in teaching, pastoral ministry, and music publishing make for presentations that are relevant, insightful, and inspiring. He is versed in a breadth of topics, and has a particular passion for spirituality, prayer, and worship for all ages. Tom holds Masters degrees in both Theological Studies and Education.

The Hillside & The Five Loaves

Consider the Hillside as a metaphor for the spiritual journey. We come there from different life stages and for different reasons, following Christ or following the crowd, steeped in religious practice or avoiding ritual, but all of us are hungry. I once thought that spiritual hunger was a negative condition, and certainly, no one *wants* to be hungry. However, I've come to understand hunger as the doorway. Unless we *are* hungry, the Bread of Life cannot feed us.

As pastoral ministers, we do our best to feed the people on Sundays—when they are there, but what happens *between Sundays* as they move through job, school, community, family, social group, and personal moments of life? Do we have a way to engage them? Inspire them with the Word? Connect them to the Bread of Life?

Wrestling with those questions was the origin of The Five Loaves—a ministry of online and event-based resources to help individuals share with one another the daily bread they have been given, so that others might be fed (www.thefiveloaves.com). We wanted to explore approaches to spirituality and formation for the times between gathered community, and for those individuals who no longer take part in our assemblies. Emerging media provide a wealth of new opportunities to test and develop.

Faith and Media

In the mid-seventies, as I was crafting my master's thesis on the need for visual literacy and related curricula for the local school district, I imagined an evolving culture where our eyes became the primary way we learned and understood the world. McLuhan had defined the agenda: *the medium is the message*. Several years later, MTV and a host of other media innovations pushed us into the

orbit of constant change and related adaptation.

As a youth minister at the time, I knew the power of media to communicate faith issues as I used recorded music (records!) and visual media to augment the weekly sessions whenever appropriate. (Youth ministers always push the envelope!) Published resources never could keep up with the changing landscape of innovation.

Fast-forward to 2013. I fear our efforts in faith formation still have not kept pace with the ways we communicate and learn. Emerging media are not just new *channels*; they also add new *dimensions* to communication, which must be factored in our use. Simply stated, radio added the dimension of sound and the aural landscape to print; television added layers of visual breadth to audio; computers added the depth of worldwide information access to audio-visual media; and social media have added connectivity, creativity and immediacy to audiovisual computing. Have you *seen* what thumbs can do?

What Do You Have to Engage – Inspire – Connect?

Emerging media may be new instruments to proclaim Christ in our own day and age, but new tools take time to learn and integrate into existing efforts. Facebook, YouTube, Twitter, and the “app” generation of smart phones represent a significant opportunity to engage, inspire and connect the faithful on all parts of the Hillside, as well as those who are first arriving and those who have left. Pervasive and persuasive, can we harness their potential to feed the hungry multitudes? We know they are there and searching.

In summer 2012, the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops commissioned the Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate (CARA) to conduct a national poll of adult Catholics to measure their use of new

media. The study offers some significant insights into the potential. (Gray & Gautier).

Three of their findings immediately stand out to me:

- On average, respondents spend 2 hours and 55 minutes online per day (median of 2 hours and 19 minutes).
- More than eight in ten (83 percent) send email at least occasionally (87 percent of those who regularly use an email capable device).
- More than six in ten have a profile on Facebook (62 percent). About one in six has a LinkedIn profile (17 percent). Fifteen percent have profiles on Google+ and 13 percent on Twitter.

Three comments: first, these results are averages across generations. Younger generations, as expected, are significantly higher in each category measured. Second, when you factor in the pace by which people adopt new media, the likely increase in “media presence” is continuously higher. Third, this particular research is from my own denomination, but I propose it would replicate in similar surveys of other religious congregations.

My conclusion: it is no longer sufficient to *wonder* if emerging media hold promise. As good educators have always done, we must pursue how to use the tools at hand. Rather than be overwhelmed, I suggest there are three core tasks that form the basis of a pastoral response. They shape our work and innovation at The Five Loaves.

1. Engage

The rules of engagement have changed. When the only constant is change, the future is always evolving in front of our eyes. In the time that it took me to write this page, I received seven “push” notifications by email, which were available simultaneously on my smart phone and tablet had I been anywhere besides at my desk. When I add

Facebook posts and tweets from “friends” I chose not to check, I could easily have spent an hour being “engaged” by all sorts of messages.

The prime goal of engagement is catching eyes and attention. In our case, we are not trying to bring attention to ourselves, but to invite others to encounter Christ in everyday life and respond to Jesus’ call, “Follow me.” We would do well to take our cue from John the Baptist: *The next day John again was standing with two of his disciples, and as he watched Jesus walk by, he exclaimed, “Look, here is the Lamb of God! The two disciples heard him say this, and they followed Jesus.* (John 1:35-37)

How do we use the new media to engage hungry souls with the Good News of Jesus Christ when we are competing with the myriad and multiplicity of messages coming from all sources? The answer is not to compete, but to complement. The incarnational approach we take should be qualitatively different. Swim with the current and stand out by what we call people to “come and see.”

Strategy One: Create an *engaging online presence*.

The current standard for websites is frequently changing and visually interesting content. Many church websites that I visit, however, are static, first-generation pages that provide essentially the same information as the weekly church bulletin. I might look there to answer a question about meeting times, but not to engage in reflection or formation.

In an effort to provide more than information, some church websites now place links to popular online resource pages. This is a good way to at least expand the information available when visitors come to the site. But there is a qualitative difference between linking to resources and providing content that has a local connection. If the goal is to engage, how can you be in *relationship* with these online pilgrims if you are sending them somewhere else?

Granted, providing new and dynamic website content is a daunting, time-consuming task for already overworked staff members. But what if your website had access to weekly updated, creative, visual content that you didn't have to produce? The Five Loaves is pioneering a subscription service, *Between Sundays InSite™*, that allows churches to embed our weekly video reflections directly on your websites and surround it with local formation opportunities and commentary.

Click here to "see" what I mean: <http://www.sasjlifelongff.com/between-sundays.html>. This is the website of St. Alphonsus-St. John Lifelong Faith Formation, a small, combined parish in southeast Wisconsin. The director is using *Between Sundays* to engage parishioners and other visitors to their website in spiritual reflection. Notice that this page is part of a much larger effort to engage visitors in faith formation.

2. Inspire

The goal of an engaging church website, however, is not just to engage a large number of visitors. Web traffic is important, but the ultimate goal, as true for all ministries, is to transform lives. How can we *inspire* web visitors to live active Christian lifestyles?

Strategy Two: Create an inspiring online presence.

I believe our busy society creates a desire for respite, to come to a quiet place on the Hillside to find inspiration. One of the developments in personal spiritual practice that I have observed in the last number of years is an increase in the use of contemplative prayer forms. Meditation, Taize prayer, labyrinths, the spiritual exercises, *lectio divina* and similar practices are popular especially with the younger generations.

Between Sundays: Spiritual Practices for Everyday Living™, our weekly video reflection, is an opportunity during the week to

contemplate the Christian lifestyle using five practices rooted in the experience of the first disciples. (See Acts 2:42.) Here is a link to how we've explained that development: www.thefivebreads.com/practices-.html.

Between Sundays is an opportunity for *visio divina*.¹ *Visio divina* differs from *lectio divina* in that we are providing video images versus allowing the ear to hear for the heart and mind. These are not random images. We are artistically intentional in the selection and placement, as well as the synchronization to the audio track. When the video is combined with a proclamation of the Scripture that it references, *Between Sundays* has the capacity to evoke images and action through personal reflection. Here is a sample entitled Run to the Cross: <http://thefivebreads.wistia.com/medias/havsdgklgu>.

I utilize *lectio divina* whenever I lead retreats and formation events, and participants respond well to its simplicity and contemplative style. I also see them struggle with attentiveness to the Word when simply listening without a copy to follow along. That's one of the reasons I believe *visio divina* is greatly needed in our time of shortened attention spans and reliance on visual information to engage our consciousness. It seems that when our eyes are not involved, our brains have a more difficult time paying attention.

3. Connect

Jesus drew the multitudes to the Hillside that miracle day. He *inspired* them with his teaching, with stories and parables that *engaged* them in new ways of seeing the world and understanding the Kingdom of God. Finally, he *connected* them with one another, inviting them to sit down to share the simple meal. The disciples facilitated the sharing and the story told is that it all was quite successful—there were twelve baskets left over. We need a similar plan of action for our modern day Hillside.

Strategy Three: Create a social media plan of action.

With an engaging and inspiring website in place, using PUSH notifications by email, Facebook, Twitter and other services lets you alert your “friends and followers” of new content posted. These short burst messages allow you to keep in touch with them in the flow of their days in the natural way that they receive other news and views.

Setting up the church’s presence in these media is not complicated, but does take a strategy and plan of action. The technology is user friendly and designed for easy connections. Easy is good, but coordinating efforts and using best practices are essential to an effective social media plan. You might be asking: where are we going to find the help to make all this work? *Where will we find enough bread to feed this many people?* With the simple gifts of a young person, Jesus miraculously fed the multitudes.

Strategy Four: Involve young people in managing the social media plan.

The strategy worked on the Hillside, and it can work for your congregation. Involve young people already familiar with these methods of communication to assist in the setup and ongoing maintenance of these plans. The ideal team will include elders as well as young people so that a complete, coordinated strategy can emerge.

There are additional benefits of having a social media plan. Imagine not having to depend on a three-minute window of opportunity at the end of weekly services to call attention to important community announcements! Congregation members who are absent that week, or have disconnected from the assembly for some reason still receive communication. Facebook, Twitter and other services are immediate in their delivery and can be updated continuously. Part of a successful strategy for using the social media is preparing regular and timely updates of new information and commentary.

Final Thoughts

Strategy Five: Take action.

By their nature, the new media invite taking an organic approach—start small and build outward. Gathering emails through sign-up Sundays, subscribe a friend or other efforts is a good place to begin if this information isn’t already part of your church census data. Get creative. Get permissions. Get linked to the Body of Christ on your neighborhood Hillside.

My wife, Kimi, and I left our full time jobs to begin The Five Loaves with the courage of two convictions: first, we believe Christ continues to miraculously feed the hungry multitudes through that sharing of daily bread; and, second, we offer our marriage as witness to the mutuality of gifts differing, yet given. Jesus sent disciples out two-by-two to teach and to heal knowing they would need the support of one another.

We want to be your partners in ministry to those on the Hillside. Come and visit us at www.thefivecloaves.com

End Notes

¹ One approach to *visio divina* is using religious icons as the subject of the interaction. (I have also experienced *visio* with photographs and paintings.) However, I am not convinced that the wonderful and ancient art form of icons “translates” to generations visually formed to the rapid eye movement required for television and film. Not to say that still photos and icons can’t be effective, but rather, I wonder if intentional *video* images create a new type of *visio divina* for our times.

Works Cited

Gray, Mark M. and Mary L. Gautier. *Catholic New Media Use in the United States*. Washington, D.C.: Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate (CARA), 2012.
McLuhan, Marshall. *Understanding Media: The Extension of Man*. New York: McGraw Hill, 1964

Methods, Events and Online Resources for Spiritual Growth and Renewal



Between Sundays™

A weekly video reflection on the upcoming scriptures and everyday spirituality.

- Inspiring music, images, and stories;
- Guest artists, songwriters and authors adding their spiritual insights.

[CLICK HERE](#) to sign up for your **free** subscription at www.thefivecloaves.com

Events from The Five Loaves



Toward Faith, Hope and Love: **a Mission for the Year of Faith**

Explores the theological virtues of faith, hope, and love as the foundation of the Christian life.



Between Sundays: **Parish Renewal, Retreat, or Day of Reflection**

Like our health, our spirituality needs daily care to remain life-giving. Between Sundays allows time to examine five spiritual practices rooted in the experience of the first disciples.



Need a Lenten Mission?

Gather disciples together during this powerful season, to reflect, pray, and explore the holy longing for God.

Special pricing for Lent 2013. Call or email for details.

Between Sundays Seasons™

A seasonal resource for **faith-sharing groups** using **Between Sundays™** weekly videos.

- Advent, Lent and Easter/Pentecost.
- Participant pages, leader's guide, session outline and resources.

SPECIAL OFFER: \$99- \$39 per season
Parish pricing available.

Between Sundays InSite™

Place **Between Sundays™** videos directly on your parish website and customize the content of the page for your community.

- Evangelize with new media.
- **Free one-month trial** subscription
- Annual subscription just \$299



The Five Loaves™ was formed by Tom and Kimi Tomaszek, inviting people of faith to open themselves up to the gift of grace, and to make meaning of their experiences of God in everyday life. [Click for more.](#)



The Generosity Project

Linda Staats

Companies spend \$17 billion in advertising each year to reach our kids. The average child sees 25,000-40,000 TV ads each year. Teens spend \$160 billion of their own and parents' money annually; in addition to influencing another \$160 billion of their parent's spending [see www.globalissues.org/article/237/children-as-consumers). In the midst of a culture that tells us what we need and how to spend, where is the voice of our faith? The "Generosity Project" invites reflection and conversation between all ages in our earning, spending, saving, and sharing.

Rev. DanaLee Simon, Pastor of Elim Lutheran Church in Ogden, UT said it well: "After attending the Generosity workshop, I am convinced that I, not the culture, will shape my child's values and attitudes toward spending and giving and saving."

In 2011, the Rocky Mountain Synod, made up of 160 congregations in five states, received one of several grants awarded by the Evangelical Lutheran Church of America (ELCA) to develop creative and innovative approaches to Stewardship. The ELCA initiative, "The Macedonia Project – Your Table is Ready," was inspired by the generous giving of the Macedonian churches for the relief of the saints in Jerusalem (2 Cor. 8.1-7).

The Rocky Mountain Synod's Stewardship Team embraced the initiative, but renamed it, "The Generosity Project—Our Table is Ready." The primary goal of the Generosity Project is to provide a tangible experience that can easily be replicated by groups of congregations or a single faith community. The purpose is to help congregations equip individuals and households, so all may grow in their capacity to recognize and respond to God's abundant grace.

Linda Staats has an M.S. Degree in Human Development and the Family and brings a life span approach to ministry with a passion for empowering all generations for service at home and in the world. She is known for her passion and expertise in the areas of cross generational ministry, milestones, and connecting church and home. She serves on the LACE Board (Lutheran Association of Christian Educators) Linda has served the Rocky Mountain Synod as Assistant to the Bishop for Youth and Household Ministry.

The Project's guiding principles are:

- Generosity is essential to the daily expression of our faith.
- The faith practice of generosity is best formed in households, with the support of the congregation and all generations.
- When values and finances are discussed between people of all ages, trust is built and faith nurtured. The culture of the congregation and understanding of stewardship will begin to change.
- As Christians, our lives, identity and decisions are shaped by God's Story in Jesus.

Congregations in the Rocky Mountain Synod were invited to send teams to a three-hour workshop that was promoted as fun, interactive, and meaningful for all ages. Congregations were prompted to bring staff, leaders from beyond just the Stewardship Committee, various household configurations, and people of all ages and life's stages—from children to older adults. The invitation explained that the participants would be encouraged to duplicate the Generosity Project experience in their own faith communities and households, utilizing the format and resources from the workshop and on the web site.

An opening exercise invites participants of all ages to play a game and experience the joy of giving and receiving. In the end the question is asked, "Who's the winner?" Small groups, intentionally formed with a range of ages in each group, share stories that reflect generational similarities and difference around earning, spending, saving, and sharing. Children as young as seven and adults in their eighties engage with one another. The conversations are lively, entertaining, and informative. Values and

faith are explored during these meaningful interactions.

Doug Cook, a member of the Generosity Project Planning Team from Cheyenne, WY and a workshop leader, commented, "I was fascinated by the interaction between the generations and the sharing of their respective experiences with one another. Asking someone what their first job was and what they saved for are wonderful ways to examine the influences on how and why we give and share. The workshops provided a safe environment for us to examine our financial priorities in the daily living of our faith."

The Generosity Project celebrates the variety of insights from the generations and stories of abundant sharing by households and congregations, both locally and globally. The stories of generosity lead to a growing awareness of God's faithfulness as well as a deeper understanding of our response as God's stewards, regardless of one's age.

Components of the Generosity Project workshop include:

1. Recognition and celebration of all generations present and how each one's approach to spending, saving and sharing is shaped by life experience and place in history
2. Directed small group conversation and story telling between generations
3. Awareness of the narrative of our culture and the narrative of our faith and how the story we believe influences our habits as consumers.
4. Discussion of 2 Corinthians 8:1-7, the story of the people of Macedonia
5. Introduction of Nathan Dungan's 10-10-80 program. (Each participant is given 10 dimes. Sitting at tables by households or in congregational groups, individuals "practice" giving, sharing and saving. The point is to model at church what we encourage people to practice at home.)

6. PowerPoint presentation on local and global ministries happening because of individual and congregational generosity. (This portion may be localized for one's context.)
7. The giving of a 3-slotted piggy bank to each household or participating group. (Thrivent Financial for Lutherans donated the banks for the Rocky Mountain Synod's Generosity project. The workshop manual includes a resource on how to make your own piggy banks.)

(See the outline and overview at end of article.)

"We call it 'Crazy Generosity!'" said Pastor Simon of Elim Lutheran, Ogden, UT. "And we're having fun! After sending four youth and four adults to a 'Generosity Project' three-hour workshop, it was rewarding to see our participants (young and old) put together "Crazy Generosity" events for the congregation. During Advent the team involved all generations in activities and conversations about God's generosity and attitudes about earning, spending, and saving. In Lent, the team followed up with small group conversations about the story of the Prodigal Son and 'crazy generosity.'"

Pastor Simon further explains, "The kids who attended the Generosity Workshop became part of our Stewardship leadership team. They loved being the experts for the night and the ones who knew how to play the games and what the blue pig was all about. They were proud as they helped set up and excited to be the teachers of the folks who had gathered. The design of the Generosity Project was brilliant in that it was accessible to people of all ages. Kids embraced the games, as we expected they would. They also blew us away theologically, which was a beautiful, spirit-filled surprise!"

Staffs and congregational leaders who participated in the Generosity Workshop were

encouraged to incorporate an inter-generational team approach into all areas of ministry planning and implementation, including the creation of the church budget.

After Pastor Dana Peterson and leaders of Shepherd of the Hills Lutheran in Ft. Collins, CO attended a workshop, their stewardship team decided to jump in with both feet, renaming themselves the "Generosity Team." They asked people to share their own generosity stories. Pastor Peterson reported, "The congregation responded with over 40% of pledging households increasing their commitment for 2012 compared to 2011."

Doug Cook describes The Generosity Project as a wonderful gift because it enables congregations to learn from people's individual faith journeys and understand the impact on the giving of one's resources, time, and talents.

Doug further explains, "I think one of the more powerful moments in conducting the Generosity Workshops is hearing how a person's life events impact their understanding of giving. I witnessed people sharing stories unique to their age group (i.e. the depression, the Great Society initiatives, Civil Rights Movement, Vietnam War, 9/11, Hurricane Katrina, Haiti earthquake, two simultaneous wars, the Great Recession) and how those events affected their faith and what it meant to give of themselves and resources to their church and other charities. The Generosity Project provides a means to examine our faith journeys and helps us discern why and how we share with others."

Resourcing for deepened stewardship need not depend on the newest curriculum or reading the latest book, or outside "experts" coming to share their expertise. Rather, a congregation's stewardship goals can be accomplished through conversation around real-life questions and faithful approaches to ministry beginning in households and our faith communities.

In the Road to Emmaus story (Luke 24), it is at the household table where Christ is revealed and recognized, that hearts are warmed for greater sharing and generosity.

In an article written by Nathan Dungan for Luther Seminary's newsletter, "Stewardship for the 21st Century," he writes that an overwhelming majority of people say that they received little or no instruction about money—sharing it, saving it, or spending it. Nathan writes, "Everywhere I go, the answer is the same, which means the primary responsibility for teaching about money most often falls to parents. Therein lie both the problem and the opportunity." He continues, "The unfortunate byproduct of this approach is that most people, unknowingly, cede the narrative of money and values to the culture."

In the Generosity Project workshops we join Nathan in asking, "Who is engaging, educating and equipping our households and young people for current and future financial opportunities and responsibilities?" Imagine the possibilities if congregations intentionally addressed these very real, challenging issues.

When we reclaim and make daily decisions based on our Christian narrative—the stories of a loving God who showers us with abundant grace and forgiveness—the results will be households and faith communities with an increased capacity and generosity to change the world in which we live.

Learn about the Generosity Project

- The Generosity Project workshop design is available to download from the web site of the Rocky Mountain Synod-ELCA. Go to: http://rmselca.org/ministries/stewardship/generosity_project/generosity.htm
- Direct questions about the design of the Generosity Project workshop or details about delivery methods to Linda Staats at: linda@homegrownfaith.net
- If you have questions about the overall Generosity Project Initiative in the Rocky

Mountain Synod, contact Rev. Stephanie Quick Espinoza, Director for Evangelical Mission at: sqespinoza@rmselca.org

Generosity Project Resources

An Asset Builder's Guide to Youth and Money (Search Institute)

A guide for congregations interested in a positive approach to youth and managing money.

www.searchinstitute.org/product_p/0170-w.htm

Biblical Stewardship: Our Duty and Delight (Dr. Mark Allan Powell)

The overarching theme is, "This is good news!" The biblical message of financial stewardship is promising and encouraging. This course features seven 20-minute video sessions on DVD, a comprehensive study guide and participant handouts.

www.selectlearning.org/store/index.php?main_page=product_info&cPath=115&products_id=566

Extravagant Generosity—the Heart of Giving (Abingdon Press)

This is a four-week "campaign" that leads people through the Scriptures and an understanding of financial discipleship in terms of personal faith practice.

www.cokesbury.com/forms/ProductDetail.aspx?pid=940973

Faith Ink Stewardship (Faith Inkubators)

This is a resource for all ages to grow as stewards of time, talents, and treasures. Includes materials for learning and worship plus an in-home connection.

www.faithink.com/Inkubators/stewardship.asp

Kids and Money Milestone (Vibrant Faith Ministries)

The 32 page Milestones Module is intended for first and second graders. It recognizes children and adults as stewards of what God has given to them. Includes a litany for worship, cross-generational events and Four Key activities for the home. Downloadable.

http://store.vibrantfaith.org/product_p/kamm.htm

Living Well: Christian Practices for Everyday Life (LifelongFaith Associates)

Chapter 8 is titled, "Managing Household Life." We are called to manage our money to serve God, our household and the needs of others in the world. There is a companion workbook for children. Free download.

www.lifelongfaith.com/living-well-chapters.html

Make It Simple (ELCA)

An expansive resource to assist congregations in education about simplicity and generosity. Includes resources for worship, sermons, families, at-home, kids activities, all congregational gatherings, DVD's, free downloads and much more. (Also check out your own denominations stewardship resources.)

www.elca.org/Growing-In-Faith/Discipleship/Stewardship.aspx

Money Sanity Solutions (Nathan Dungan)

A guide to help your family build healthy money habits, as silence is not an effective teacher. Designed to bring families together to build new skills, counteract hyper-consumerism and develop healthy money habits linked to their values. Has a comprehensive web site.

www.sharesavespend.com

Stewardship for the 21st Century (Luther Seminary)

This is a vast, comprehensive center with print, web and video resources to support Stewardship in congregation and homes. Sign up for the newsletter. Check out the three intergenerational lessons on generosity.

www.luthersem.edu/stewardship

Books, Articles, & Research

Holy Currencies. Eric H.F. Law. St Louis: Chalice Press, 2013.

This book broadens our understanding as a steward and that money is not the only currency your ministry needs.

www.chalicepress.com/Holy-Currencies-P1202.aspx

Children as Consumers (Global Issues)

This information is a must read if one needs to be convinced of the need of the voice and role of our faith communities to walk along side

our households on what it means to be God's stewards.

www.globalissues.org/article/237/children-as-consumers

The Developmental Stages of Generosity (Unitarian Universalist Association)

There is much to be learned from the theories of human moral, social-emotional and faith development when it comes to understanding one's capacity for generous behavior. Parallels are drawn between James Fowler's Stages of Faith and the development of generosity.

www.uua.org/finance/fundraising/generosity/adults/185452.shtml

GENERATION G

This web site captures the growing importance of 'generosity' as a leading societal and business mindset. Sharing a passion and receiving recognition have replaced 'taking' as the new status symbol.

<http://trendwatching.com/trends/generationg>

The Generosity of Spirit through Myths and Folktales. (Points of Light Institute)

A cross-cultural, inter-faith approach to generosity that explores the origins of tales from around the world and connects the themes of giving and philanthropy.

<http://learningtogive.org/resources/folktales/plans.asp>

Science of Generosity (University of Notre Dame)

The Science of Generosity initiative brings together diverse approaches in order to create a field for the study of generosity. It supports, conducts and shares scientific research on the sources, manifestations, and consequences of generosity.

<http://generosityresearch.nd.edu>

Will Our Children Be Stewards? (The Episcopal Church)

With our children receiving 3,000 messages a day urging them to spend, where is the voice in the village inviting them to share? Offers specific suggestions for stewardship ideas with children.

http://archive.episcopalchurch.org/stewardship/109299_107069_ENG_HTM.htm



GENEROSITY PROJECT OVERVIEW

The Rocky Mountain Synod – ELCA

This is a three-hour workshop designed to introduce the Generosity Project to congregations. Detailed descriptions for preparation, set-up and all activities are in the binder and available to download.

http://www.rmselca.org/ministries/stewardship/generosity_project/generosity.htm

As People Arrive:

- Put stickers on nametags to match one's generation. Display Generation List with colored dots attached as a guide.
- Option: Make a pig out of a milk carton as people wait for workshop to begin.

Welcome and Brief Overview

Brief Description of Generosity Project and Goals:

- Celebrate the generosity of God made known in Bible study, prayer and intergenerational conversation, and expressed by individuals, households and in corporate financial giving.
- Grow an individual, household and congregational spirit of giving.

Overview and Objectives of this Time Together:

- To experience an intergenerational process that can be replicated in the congregations and households of those participating in the workshop.
- To return to the congregation with a language and resources in which to talk about, teach, model and practice the gift of generosity and giving in one's daily life.

Making the Case for Why The Household is the Center for Faith Practice

Objective: To recognize the world's message and marketing to our children and households.

- **Who is the Winner?** Give & Get Game. This sets up the case for "Why" the household is the center for faith formation.
- **Going Deeper** A look at consumer statistics & the Narrative for our Faith.

Circle of Giving: From Generation to Generation

Objective: To experience intergenerational conversation regarding giving and generosity as a faith practice in the household and at church.

- **Circle of Blessing**
- **Open scripture. Join the conversation.** Who were these Macedonians?

Presentation of Goals & Outcomes

Objective: To learn the history behind the Generosity Project and its goals and outcomes.

- **Power Point** and discussion.
- **Celebrate** examples of local & global ministry.

Here I Stand

Objective: To identify past experiences and individual opinions related to generosity and giving and to engage in further conversation about values and faith that have shaped one's approach to finances.

- **Continuum Activity**

Household Faith Practice: Secrets of the Blue Pig

Objective: To practice the 10-10-80 plan.

- **Pig and Dimes:** Around tables, the practice of saving, sharing and saving.

Taking It Home: Q's, Action Plan and Resources

Objective: To begin creating a plan for sharing one's experience with members of the congregation.

- **A Tale of Two Tables:** Advantages of creating an intergenerational stewardship team.
- **Covenant:** Implications and expectations.
- **Resources:** Print, people, web, and networks.
- **Action Plan:** See. Think. Act. Celebrate. Reflect on the workshop experience and begin to plan on how to incorporate the Generosity Project into the life of the congregation and households.

Closing Litany: Celebration of Generosity



The Center for Spiritual Resources

Robbin Whittington

This is the story of how one small center in the mountains of Western North Carolina birthed an open-source electronic portal where anyone can find and share trusted resources for their spiritual journey and lifelong faith formation. The Center for Spiritual Resources (CSR) was founded in 2005 as the Centers for Christian Studies, a ministry partnership of the Cathedral of All Souls in Asheville, NC, and the Episcopal Diocese of Western North Carolina. The idea was that instead of having to travel to Asheville in order to benefit from valuable resources and programs, the Center would bring those resources to them.

From its inception, the Center had partnership in its DNA as the catalyst for its creation and continued growth. For more than a year, at the invitation from the Dean of the Cathedral, Todd Donatelli, Archdeacon Genia Dowdeswell polled clergy throughout the diocese about their interest in a center of this kind. Our new Bishop, Porter Taylor, was deeply supportive of the initiative, and after many conversations and much discernment, the Center was born.

The focus of the Center's mission was to provide opportunities to encourage people in their faith, to challenge them to live a life that reflects the vows of their Baptismal Covenant, and to guide them in developing a deeper understanding of themselves, their community and church, and the world.

The Center created and delivered resources to the far corners of our geographically diverse diocese. Some of the initial programs and resources included a website that listed programs, events, and spiritual directors; days of discernment; teaching days with the Bishop; retreats and workshops; pilgrimages; going deeper groups; a two-year "The Art of Spiritual Companionship" program; and Parker Palmer's "Circles of Trust" program.

When the founding executive director, the Rev. Canon Charlotte Cleghorn, announced her retirement in early 2010, I was hired in part because of my belief that the Center was uniquely

Robbin Whittington is Executive Director of the Center for Spiritual Resources (TheCSR.org) in Asheville North Carolina. She also owns and manages R. Brent and Company, which she established in 1993 as a publishing and consulting company, producing and publishing a wide array of books and resources for enrichment, education, and inspiration. Robbin teaches "Google Dash" training courses for seniors and middleagers ranging in skill levels from, "How do you turn this thing on?" to, "How can I refine the use of technology for greater effectiveness in work and life?"

positioned to become a clearinghouse for enriching programs, resources, and connections, both within and beyond our diocesan borders. To become a true hub for life that connects people with the other people, programs, and resources that are searching for. In order to continue to grow more fully into that expanded focus and mission, we changed the name to the Center for Spiritual Resources.

Remaining true to the spirit in which the center was created and those early days of conversation, discernment, and invitation, I began to reach out to people across our diocese to let them know that we were there to help them find resources for their spiritual journeys and lifelong formation. I connect with the community via an active presence on Facebook, Twitter, Google+, Pinterest, and LinkedIn. I also serve on five diocesan committees in order to make connections, and to ensure that people have as many ways as possible to benefit from the Center's resources.

As more and more people responded to our invitation, I began searching for trusted resources and was amazed by the seemingly endless array of valuable resources I discovered. It quickly became apparent that we needed to shift our focus from being a center where resources were created to a center devoted to collecting, curating, and sharing trusted resources that were already available.

Now we need to answer the questions: "How do we know who needs any particular resource?" and, "How can we share all of these great resources with people no matter where they live and worship?"

Those questions inspired one of CSR's most innovative and ambitious projects to date: the creation of an online Resource Portal—a collaborative open-source electronic portal created specifically to connect people with resources and programs for their spiritual journey and lifelong formation.

We spent 18 months creating a portal whose appearance and language were inviting, a portal that offered resources that were easy to find, easy to share, and easy to use. A jargon-free portal that invites all who are seeking spiritual resources is symbolic of what it will look like for us to live into what it means to be church in this new era.

The Portal lives on the CSR website (<http://thecsr.org>) and organizes resources into five main categories: Church Life & Ministry, Life Purpose & Career, Money & Meaning, Spiritual & Personal Growth, and Home & Hearth. Each main section opens into a wealth of resources that can be explored further.

The best thing about the Resource Portal is that it's a collaborative effort that relies on input from the people who use it. The portal provides a database of existing resources, but ultimately, it encourages others to add their own knowledge of resources to the mix.

From any page on the portal, visitors can submit a resource that they've found valuable. Expert curators will review and publish all resources that meet the site's submission guidelines.

The importance of this dimension cannot be overstated. Where would YouTube be if only a few people were responsible for loading all of the resources? The power comes through a community of people committed to sharing ideas and helping link others to valuable resources.

We knew we were onto something spirited because of the immediate and very positive response we received to the portal, and because, for it to live into its highest potential of service as a vibrant, trusted resource, the scope and work far exceeded one person or organization's ability to manage.

A real turning point in our journey came in early 2011 through collaboration and partnership. I was invited to participate on a panel to discuss resource centers and the 21st century. It was there I met Dr. Lisa Kimball, Director of the Center for the Ministry of

Teaching (CMT) at Virginia Theological Seminary, and began a conversation around the vital need to collaborate around an electronic portal like the one I introduced. Those early conversations culminated in a vibrant partnership between CMT and CSR to help vet, categorize, load, and share trusted resources via the electronic portal on the CSR website.

At the Episcopal Church’s General Convention in 2012, CSR debuted the portal and the partnership with VTS’s Center for the Ministry of Teaching (CMT). Many who saw the portal expressed appreciation and hope for its potential to impact the lives and faith journeys of many. We made new friends and partners in ministry and came home with more than 125 people and organizations who expressed great interest and a desire to both support and use the portal.

Late in 2012, CSR joined CMT in supporting the Episcopal Digital Formation Hub Initiative (EDFHI) by sharing our portal prototype. EDFHI is seeking a grant in order to “establish an Episcopal Digital Formation Hub (the Hub), with both an English-language and Spanish-language site, that will curate and offer quality resources to Christian educators and around which those in the ministry of Christian formation will gather.”

CSR is very excited by the many creative ways we each can fully honor how we are being called: the EDFHI to create a robust, trusted hub for Episcopal Formation Resources; and CSR to offer a more ecumenical portal for those who are hungry and searching.

Google analytic search statistics show that millions of people are searching for answers on the Internet, and we are providing an easy-to-navigate way to find trusted resources.

Average Global Google Monthly Search Results

God	55,600,000
What is Faith	9,140,000
Christian Faith	165,000
Christian Church	1,220,000

Church	37,200,000
Spirituality	450,000
Personal Growth	60,500
Career	83,100,000
Life Purpose	165,000
Episcopal	1,220,000
Episcopal Belief	6,600
The Episcopal Church	550,000

This latest refinement of the website represents our efforts to take the portal to the next level to offer a more effective and more enjoyable user experience. This new design will offer users a clean, intuitive model for exploring any of the resource categories.

We are making this road as we travel it, but the portal, through an open-source platform model for sharing and partnership, can give life, support, build, and help grow The Episcopal Church and other institutions in a way that’s fresh, relevant, and sustainable.

Visit the Center for Spiritual Resources Website: <http://thecsr.org>.



Vision for e-resource portal: In collaboration with expert curators, Christian educators, and other partners, to provide an inviting portal for those seeking trusted resources for their spiritual journey and lifelong formation.

Average global Google monthly search results analytics for the following:

- God: 55,600,000
- Faith: 9,140,000
- What is Faith: 9,140,000
- Christian Faith: 165,000
- Christian Church: 1,220,000
- Church: 37,200,000
- Spirituality: 450,000
- Personal Growth: 60,500
- Career: 83,100,000
- Life Purpose: 165,000

the entire portal is formation

Average global Google monthly search results analytics for the following:

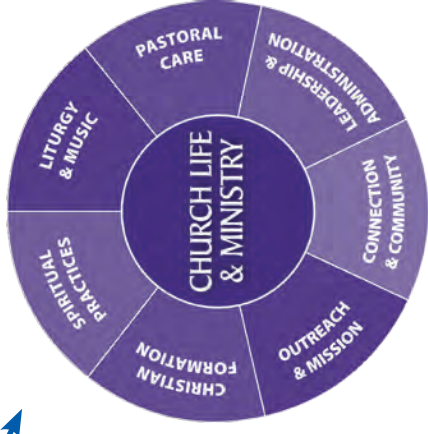
- Episcopal: 1,220,000
- Episcopal Belief: 6,600
- The Episcopal Church: 550,000
- Adult Faith Formation: 390 (no denomination specified, so for all denominations)
- Lifelong Faith Formation: 16 (less than 10 if request exact words)
- (no results for “Episcopal formation”)
- (no results for “Lifelong Christian formation”)
- Episcopal Faith: 1,900 (only 20 results; all others 100+ results)

Welcoming the Stranger

- This multi-faceted, jargon-free portal serves as an inviting entry point for the millions who are already seeking resources for their spiritual journey and lifelong formation and are having to trust Google search results for trusted resources.
- With this portal, seekers will find many of the same resources that are loaded under “Lifelong Christian Formation,” but will find these trusted resources because they are offered a way in that is easy to navigate and is inviting.
- From any page on the portal, anyone can submit a resource that they’ve found valuable. We have expert curators who will review and publish all resources that meet our guidelines. The importance of this dimension cannot be overstated. Where would youtube be if only a few people were responsible for loading all of the resources?
- This portal, through an open-source platform model for sharing and partnerships, can give life, support, build, and help grow The Episcopal Church and other institutions in a way that’s fresh, relevant, and sustainable.



potential millions finding TEC





Good News People

Katherine Feely, SND

Getting into one of the boats, the one belonging to Simon, Jesus asked Simon to put out a short distance from the shore. Then Jesus sat down and taught the crowds from the boat. After he had finished speaking, he said to Simon, “Put out into deep water and lower your nets for a catch.” Simon said in reply, “Master, we have worked hard all night and have caught nothing, but at your command I will lower the nets.” (Luke 5:3-5)

“First, set the hook.” “It doesn’t matter how fancy your equipment is or how attractive your lure appears,” says pro angler Mike Auten. “If you don’t set the hook you’re not going to catch anything. Setting the hook properly is more than just a yank on the rod. The hook-set actually starts the process, the act of tightening the line and reeling sets the hook.” The Gospels are replete with fishing stories and metaphors, but didn’t include this tidbit of advice. This advice appears in the opening lines of an expert fishing guide online. These same words, “first set the hook,” may not appear in Scripture but are certainly relevant when it comes to designing innovative programs to meet the faith formation needs of today’s adults. First, set the hook.

How does one first set the hook properly when it comes to faith formation? In the case of the *Good News People* program developed by JustFaith Ministries in Louisville, KY, setting the hook meant gaining a clear sense of the current needs and realities of parishes in order to respond with a creative and dynamic new program.

Jack Jezreel, founder and president of JustFaith Ministries knew from his experience and exposure to parishes around the country that there was a clear need to connect the gathering mission of the parish with the sending mission of the Gospel. Jack’s driving question was, “How do parishes move from only gathering to gathering and sending forth?” He noted, “The Gospel and the Second Vatican Council both suggest that parishes should be very deliberate not only about gathering, which they currently do very well, but also about the sending, which is in some

Katherine Feely, SND is currently developing and launching a new program the “Good News People” Project at JustFaith Ministries. She is a Sister of Notre Dame from Cleveland, Ohio and has a B.S. in Accounting and Economics and a Masters in Theology from Boston College. Prior to coming to JustFaith Ministries in October 2011, Sr. Katherine served six years as the Director of the “Education for Justice” program (www.educationforjustice.org) at the Center of Concern in Washington, D.C. and has experience in the fields of theology, education, faith formation, and pastoral programming.

way still rather undeveloped, especially in terms of Catholic social teaching. The parishes that are energizing and life-giving have recognized this intrinsic link between the inner journey and the outer journey, between spirituality and active engagement in the world.” Jack recognized that something more was needed than when it came to helping parishioners make this link in order to grasp and embrace a deeper understanding of discipleship in the world today. A new program on engaged discipleship was the result.

Before Leaving the Shore

Jack’s insight and intuition were affirmed and quantified by Pierre Hegy in his 2011 book, *Wake Up Lazarus! On Catholic Renewal*. Here Hegy summarized some of the current research on Catholicism and parish life and identified some of the realities that supported the development of a new program focusing on discipleship. Four key points which influenced the program design are summarized as follows:

1. According to Gallup only 19% of Catholics are engaged parishioners.
2. Involvement brings greater satisfaction, social consciousness and sense of togetherness.
3. Christ-centeredness is the key to spiritual growth.
4. Religious education can be transformed when spiritual growth and outreach are integrated into a program, when faith is connected with action.

With the validation and support of experience confirmed by research, the program design of *Good News People* proceeded to integrate those elements that build small communities, foster deeper faith and transformation, and lead outward to active engaged discipleship. Heeding the research as well as responding to the various

invitations of U.S. Catholic bishops in documents like, *Communities of Salt and Light, and Go Make Disciples*, it became clear that this new program must teach discipleship to produce disciples, hence, *Good News People*.

Charting the Course

Discipleship is the starting point of turning faith into action and connecting *gathering* with *sending*. It is the focus for a powerful, compelling call to an engaged life: a call away from routine, away from frustration, to new purpose and meaning. By its nature, it carries with it the dynamic of *being sent* to bring the Gospel vision to the world. With that in mind, the *Good News People* program was designed to address the following questions “What does it truly mean to respond to Christ’s call to follow him as a disciple in today’s world?” and, “How am I, and how are we, being called *and sent* to be good news for others?”

The *Good News People* program familiarizes participants with the biblical witness of Jesus. It explores the richness of the Catholic faith in a variety of dynamic ways that honor the hungers of the soul, the needs of adult learners, the competing demands of busy people, the dynamism of prayer and reflection in small communities, and the wisdom that emerges from listening deeply to the experiences of daily life.

The *Good News People* program is a parish-wide invitation to explore the journey of faith together as a community of disciples. It engages prayer, sacred Scripture, discussion and sharing, inspirational readings and reflections, Church teaching, “good news” stories of faith and the cultivation of virtue. The program DVD features stories of real people who are living their faith in ordinary but inspiring and hope-filled ways. After each story, expert theologians and commentators connect the story to our faith tradition and the theme of the specific session.

The purpose of the program is to communicate hope, love, and possibilities

found in a faithful commitment to the Gospel to be “Good News to the poor.” It is a hope-filled and enriching process to explore the message of Christ in order to proclaim Christ anew.

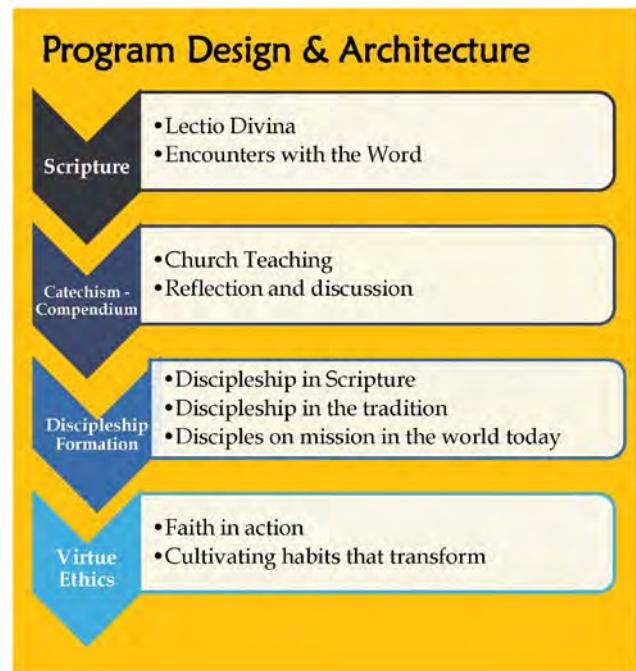
The goals of the program are to:

- *Explore* the call to discipleship and the power of community through prayer, reflection, and action.
- *Learn* more about the richness of the Catholic faith through Scripture, the catechism, and Church teaching.
- *Find* renewed hope in living the Gospel and putting faith into action.
- *Foster* vibrant parish communities alive with the Spirit and mission of Christ.

The major elements of the program include an opening plenary session, 7 sessions in the fall, an immersion experience, 7 sessions in the spring, and a closing plenary session and missioning service.

The *Good News People* program engages the head and heart along with the hands and feet, as it seeks to build the bonds community, makes essential connections between Scripture and tradition, fosters a deeper understanding of the faith and the demands of discipleship, and leads to vibrant parishes that bring to life Christ’s mission to the world.

Currently, JustFaith Ministries is piloting the program in 25 parishes around the country to test and evaluate the content and process. Refinements will be made based on feedback from pilot participants before the national launch in late summer 2013.



Putting Out into Deep Water

In Luke 5:3-5, Jesus tells Simon to put out into deep water and lower his nets. Jesus knows Simon and the other disciples are weary from their labor. He knows they are discouraged and lacking a clear sense of effectiveness and yet he tells them to go deeper. Jesus is seeking disciples who do not give in to discouragement but engage again and again, listening and responding to the call as it is revealed.

Likewise, the *Good News People* program seeks to attend to the deeper hungers that are part of every life. There is holiness and hunger in every life waiting to be noticed and heard. There is power in being present to God and to one another. There is challenge in being the light of Christ for others.

We are the only Gospel most people ever hear. We become Good News when we come together in small and large communities of faith. The Spirit of Jesus becomes a real, felt presence among us as we break open our lives and feed each other with our stories and struggles. We become the body of Christ to God’s people, when we welcome and connect

with “Christ in disguise”—God’s people who are excluded, exploited and suffering.

Sent Out Together with a Message of Hope

Good News takes many forms and can be seen in the ways in which the love of God and love of neighbor are one seamless act of love. The unbreakable bond between love and justice is stressed by Pope Benedict XVI in *Caritas in Veritate*. Love and justice are needed to bring the vision of the Kingdom of God to life.

This faith formation experience is an invitation to see the connection between love and justice and to seek out good news in places throughout the community where one can encounter the power of faith, hope and love in action. *Good News People* offers a time of being attentive whole-heartedly to finding the ways in which the kingdom vision is unfolding in the present and respond to the invitation to be part of its unfolding.

The point of the program is to offer an experiential reflection on how we can each be a bearer of light and hope for one another, especially for those most in need and most vulnerable.

It is our hope that this experience will be a source of ongoing reflection on the many ways we are called and sent to be good news for each other. We hope that through the experience participants will come to know, at the deepest level and in every circumstance and trial, that they are the ones who must bear Christ and **be** Christ in the world today. As disciples, the primary mission is to bring the light of Christ to everyone we meet.

Communities Transformed

The process of transformation begins by heeding the wisdom of good fishermen, “First, set the hook.” As every good fisherman knows, it is not about appearances, but what

lies deep below the surface that matters. A good fisherman is known by his catch. Good disciples are known by how they put their faith into action. By forming disciples in the faith, the ultimate hope of the *Good News People* program lies in inspiring renewed passion for and engagement in the Church’s social mission and connecting *gathering* with *sending*.

Stories of Transformation

(From the pilot parishes)

Before Good News People, my relationship with God was often relegated to a weekly mass and times of need. My experience with Good News People has brought my relationship with God into my every day and caused me to reevaluate what it means to be a child of God. No longer is “just enough” good enough. I am now challenged to get uncomfortable, do more, and create change to build the Kingdom of God, all of which has worked to make me a happier, more fulfilled person. The relationships created by this small group have created a support system that will no doubt last long beyond this program.

Jacque Kelnhofer

St. Mary Parish, Hales Corners, WI

The Good News People program proved to be an effective tool for deepening adult faith formation in our parish. The program’s use of discussion, personal reflection, journaling and prayer, while incorporating the ancient practice of Lectio Divina were truly mind-expanding. The regular reference to the Catechism of the Catholic Church helped our parishioners deepen their knowledge of Catholic tradition. Overall, personal relationships with God and each other, not only within our parish community, but with a clearer awareness of how to be disciples of Christ in the world were the obvious results. It is an experience not

unlike having taken a walk with two other dejected friends on a dusty road leading past the outskirts of Jerusalem, trying to understand the events of the past few days just after the first Easter. Then the raw awe of realizing you have just encountered the Risen Jesus during your journey became a life-giving reality (Luke 24:13-35)! What renewed Christian love and zeal it brings!

Hortense Bradley
St. Jerome Parish, Los Angeles, CA

In my role as pastor, I see it as my responsibility to use the charisms that I have been blessed with to work with the

inspiration of the Holy Spirit to gather, form, send, and nourish the parishioners of my parish, so that they will actively choose to become disciples of Christ. To become a disciple of Jesus has to be a conscious decision on the part of a person and can only be made if given knowledge, experiences that enlighten, and a sense of community. The Good News People program provides these and I am very grateful to have this great program to challenge the people of my parish to respond to Jesus' invitation "to come and follow me."

Fr. Kevin Downey, O.F.M.
St. Francis of Assisi Parish, Triangle, VA

Good News People Program
www.goodnewspeople-jfm.org

Just Faith Ministries
www.justfaith.org



Can a Congregation Imagine ‘Something New’?

Karen Gieseke

The church council annual retreat agenda and conversation included the expected business items: calendar planning, stewardship drive, building maintenance, and budget issues. But an unplanned and unexpected conversation began. The dialogue turned to Sunday School and included the challenges of recruiting and retaining teachers, the children’s unpredictable attendance, the weariness of those attempting to lead the program, and the honest but unspoken question of “Is it worth it?”

This conversation is occurring in church settings across the country. Whether at a council retreat, a committee planning meeting, a weekly staff conversation, or among the volunteers committed to nurturing the faith of children at the expense of nurturing their own faith, the same questions continue to surface. Where are the families? Will the children’s attendance last after Christmas? How can we recruit energized teachers committed to a schedule? And most importantly, is God’s story being heard and experienced in a way that fosters a growing and rooted faith, and an identity as a child of God that is known and lived?

The Spirit and Culture of Youth Ministry names the faith of the whole congregation as one of four elements in exemplary youth ministry, asserting “. . . it is the culture of the whole church that is most influential in nurturing youth of vital Christian faith” (Martinson et al., 14). It is the attitudes, behaviors, and customs of the whole Body of Christ, all people of all ages, that is needed in planting, growing, and nurturing Christian faith. The stories of *all* validate both purpose and identity within God’s family, whether young or old. “. . . care of children as practice of faith transforms us adults by summoning us to be committed to the well-being of children—not just our own but all children—as an essential dimension of the common good of the human family” (Miller-McLemore, xv). Our faith gives witness to God’s story throughout life’s journey, and doesn’t begin and end with specific benchmarks—or age delineations—on life’s timeline. But many ministry programs draw lines between age groups, imitating North

Karen Gieseke has a Master of Arts degree in Children, Youth & Family Ministry from Luther Seminary. She currently is the Children, Youth & Family Ministry Coordinator for the Southeastern Minnesota Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.

American culture which employs age to guide whether one is “in or out,” including movie ratings, restaurant menus, and purchasing discounts. This same attitude, behavior, and custom in congregations reflects current culture and “causes those in our churches not to want to be with other generations because they have been told they don’t need to be” (Beckwith, 132). But the model and practice of separating from each other and each other’s stories has led to a place where Christian identity and a maturing Christian faith are on shaky ground.

So can we imagine “something else” other than what our current culture offers our families and congregations? “What if we began to live as people who believe what we preach—that Jesus is Lord, that his life, death and resurrection binds our futures with his, and that the kingdom of God is at hand. . . a community that embodies the world as God intends it to be?” (Root, 212). Some congregations are doing just that, bringing together the cloud of witnesses of all ages. The above-mentioned council retreat resulted in a brave and bold decision. The council leadership decided to “cancel” the current Sunday School model for a year and try “Something Else”. They believed in the gift of community and the richness in telling and sharing stories, and understood the current program struggled with both sustainability and rooted faith formation. So they began a journey together, and invited the congregation along to try “Something Else.” Grace Lutheran Church in Waseca, MN experienced a year of risk, reward, opportunity, and promise (www.wasecagrace.lutheran.com).

An organic team of leaders, most in their 30s and 40s, created weekly intergenerational experiences paired with the narrative lectionary stories from the worship texts, tying together conversations and experiences each week, and named these opportunities *Something Else*. An example of this pairing developed within the Passover story, as brainstorming conversations explored the

Passover text related to the Gospel story of Jesus’ dialogue with the disciples “that from now on his blood would be enough.” The life-giving words and example through God’s story evolved into the opportunity to hold a community blood drive, something the church had never done.

Through collaboration with the Red Cross, a community wide life-giving experience unfolded. Children and adults worked side-by-side, as city residents who were not church members, gave generously of the gift of life. The men’s Bible study and the women’s group came alongside the younger families from Grace Lutheran and all joined together with the *Something Else* Team in the planning and oversight of the blood drive. Volunteers from multiple ages joined hands at complementary activity stations which focused on assembling personal health care, baby care, and school supply kits.

Coincidentally, the same day as the event was New Member Day at Grace Lutheran. So rather than the usual “brunch” experience, the new members joined in, shoulder to shoulder, with all ages in this life-giving opportunity, which originated in God’s story in Egypt, continued through the words of Jesus at the Last Supper, and now offered life to people today.

How did doing *Something Else* affect the congregation? After the blood drive experience, one young boy from Grace Lutheran was heard asking “When are we were going to do something like that again?” An older woman from the women’s group shared in an email, “Thanks for letting me be a part of the team,” and a church council member, reflecting back on this year of doing *Something Else*, said his favorite experience was the blood drive ministry.

Could ‘Something Else’ be Imagined?

Confirmation is celebrated within many Christian congregations and most frequently

designed for youth. The tradition of this ministry runs deep and is often a cornerstone, or benchmark, in faith. Unfortunately, current culture seems to hear the message of a “graduation” of sorts, away from the Christian community rather than an “entering into” the community. In response, variations in content delivery and activities have been added over the years to create meaningful opportunities seeking to “root” one’s faith, rather than complete it. But findings reported through studies suggest a frail faith foundation in our youth as “. . . adolescent religious and spiritual understanding and concern seem to be generally very weak. Most U.S. teens have a difficult to impossible time explaining what they believe, what it means, and what the implications of their beliefs are for their lives.” (Smith, 262).

At Peace Lutheran Church in Eyota, MN, “Livin’ the Faith” is offered as the *something else* for a traditional confirmation framework (www.peaceeyota.org). Peace Lutheran, a mission start church, had few if any congregational traditions or history. Many in the community had little or no expectation of how specific ministry programs should unfold. The initial attempt at a “traditional” confirmation model resulted in telling many of the participants they had “failed” to meet the requirements, a message in direct opposition to the message of grace which is foundational to Christian faith. The result was re-imagining *something else* for these steps and moments on the faith journey.

Peace Lutheran melded the current congregational culture with several foundational blocks from another church’s confirmation experience, and launched “Livin’ the Faith.” This opportunity, open to all from 9th grade through adults of any age, offers a nine-week journey rooted in reflecting on faith with the outcome focused on the ability to state “what I believe.” Additionally, for anyone less than eighteen years of age, a parent or mentor is a partner in the weekly 90-minute conversation which focuses on a

theme and invites a weekly writing reflection that asks, “Why does this matter to me?”

As Livin’ the Faith evolved, adaptations resulted including deeper Biblical exploration through the reading of both Genesis and Luke, and the creation of more space for intentional and personal conversation as the group size grew. Large group reflective conversation each week became increasingly challenging as more people joined together. To adapt and listen more intently, the pastor now invites the participants to text him their questions as they dialogue with their parent/mentor, providing space for more voices to be heard and engaged with during the conversation. The adaptive innovation resulted in an unprecedented willingness for transparency about one’s faith and the questions arising. The nine-week experience culminates in an optional Commitment Sunday celebration. Peace Lutheran’s pastor candidly admits he’s not sure of the long term outcomes, but is confident the experience invites a variety of narratives to journey together and calls the individuals to respond with what they believe about their own personal, Christian faith and relationship with God.

The freedom to imagine *something else* resonates throughout God’s story, beginning with Creation and moving God’s people into the innovations of the 21st century. The willingness to imagine *something else* in the here and now “. . . allows us to wait with confidence, to name our anxieties without fear, and to make room for new life and possibilities as Christ works, unseen, to usher us into an unknown future. . . and the future belongs to Christ. Fear not.” (Root, 217)

Into what future *something else* might God be inviting the *faith of your whole congregation*?

Works Cited

- Beckwith, Ivy. *Formational Children's Ministry*. Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2010.
- Martinson, Roland, Wes Black, and John Roberto. *The Spirit and Culture of Youth Ministry*. St. Paul: EYM Publishing, 2010.
- Miller-McLemore, Bonnie J. *In the Midst of Chaos-Caring for Children as Spiritual Practice*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2007.
- Root, Andrew and Kenda Creasy Dean, *The Theological Turn in Youth Ministry*. Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2011.
- Smith, Christian and Melinda Lundquist Denton, *Soul Searching-The Religious and Spiritual Lives of American Teenagers*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2005.

FAITH FORMATION RESOURCES

Like church, your home is also your sanctuary. Vibrant Faith Ministries wants to help you connect faith and home by giving you easy and accessible ways to become more intentional in your faith practices.

Our **ONLINE RESOURCE**, VibrantFaith@Home, has all of the resources you need to build a strong Christian household. Our goal is to equip and empower families to:

- **TALK** with each other about their faith
- **PRAY** together in ways that are comfortable and comforting
- **RITUALIZE** the important milestones—no matter how big or small
- **REACH OUT** in service and support to others in the community



Scan the QR code or visit
vibrantfaithathome.org
for unlimited access to our
FREE family resources—
and so much more!





Renaming and Reclaiming a Faith Practice

Debbie Streicher

In Scripture, God renamed Abram and reclaimed Abraham with an envisioned purpose to be the father of all nations. Jacob was renamed and reclaimed Israel, father of the twelve tribes of Israel. When God renamed and reclaimed, He had an intended purpose. In our ministries when we reflect on some of our existing resources and programs, is it possible by simply renaming them and reclaiming them as vital faith formation tools that we can bring new life, en”theo”asm, and visioning to them?

The FAITH₅

Originally designed as the FINK₅—a 5-step outline to be modeled every time small groups met in the congregation and used as a faith formation tool in the home, Faith Inkubators renamed the process the FAITH₅ in 2008. This provided the innovative edge needed to bring the focus back to what was really important. Renaming this faith practice, highlighting it in all the resources, and being intentional about facilitating the 5 step process has proven to be an instrumental move. It revealed this core piece to be an essential and effective faith formation tool for all ages.

Why FAITH₅? Because the acronym, Faith Acts In The Home, gives meaning and value to the process.

- **Faith.** It’s all about providing tools for the formation of faith.
- **Acts.** The name of the book in the Bible that connects the Gospels to the rest of the New Testament. In the early church, they met in homes, dedicated themselves to the Apostles’

Debbie Streicher is Project Coordinator for Milestones at Vibrant Faith Ministries and also serves as an Associate Consultant. She is President for LACE, the Lutheran Association of Christian Educators, and has served LACE in the role of Region 8 Representative and VP for Communications. Over the past 25 years, she has facilitated, overseen, organized, and developed faith formation programs from infants through adults. She worked intricately with Faith Inkubators resource development and has consulted and led events for congregations using these materials for over 15 years.

teaching and prayer, and shared everything. Those “house churches” changed the world once before. It is possible they could do it again. In addition, when used as a noun, the word acts is defined as something someone has done or the action of carrying something out. The focus for this faith practice is to take intentional action in every household and set an expectation that it is done.

- **In The Home.** A reflection on Deuteronomy 6:6: *“Keep these words which I command you today in your hearts. Recite them to your children. Talk about them when you are at home and when you are away, when you lie down and when you rise...”*

The **FAITH5** steps are: *Share, Read, Talk, Pray, and Bless.* The **FAITH5** connects church to home, faith to life, and parents to children in a powerful way.

1. **Share** highs and lows of the day.
2. **Read** a verse from the Bible.
3. **Talk** about how the Bible verse relates to highs and lows.
4. **Pray** for one another’s highs and lows, for your family, and for the world.
5. **Bless** one another by tracing the sign of the cross on one another’s forehead or palm as a reminder that we belong to God and to one another.

(**Video Presentation:** Rich Melheim introduces the origin, philosophy and potential impact of the Faith5 at www.faithink.com/inkubators/f5.asp.)

Following this simple outline establishes both a tradition and a ritual for passing on the faith in the congregation and the home. David Anderson of Vibrant Faith Ministries has identified four keys for practicing faith. They are **Caring Conversations, Devotions, Service, and Ritual and Traditions.** The **FAITH5** fall under the umbrella of these four

keys and provides one out of several other resources for congregations to use as a tool for all ages. The importance of providing a framework for passing on the faith is essential for faith formation. It sets a ritual in place and builds a tradition for years to come.

When Rich Melheim, founder of Faith Inkubators, asked Tony Campolo, Professor Emeritus of Sociology at Eastern University in PA, what the healthiest thing a young person could say is, Campolo answered, *“We always do it this way in our home.”* *We* means one is not alone. *Always* means there’s a ritual and *this way* means a tradition. *Our home* says there’s a place to go to call home.

When the **FAITH5** is intentionally done in all small group settings in the congregation and in homes as well, faith stories abound. Faith stories lead to individuals and families growing together in their faith journeys. The end result is healthy faith formation with the natural outcome of a willingness to serve.

Intentional Practice

FAITH5 initiated a new look and introduced a vital way for all ages to be immersed in a faith formation environment. In my own congregation in Northern Virginia, we had been using Faith Inkubators resources for 5 years before I, in my role of Director of Education and Youth on staff, had a reality check. Our education team had a great idea for the opening of our Sunday school year in September 2000. We invited all ages to join us for a celebration of faith practices. A placemat was designed with faith practices for everyone to color and then laminate. Each household received a candle and was invited to take their placemat and candle home. Households were asked to do the **FAITH5** every day. We patted ourselves on the back for such a great idea and assumed we had now engaged the entire congregation in faith practices.

A couple of weeks later, I received a phone call from a mainline denominational magazine. Someone heard that we had introduced a tool for faith talk to happen in

homes. They wanted to interview some of the families and write an article about our congregation. I began to call families to ask if they would agree to being interviewed. Close to 65 placemats and candles were taken home on opening Sunday. The more calls I made, the more discouraged I became. Answers ranged from, "What were we supposed to do with the candle?" to "I think it's somewhere around here."

I found two families who were actually doing the faith practices every night. One family said yes to the interview.

Reality hit when I realized what we thought was a wonderful idea and even attracted attention from a national magazine wasn't really happening.

I called the magazine, apologized, and explained we had one family who would do an interview. They said, "Great! Let's do the story." I was amazed when they came and visited the family and ran the story. I was quietly wondering if this may be an indication of just how challenged we are in our congregations and couldn't believe the story was published.

In January of 2001, the article appeared. The family highlighted was uplifted and became advocates for doing faith at home. Other families looked to them for stories and our ministry began to grow one family at a time.

I learned an important lesson that year. Providing tools and resources for people doesn't mean they'll ever use them. As a congregation, we became more intentional in everything we did.

As more and more stories were shared, faith stories became part of who we are. The FAITH5 in the congregation became a cross-generational tradition across the congregation in small groups, at meetings, in Sunday school, and in youth groups.

All ages looked forward to and thirsted to be together. They shared Highs and Lows, read Scripture together, related it to their own lives, and became comfortable with prayers and blessings. Faith stories were abundant to

the point they were shared in worship. God's work in the congregation's life was being shared everywhere. It became a way of life. When learning a foreign language, immersion results in fluency. Fluency leads to learning about a culture and then speaking and living the language becomes a way of life. Likewise, immersion in the language of faith in the congregation and at home can lead to fluency in our faith. Fluency forms the culture in congregations. It becomes a way of life.

Gallup Research on the "engaged church" found that increased engagement translates to positive impact inside and outside the local faith community. Engagement in church life leads to spiritual commitment and positive outcomes (life satisfaction, inviting, serving, giving).

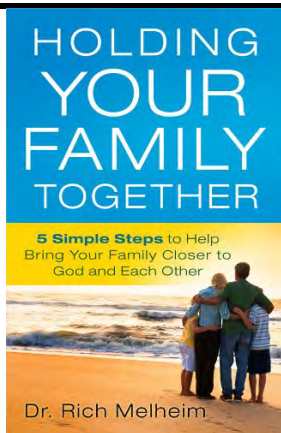
Faith practices modeled and learned well become a way of life. Engagement by the entire faith community is important. According to Gallup, this leads to spiritual commitment and ultimately a serving attitude. If the goal in our congregations is to make disciples, reflecting on ways to engage our people in a faith practice should be a priority.

Faith Inkubators Resources

- Website: www.faithink.com
- Faith5 Website: <http://faith5.org>
- Faith5 App: <https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/faith-5/id526158175?mt=8>

Vibrant Faith Ministries Resources

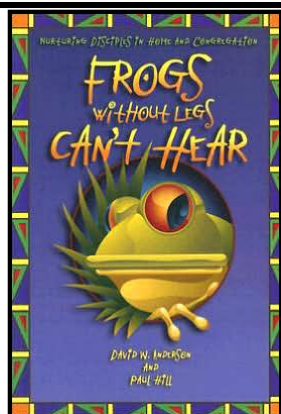
- Website: www.vibrantfaith.org
- Vibrant Faith at Home: <http://vibrantfaithathome.org>
- Vibrant Faith at Home App: <http://get.thechurchapp.org/share/vibrant-faith-ministries>
- Taking Faith Home Bulletin Inserts: http://store.vibrantfaith.org/category_s/46.htm
- Faith Talk Cards: http://store.vibrantfaith.org/product_p/ftfk.htm



Holding Your Family Together: 5 Simple Steps to Help Bring Your Family Closer to God and Each Other

Richard Melheim (Regal, 2013)

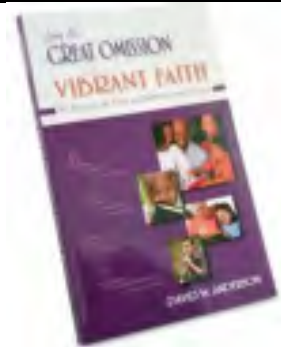
Imagine a home where every person feels loved, valued and heard. Imagine a family that seeks God's wisdom, will and Word together. Imagine an intimate, affectionate community where every night is an experience of caring, sharing, comfort and peace. You can make this beautiful picture a reality in your home. *Holding Your Family Together* is a workable, powerful plan based on a simple nightly routine: Share, Read, Talk, Pray, Bless. This is the FAITH₅, and it has transformed families around the world. No matter your child's age or your family's unique situation, the FAITH₅ can work for you.



Frogs without Legs Can't Hear: Nurturing Disciples in Home and Congregation

David W. Anderson and Paul Hill (Augsburg Fortress, 2003)

David Anderson and Paul Hill challenge church leaders to shift the center of faith formation from the congregation to a shared center involving the home and ministry in daily life. The purpose of the book is to identify the principles and practices that are faith formative, grounded in research and over a decade of pastoral practice. To do this they present five principles that define the congregation-home partnership, four key faith practices that promote faith growth (caring conversation, rituals and traditions, devotions, and service), and three characteristics of effective adult faith bearers.



From the Great Omission to Vibrant Faith: The Role of the Home in Renewing the Church

David W. Anderson (Vibrant Faith Ministries, 2009)

Parents play the most important role in the vibrant faith formation of their children. Yet, many congregations fail to equip parents and other caring adults with the tools they need to nurture and grow the faith of the young people in their churches. The good news is that it is not too late to fix this problem. The author, Dr. David Anderson, traces how this "Great Omission" has happened and what we can do to challenge our youth to live lives of faith and service.



Vibrant Faith in the Congregation

David W. Anderson (Vibrant Faith Ministries, 2011)

Through their vision called the Vibrant Faith Frame, Vibrant Faith Ministries has helped congregations develop strategies to nurture Christian faith in individuals, homes, congregations, and communities for more than 15 years. David Anderson identifies what these strategies look like in a congregation. With special emphasis on Christian faith formation and community outreach, *Vibrant Faith in the Congregation* illustrates how congregations have successfully applied the Vibrant Faith Frame to various congregational ministries, such as evangelism, Christian education, worship and preaching, youth and family, and stewardship.

Have you gone "HOME" yet? Vibrant Faith Ministries' newest online resource, VibrantFaith@Home, offers free tips and tools as well as an online community to support and strengthen your family's spiritual journey no matter what your age or stage.

OUR DREAM

When you log in to **VibrantFaith@Home**, you'll find everything you need to build a strong Christian household. Our goal is to equip and empower families to:

- **TALK** with each other about their faith
- **PRAY** together in ways that are comfortable and comforting
- **RITUALIZE** the important milestones—no matter how big or small
- **REACH OUT** in service and support to others in the community

BENEFITS

- **Comprehensive:** Easy-to-use tools, tips, family activities and advice for all ages and stages
- **Four Keys-Focused:** Learn more about the Four Keys of Caring Conversations, Devotions, Service, and Rituals and Traditions
- **Seasonal:** All new faith-forming activities for spring, summer, fall and winter
- **Mobile:** Easily accessible via your computer or hand-held device
- **Customizable and Personal:** Special tools help you match your needs with the available resources
- **Interactive:** Take part in blogs, forums, and numerous other ways to interact with our authors and other **VibrantFaith@Home** users

FEATURES

- Simple, easy-to-use **faith-forming activities** linked to the events of everyday life
- **Advice and support** for parents, grandparents, families and young adults
- **Learn the basics** of prayer, faith and the Bible
- Special activities designed **just for children**
- **How-to videos** for sharing faith at home

Come on HOME!

Visit VibrantFaith@Home today for unlimited access to faith-forming activities and so much more!
And, keep coming back! New content is added all the time.

Scan the QR code for more information or visit www.vibrantfaithathome.org



What Our Online Community is Saying:

"It was easy to navigate, easy to register, and easy to access content on the site. That is high praise from a web immigrant. The content was superb."

"I would definitely recommend this site to parents, grandparents and godparents. I think it's intuitive and will be a great resource for families!"





Our brand new subscription-based service that empowers effective partnership between the congregation and the home!



BENEFITS

1. Embed VibrantFaith@Home into your congregational website.

We provide the tools you need to embed **VF@Home** directly into your website. This will drive parishioners to your website while giving them full access to all of **VF@Home's** resources and activities.

2. Create Virtual Groups.

Using the **VF@Home** platform, you can create a congregational "group" of **VF@Home** users (including an unlimited number of "subgroups," on topics such as Confirmation, First Communion, Adult Bible Study, etc.). These groups help facilitate virtual sharing, interaction and seamless connection between faith growth at home and faith formation in the congregation.

3. Promote VibrantFaith@Home.

Print-ready and customizable materials will encourage congregation members to discover the wealth of resources and activities available on **VF@Home**.

4. Use VF@Home in the Congregation.

Our informational webinars teach congregational leaders how to effectively use the **VF@Home** resources and activities in the context of congregational programming.

- **VibrantFaith@Home** - How to find and access the content you need
- Link to Faith Formation Programming
- Cross-generational Programming

5. Provide Youth & Family Resources.

Each quarter, we offer season-specific resources and activities to help you draw programming connections between the **VF@Home** offerings and:

- Children's Sunday School or Religious Education
- Sacramental Preparation
- Youth Ministry and Catechesis
- Adult Faith Formation
- Sunday Worship

6. Offer Cross-generational Sessions.

We offer three complete intergenerational programs ("lesson plans") each quarter using the **VF@Home** activities available for that season. These sessions can be used in a small parent-child or parent-teen group, or in large "whole community" gatherings.



7. Nurture with Additional Training/ Coaching. PLUS subscribers receive a reduced fee on "Empowering Household Faith," our training/coaching/consultation services designed to assist congregations in developing a true partnership with the home. Contact Leif Kehrwald to discuss costs, funding options and dates.

8. Free subscription to Lifelong Faith – quarterly journal published by Lifelong Faith Associates, John Roberto, General Editor.

Vibrant Faith @ Home PLUS is a great resource for parishes and congregations that aspire to reach out and serve families in a truly effective way!



Contact Leif Kehrwald at 503-351-9889 or lkehrwald@vibrantfaith.org with your questions or to learn more.

Cost for a full year subscription is \$195

To see samples and to subscribe, click here or scan the QR code!



A Coaching Approach to Spiritual Vitality

Jim LaDoux

Coaching is one of many pathways for helping individuals and households grow in faith. It's an interactive, spiritual process that involves meeting people where they're at in life, and then walking alongside them as they discern what God is up to in their life. This faith formation pathway recognizes the importance of, and seeks to incorporate:

- *Caring Conversations* that build trust and develop authentic relationships
- *Devotions* that result in centered lives that are grounded in prayer, bible reading, and reflection and meditation.
- *Service* to our neighbor as opportunities to discover, develop and deploy our gifts and live into our vocation, and
- *Rituals & Traditions* that focus our attention on the "holy ground" experiences and the meaningful, memorable moments in life where God is at work in, through and among us.

Faith formation outcomes frequently addressed when using a coaching approach to nurturing spiritual vitality include helping people:

- broaden individual pathways for forming faith, including options such as online courses and self-directed home study activities.
- discern, develop and deploy their gifts in service to others.
- explore their passions and callings in life and how they seek to live more fully into their sense of vocation.
- develop spiritual disciplines and a personal devotional life that goes beyond what happens in a congregational setting.

Jim LaDoux supports the creation, planning and promotion of Vibrant Faith Ministries' coaching and training services. Jim has a Master of Management Arts degree from Metropolitan State University with a special emphasis in organizational development and strategic planning. For more than 20 years, Jim has served numerous congregations by helping them establish gifts-based ministry programs, small group ministries, youth ministry programs, community outreach programs and strategic initiatives. Jim is the author of *Surface to Soul: Coaching Spiritual Vitality in Congregations* (Vibrant Faith Ministries).

- integrate Sabbath time along with daily and weekly rituals that are life-giving, sacred moments.
- create a plan for continually growing in biblical knowledge and one's church history and traditions.
- find dialogue partners for discussing books, articles and current events through the lens of faith.
- maximize their capacities and impact as a Christian leader.
- ensure consistent action on a specific projects they've agreed to pursue on behalf of their congregation or community.

Forming faith through the coaching process may be done individually, with couples or in small group settings. It usually involves the following steps:

1. **Connect.** Establish healthy relationships among participants that are built on mutual trust and an agreement around general outcomes.
2. **Highlight.** Discern specific outcomes based on one's most pressing spiritual issues or logical next steps in faith formation.
3. **Align.** Identify what thoughts, words and actions may need greater alignment towards the goal of being a totally committed follower of Christ.
4. **Navigate.** Commit to making consistent progress on outcomes through setting and achieving weekly or monthly goals, often referred to as "next steps."
5. **Guide.** Attend to reviewing progress, reflecting on results, and refocusing efforts on new short-term wins.
6. **Evaluate.** Take time to assess choices being made in light of their impact on coaching outcomes.

Coaching to form faith requires ongoing dialogue with an assigned coach. In most cases, there are regular face-to-face

gatherings, with questions, updates and celebrations frequently communicated between sessions via texting, email or Facebook groups. Face-to-face sessions begin with prayer, may include time for reflecting on Scripture and then usually incorporate the following components:

- **Reviewing** each person's progress on previously established short-term goals or action steps.
- **Reflecting** on insights, ideas and observations that surfaced in response to progress being made on their short-term goals. The objective is to identify what's working, what's not working and what individuals are learning about themselves and their setting in the process. This component often identifies roadblocks and speed bumps that need to be addressed or removed to move forward faster.
- **Refocusing** thoughts, words and actions towards new short-term goals.
- **Resourcing** participants with tools, resources and strategies for fulfilling their intentions.

Face-to-face sessions may be as short as 30 minutes or as long as two hours depending on the frequency of conversations and the number of people involved. The intent is to always keep things moving toward the stated coaching outcomes.

Many coaching arrangements begin by creating an agreement or covenant that outlines expectations for participants. This covenant is usually recited at the start of every face-to-face gathering. Listed below is one used by a Presbyterian church in Minnesota.

As followers of Christ and members of this congregation, we commit to:

- Affirm, encourage, pray for and bless one another and the ministries we represent.

- Appreciate and affirm each other's gifts, backgrounds and viewpoints.
- Arrive on time for meetings, fully present to engage with one another.
- Communicate with each other in honest, open, Christ-like ways.
- Hold each other accountable for fulfilling and setting 30-day goals.
- Being open to the work of the Spirit and where the Spirit may be guiding us.

Coaching & Faith Formation

One example of a coaching approach to faith formation involves a congregation in the Twin Cities that already was known for having a wealth of small groups focused on faith forming activities. What was missing was help for people to articulate next steps in their faith journey for which they'd be held accountable. This meant that small group gatherings integrated the **Review, Reflect, Refocus, and Resource** language of coaching into their existing conversations. The small group facilitator was trained to serve as a coach to other participants. Groups were now coming together to address specific actions they were taking to grow in faith rather than simply share some possible ways they could move forward in the future. Measuring one's action rather than intention was a key to making these groups more spiritually vibrant. The approach of setting 30-day goals structured around the "4 R" conversation became a transforming innovation for forming faith.

Another congregation piloted an initiative referred to as *Four Key Households*. In this setting, several households committed to practicing faith at home for a period of 90 days, with the intent of assessing the impact of the newly implemented behaviors and routines. Households had a trained "Four Key" coach come to their home and teach them how to do faith practices that could be done during meal times, bed times and while they were traveling in the car. The pilot

households participated in weekly 20-minute conference calls where each household **Reviewed** what they did the past week, **Reflected** on what worked and what didn't. After this initial sharing, households **Refocused** their energies, sharing goals for the coming week along with what kind of support and **Resourcing** they'd find most helpful. The assigned coach made a point of recognizing the progress made by various households, asking poignant questions to reveal when and where people were getting stuck practicing faith, and periodically resourcing households with strategies appropriate to their settings.

Some congregations have used the "4R" coaching approach with their councils to encourage ongoing faith formation in their leaders, as well as to address the lack of accountability around ministry goals. In these congregations, a portion of the monthly meeting agendas deal with **Reviewing** previous 30-day commitments, **Reflecting** on the results of their actions, and then taking time for each person to **Refocus** by sharing new 30 day goals related to their own spiritual growth and for the ministry teams they represent. At these same meetings, staff members report progress made on their 30-day goals and list their upcoming 30-day goals. In one congregation, the Vibrant Faith coach would check in by phone with the ministry team leaders once a month, offering to resource the leaders, as needed, as they fulfilled their monthly goals. As one leader commented, "this seemingly small change of incorporating the '4Rs' in our agenda has transformed what we talk about and has energized us in ways we never thought possible."

I've seen this concept further reinforced when members, gathering for Sunday morning refreshments go around the table, and invite people to share what ways they've practiced their faith in the last 7 days in light of their "next steps." I've seen ministry team reports organized around the "4Rs" that include detailed listings of what's been

accomplished in the last 30 days by individual team members along with action steps agreed to by team members for the next 30 days. I've seen pastors and program staff share their progress and next steps in newsletters, in sermons, and in small group gathering. It's particularly helpful if key leaders are modeling the way for others.

The "4R" coaching approach to faith formation is innovative for four reasons.

1. First of all, it challenges people to *take personal responsibility for growing in faith*—a concept that is often foreign to many church members.
2. Secondly, it *builds transparency and accountability* through the setting of 7-day or 30-day goals. Because the goals are actionable and have a deadline, people can actually be held accountable for their fulfillment.
3. Thirdly, it reinforces the important concept that *faith formation is a lifelong process that can be practiced anytime, anywhere*.
4. Lastly, because so many people are usually involved in establishing next steps, another key message is communicated to members of congregations—*faith formation is for everyone!*

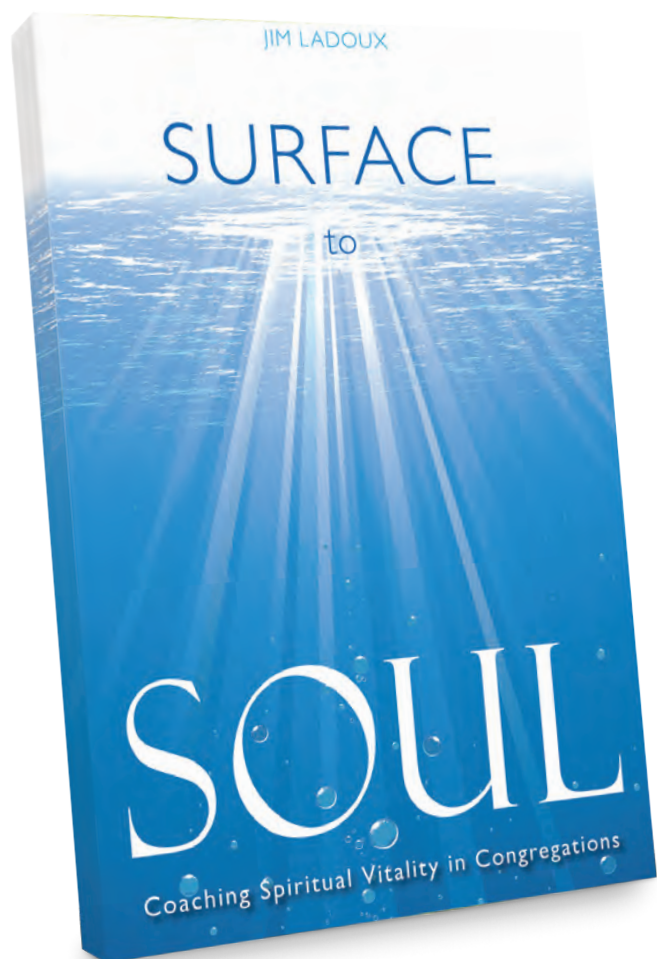
If we are to build up the body of Christ and be a source of hope and blessing to this world, then we need to ensure that members of our faith communities are regularly fueling their souls with caring conversations, prayer, listening to God's word, and meaningful rituals and traditions. If our homes and congregations are to serve as spiritual gyms—places where we learn how to practice faith 24/7—then we need coaches in our lives who will teach and demonstrate faith practices for us, inviting us afterwards to take the "next step" by modeling it for others. If the goal is to build disciples who, in turn, build disciples, then we need to include coaching as one of

our tools for forming faith in the lives of all people.

Resources

- LaDoux, Jim. *Surface To Soul: Coaching Spiritual Vitality in Congregations*. Minneapolis: Vibrant Faith Publishing, 2012.
- Miller, Linda and Chad Hall. *Coaching for Christian Leaders: A Practical Guide*. St. Louis: Chalice Press, 2007.
- Muller, Wayne. *Sabbath: Finding Rest, Renewal and Delight in our Busy Lives*. New York: Bantam Books, 1999.
- Ogne, Steve and Tim Roehl. *Transformational Coaching: Empowering Leaders in a Changing Ministry World*. Nashville: B&H Publishing, 2008.
- Reardon, Phyllis. *Life Coaching Activities & Powerful Questions: A Practical Workbook for Life Coaches and all involved in Personal Development*. Newfoundland: Coach Phyllis, 2010.
- Robinson, Anthony B. *Changing the Conversation: A Third Way for Congregations*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008.
- Stoltzfus, Tony. *Leadership Coaching: The Disciplines, Skills, and Heart of a Christian Coach*. Wheaton: Tyndale House, 2005.

NEW RESOURCE: SURFACE TO SOUL



Surface to Soul: Coaching Spiritual Vitality in Congregations

Jim LaDoux

Written with pastors and lay leaders in mind, this workbook guides congregational leaders through a six-step CHANGE process for coaching spiritual vitality into all areas of home and congregational ministry. One of the workbook's key features is a CHANGE Agent's Toolkit, which gives leaders 30 tools they can use to help create a culture of vibrant faith within their congregations.

\$19.95

TO ORDER, CLICK ON THE LINK BELOW:
http://store.vibrantfaith.org/product_p/sts.htm

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



JIM LADOUX serves as the Director of Coaching & Training at Vibrant Faith Ministries in Minneapolis, Minnesota. He has been instrumental in developing their signature coaching process that helps individuals, families, and congregations integrate principles and practices that lead to vibrant faith for all ages.

Jim has served Lutheran, Presbyterian, Methodist and United Church of Christ congregations for over 20 years, helping them develop strategic plans, equip leaders, launch small group ministries, establish year-round stewardship plans, increase member engagement, and rethink faith formation principles and practices. In partnership with Wartburg Theological Seminary, Jim oversees Vibrant Faith Ministries' Youth & Family Certification Schools that are held throughout the United States.

Jim lives in Burnsville, Minnesota, has been married for 22 years and enjoys being a parent of two young boys. He and his family enjoy travel, camping, swimming and board games. They are members of Prince of Peace Lutheran Church.





Taking a Coalition Approach to Young Adult Ministry

Kate Hine, SND and Margaret Vogel

In Acts there is a brief story about a young man named Eutychus who falls asleep while Saint Paul is preaching (20:7-13). Drowsy Eutychus, who is seated on a window sill during the sermon, drops out of a third story window to his death. It is easy to imagine a shocked crowd running down the stairs to the lifeless body below. With abandon, Paul throws himself on the young man, revives him, and announces to the crowd, “There is life in him.” The company and Eutychus return to the gathering space, where they break bread and listen to Paul until dawn. This Scripture brings hope for young adult ministry. What looks dead can be revived, but it will take the whole community.

In its October 2012 report, *Nones on the Rise*, the Pew Research Center documented that one in three American adults under the age of thirty describe themselves as religiously unaffiliated. Anecdotally, this is mirrored in the weary cries of pastors, ministers, and lay faithful. The problem of falling away is not new, and that is part of the challenge. “It appears to me as if the human Church was asleep and Christ is vainly trying to wake it up,” wrote Catherine de Hueck Doherty to Thomas Merton in 1961. “Or, to put it another way, the masses of the laity have clothed their souls in asbestos suits so that the fire of the Holy Spirit may not impenetrate us nor set us on fire.” This is a compelling visual for today’s culture. The Christian Church looks asleep to many young adults whose everyday lives are buffered with spiritual isolation. For them, the Incarnate Christ is unseen or easily dismissed.

Margaret Vogel has ministered in northeast Ohio, primarily in the diocese of Cleveland, since 2007. She works to create more accessible religious systems and more engaging faith communities for Catholic young adults. She holds a degree in religious studies from Ursuline College and a master’s in adult education from Cleveland State University. Her research and practice focus on closing the gap between disaffiliated young adults and the Catholic Church.

Sr. Kate Hine is Vocations Director for the Sisters of Notre Dame of Chardon, OH, a spiritual director, and staff member at Cuvilly House, a young adult ministry center in Cleveland which provides services to young adults in their 20s and 30s, both single and married, who desire to deepen their relationship with God, with other young adult Catholics, and with the poor.

Re-imagine the story of Eutychus under painful and all too familiar young adult ministry circumstances. The community is gathered. Paul is preaching. Eutychus falls out of the window. It takes the community a long time to notice but eventually someone says, “Hey, what happened to that young fellow that used to sit by the window?” Paul, with some concern, pauses for a moment and asks one of the ushers to add a sign to the front door so the young man knows he is welcome to come back. Yes, this re-imagined tale is hyperbolic, but it serves an illustrative purpose. The needs of this time—with so many people dressed in asbestos or fallen through windows—require the active involvement of the whole community. Young adult ministry is not an outreach, or a campaign, or a folly to be pursued when the budget has a surplus. Now, more than ever, effective young adult ministry must change the way the Church does business. How might the local Church approach this growing need collectively and more systemically?

Innovation

There is an experiment happening in the Catholic Diocese of Cleveland called *The Coalition with Young Adults (C-YA)*. Its purpose is to create an intentional network of community leaders and young adults who work collaboratively to reveal a Church that is relevant to today’s young adults. The C-YA network is homegrown and inspired by women religious. The bold question posed by the Conference of Religious Leadership (CORL) was, “how will we create a growing pool of young leaders to sustain our charisms?” This question proved to be an unselfish turnkey that released a new kind of conversation around the lives of young adults. The business of young adult ministry was not to be concerned with sustaining current structures as much as it would be about forming people who are open to and sustained by the Holy Spirit. Women religious

courageously modeled freedom in their question, and creativity was born.

Invitation & Inventory

The first step of action was to notice who else needed to be at the table. With grant support from the Sisters of Charity Foundation and guidance from the Mandel School of Nonprofit Management at Case Western Reserve University, C-YA trained a team of young adults to conduct a survey inventory of young adult ministry resources. This inventory expanded the number of potential stakeholders in the conversation, connecting with strengths, assets, resources and persons within the region. The act of inventory created dialogue with new partners including Catholic healthcare providers, employers, social service agencies, Catholic colleges, and parish ministries. One of the greatest challenges of the initial survey was the term “young adult ministry.” Many institutions and individuals first opted not to participate in the survey because they did not view themselves as being in the business of young adult ministry. The surveyors were trained to reframe the question: Do you employ young adults? Does your institution require succession planning? How are you recruiting young adults as volunteers, board members, donors? Suddenly, people once distanced from “young adult ministry” felt invested. To return to Acts, everyone was out of the room and seeing a common problem.

It was crucial that these non-traditional partners see themselves as agents of young adult ministry because, unlike a traditional parish setting, these agents often encountered the large percentage of young adults who are not actively engaged in parish life. Now the Cleveland dream is that if a young adult enters any place in this regional system, they will be connected with questions of deeper meaning and invited into opportunities for spiritual growth. They will experience the rewards of a lived vocation in everyday life whether their call leads them to a corner

office, the seminary, the convent, or a soup kitchen.

Listening, Connectivity, & Capacity

The second step of coalition building included the creation of a vision statement. The first part of this included conversations among stakeholders to determine what vision they could support. These conversations took time and demonstrated that even with broad questions competing interests remained. Some young adults were included in the process, but this was largely an institutional conversation. With much discernment, it was agreed that the most pressing need was to generate connectivity and capacity in the system, not new programs.

The second part of visioning focused on listening to young adults. What did young adults need from institutional stakeholders and one another to become who God created them to be? C-YA hosted a gathering called *Raising the Tide* to investigate this question, attracting more than 100 young adults from diverse cultural, socio-economic, and ethnic backgrounds. There was also a wide range in religious affiliation and spiritualities. The morning focused on the diversity of gifts and experiences within the common call of Baptism, and allowed for open and honest dialogue. The afternoon provided an open space for young adults to put forth their concerns and creative ideas for action. This day has been followed by ongoing smaller listening sessions. In this way, C-YA is able to hear what young adults need from the larger system and young adults are able to listen to one another.

Commitments & Working Together

As a result, C-YA is a growing Catholic network of people and resources committed to collaborate in serving with and for young adults in their 20s and 30s. The network is intended to bring together young adults and people from parishes, religious communities, diocesan offices, and other organizations. Together, these stakeholders share an intentional commitment to better understand, engage, and support young adults in making connections between the Catholic faith and a lived vocation in every life.

In practice, C-YA is a multi-faceted, experimental approach to young adult ministry. This approach attends to the transitional nature of young adulthood because its network represents stakeholders from education, parish, career, and service. Outgrowths of the C-YA experiment include:

- Cuvilly House, a young adult ministry center and space for young adults to experience intentional lay community. This ministry is the work of Sisters of Notre Dame and has been informed by C-YA conversations as well as a partnership with Charis Ministries of Chicago.
- Cleveland will host a first-of-its-kind Intergenerational Convocation on October 26, 2013, gathering young adults with a passion for social entrepreneurship and women religious. This is a partnership between C-YA, Women in Spirit NOW, and Catholic Community Connections.
- C-YA is working to normalize and increase the number of young adults who engage in personal spiritual direction. This practice has enjoyed significant growth and positive

response on local Newman campus ministries. In the next year, C-YA will pilot this model at five parishes in the diocese.

- C-YA is helping to design *Leadership for a New Day*, which is an initiative of CORL. This unique leadership development program utilizes 24-hour retreats and a mentoring relationship to develop competencies in young adults who seek a career in ministry or other non-profit service.

In all this activity, C-YA experiences the unique ability to thrive or fail. The work of the Coalition is experimental. The network structure provides necessary freedom for ideas to germinate, grow, and delay as needed. To date, C-YA has been financed with grants and the sweat equity of its members. It is hoped that as the lay faithful realize the benefits of this network, they will help to support its sustainability.

How to Begin a Coalition

Coalitions take time but the impact for evangelization and change are worth the investment. Communities that wish to engage young adults need to take a step back from standard business practices and ask: Who else needs to be at the table? Building effective bridges with the larger community increases the relevance and visibility of the Church.

- Begin conversations with questions that invoke dreams.
- Forget about existing structures or territory and see what is possible.
- Allow room for entrepreneurial efforts, experimentation, successes and failures.
- Embrace the vulnerability and hope of the Gospel of Jesus.

As Peter Gomes writes, “Hope is not an act of will so much as it is an act of imagination and courage. Christian hope is meant to guide you into the place where you have not yet been, and into becoming the person you have not yet become.” C-YA is an experiment in hope. The network is based on the hope that a strong community of diverse stakeholders will capture and re-ignite the hearts of young adults wherever they are called and guide them into lives worthy of the God who dreamed them into being.

For More Information

- For more information about Cuvilly House go to: www.sndchardon.org/ourministries/youngadultministry/
- For more information about C-YA contact Margaret Vogel at: Margaret.vogel@gmail.com or go to: www.cyacleveland.org
- For more information about Charis Ministries of Chicago go to: www.charisministries.org

Works Cited

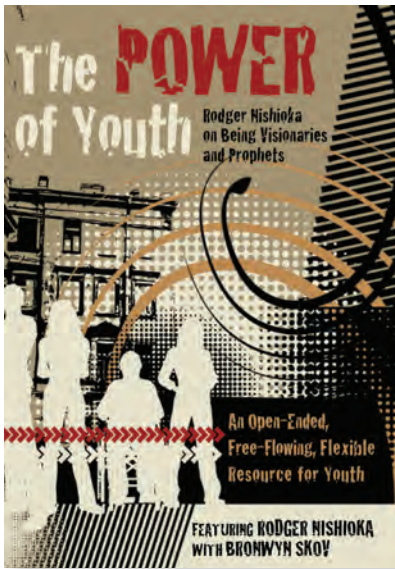
Gomes, Peter. *Strength for the Journey*. New York: HarperCollins, 2003.

Pew Research Center. *Nones on the Rise*. October 9, 2012. www.pewforum.org

Wild, Robert A. *Compassionate Fire: The Letters of Thomas Merton and Catherine de Heuck Doherty*. Notre Dame: Ave Maria Press, 2009

New Study And Prayer Resources For Youth

From Morehouse Education Resources: Two newly released programs for your church's youth and youth leaders.



The Power of Youth

An Open-Ended, Free-Flowing, Flexible Resource for Youth
An important new 8-session DVD study aimed at today's youth!

Contemporary topics include:

- Recognizing our importance to God
- Being both visionaries and prophets
- Asking the tough questions
- Claiming your power to change the world

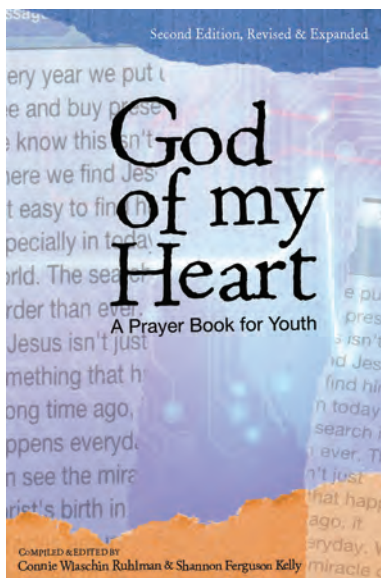
View a session video clip on



Single package includes a DVD with video content for each session and a CD with a printable Leader's Guide and reproducible handouts.

Led by Rodger Nishioka (Columbia Theological Seminary) and Bronwyn Skov (Youth Ministries Officer for the Episcopal Church).

846863019137 | \$49.95



God of My Heart

A Prayer Book for Youth

Now Revised and Expanded!

- An honest book for youth, coming from the heart of today's youth

In this newly released second edition, *God of My Heart* offers the voices of youth not only about their faith but also about their fear, hope, failings, regret, longing, joy, and passion.

Includes dozens of youth-written prayers and information on how, where, and when to pray. The book is perfect for teenagers, young adults, adults, and youth leaders—anyone looking to engage and understand young people today.

9780819228659 | \$18.00

These resources are available through Cokesbury at 800.672.1789, at Cokesbury.com, at Episcopal booksellers, and wherever fine Christian products are sold.

Follow us on  



CHURCH PUBLISHING INCORPORATED

Church Publishing • Morehouse Publishing • Seabury Books
Morehouse Church Supplies • Morehouse Education Resources



A “Community of Communities” Approach to Youth Ministry

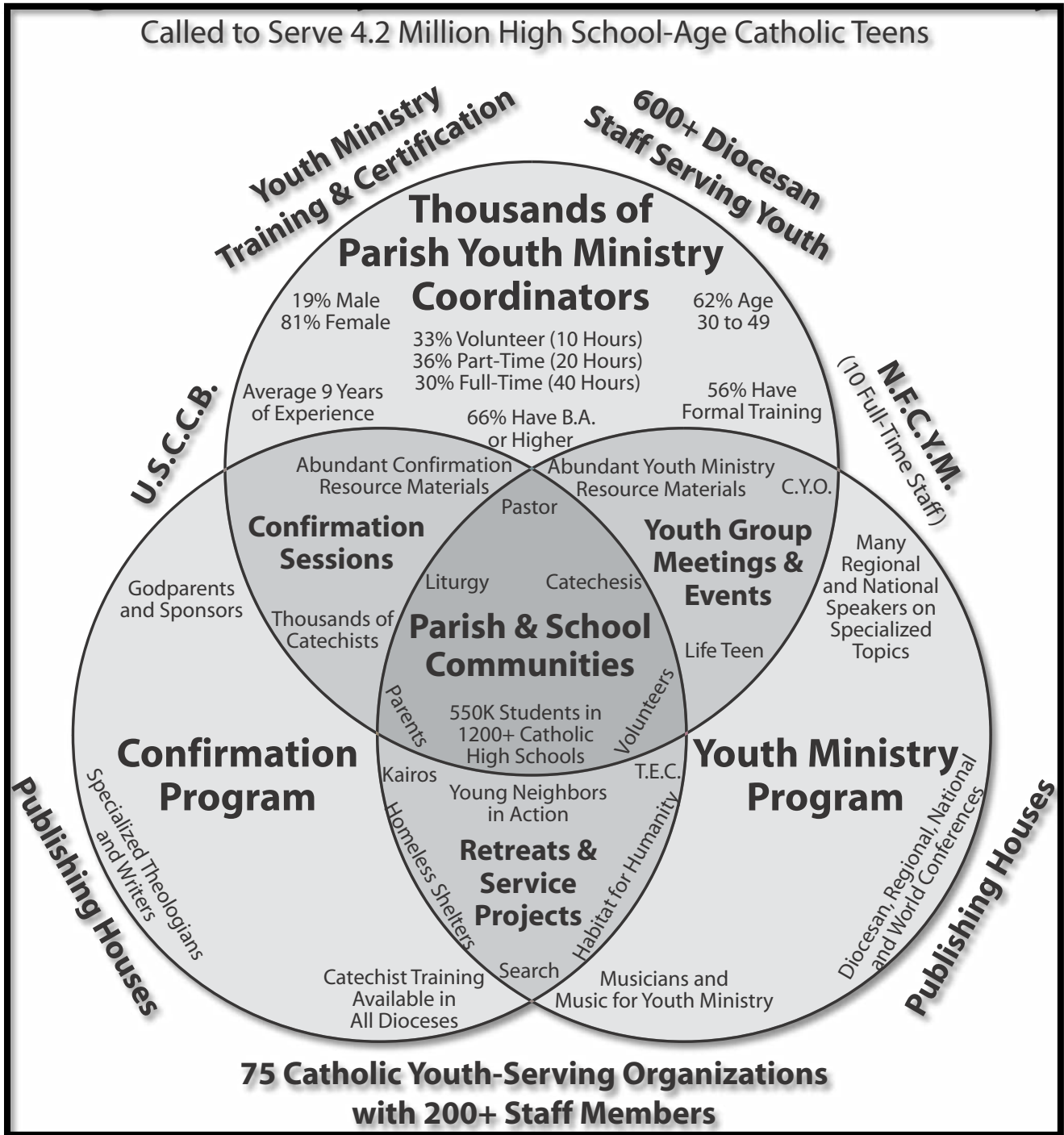
Ken Johnson-Mondragon with Ed Lozano

In 2005, when the National Study of Youth and Religion published *Soul Searching*, for the first time it became possible to measure the reach of Catholic youth ministry in a scientific way. Many pastors and youth ministers were disconcerted to find that only 24% of Catholic youth were participating in parish youth groups—far short of the 52% average among Protestant teens and 72% in Mormon communities (Smith and Donovan, 51). It is undoubtedly true that the renewal of Catholic youth ministry in the last 40 years has produced a rich ecosystem of parish youth ministry leaders and catechists, formation programs, practical resources, Confirmation programs, support services, ecclesial movements, and specialized, dynamic speakers for diocesan, regional and national events (Diagram 1). Nevertheless, one must ask the question: regardless of how many components are integrated into our programming, can we really call our youth ministries “comprehensive” if they are leaving 76% of our Catholic adolescents unserved?

In some ways, the low level of participation among Catholic youth should come as no surprise. There are currently 17,644 parishes in the United States,¹ called to serve a population of about 4.2 million high school-age teens who identify themselves as Catholic.² That means the *average* parish has about 240 Catholic adolescents living within its boundaries. In California, the parishes are even larger, with the average parish called to serve 1,000 youth and some very large parishes having as many as 3,000 Catholic adolescents—yet most youth ministers are delighted if they are reaching between 50 and 80 high school students each year. Simply put, few parish youth ministries are structured in a way that would make it feasible to involve even half of their parish’s adolescent members.

Ken Johnson-Mondragón, D.Min. is Director of Research & Publications at Instituto Fe y Vida in Stockton, CA, a national non-profit Catholic leadership institute widely recognized as the authority in the field of Hispanic youth and young adult ministry in the United States, and the leading agent in bringing the Bible to young Latinos throughout the Americas. Ken is the author of *Pathways of Hope and Faith Among Hispanic Teens: Pastoral Reflections and Strategies Inspired by the National Study of Youth and Religion*. **Ed Lozano** is the Coordinator of Youth Ministry at St. Matthew Church in Arlington, TX.

Diagram 1: Ecosystem of Catholic Youth Ministry



The “Community of Communities” Approach

This is where a “community of communities” approach can expand the reach of the parish’s youth ministry over time. Pope John Paul II said that when the parish is seen as a community of communities and movements, it becomes “possible to live communion more intensely... In such a human context, it will be easier to gather to hear the word of God, to reflect on the range of human problems in the light of this word, and gradually to make responsible decisions inspired by the all-embracing love of Christ.” Similarly, the inadequacy of trying to gather a large and diverse youth community into one youth group was highlighted at the First National Encounter for Hispanic Youth and Young Adult Ministry:

The leaders in *Pastoral Juvenil*, Hispanic ministry, and mainstream youth and young adult ministry are increasingly aware that the programs and activities of the mainstream culture do not attract the full participation of Hispanic adolescents and *jóvenes*, even though they may speak English. This occurs due to economic, cultural, educational, geographic, and linguistic differences between the young people, especially when the parish ministry is limited to a single youth group. (33)

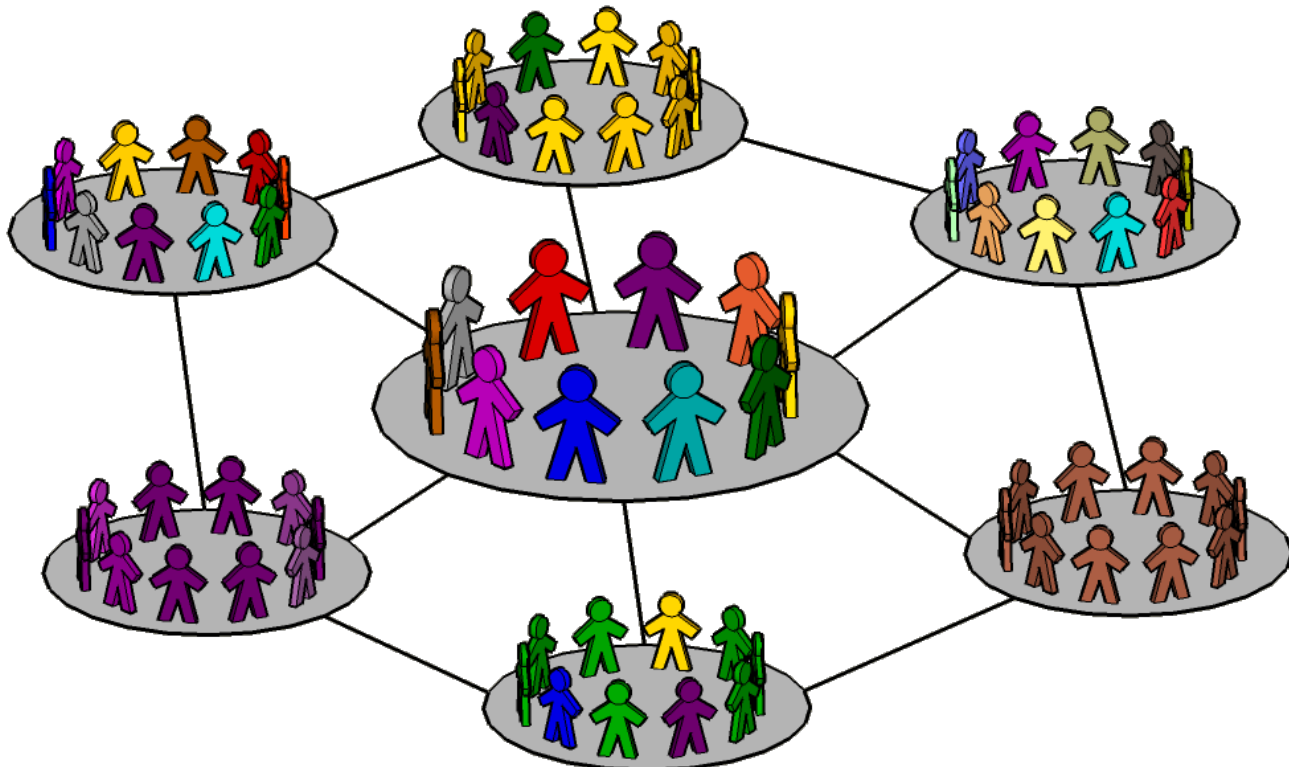
In a community of communities approach, the paid or designated volunteer youth ministry leader (YML) in the parish chairs a core team that consists of adult coordinators and key youth leaders who oversee each of the youth ministries or small communities. This approach is very helpful in linguistically diverse youth communities, as it affords the opportunity for young people to gather in a peer group in which they share a common language and socio-cultural experience. In other words, it lowers the social barriers to

entry into the parish youth ministry for young people who may feel different, isolated, or marginalized for any reason. At the same time, it provides multiple opportunities for teens to get involved in the parish throughout the week—which is great for families and young people with busy schedules.

In this model, the responsibilities of the YML and the core team are: to do pastoral planning for the whole youth community; to uphold the vision of youth ministry in all of the programs, ministries, and events; to provide leadership training and access to formation for coordinators and their teams of adult and adolescent leaders; and to collaborate on occasional events and activities for the whole parish youth community. The YML may also serve as the actual coordinator for one or more of the small communities or ministries, especially when the community of communities approach is getting started. Eventually the YML should hand off established ministries to volunteer coordinators in order to start new ministries that respond to local pastoral needs.

Diagram 2 illustrates this concept, with the core team in the middle and the various groups and communities extending out from the center—some more culturally diverse than others, depending on the language and pastoral needs addressed in each community. It is important to note that the various ministries and programs are not isolated from one another. Rather, they share a common vision, a common mission, and a common pastoral plan. In addition, they directly relate to and collaborate with one another on occasion, and they all provide a vehicle for young people to live as disciples of Jesus Christ, to grow in Christian maturity, and to insert themselves into the life, mission, and work of the Eucharistic community of communities, which is the parish.

Diagram 2: Youth Ministry in a Community of Communities



A Case Study: St. Matthew Catholic Church in Arlington, TX

In 1996, Ed Lozano was a volunteer Confirmation catechist, teaching a group of 12 high school students at his mostly-Hispanic parish in Arlington, TX—with no budget. About half way through the year, the young people in his group started to ask for more, indicating that they wanted a youth group to continue after Confirmation. By the next year, Ed had contacted the diocesan office of youth ministry in Fort Worth and received a basic certification in youth ministry. He immediately grasped the rich potential of a comprehensive model that included the eight components of Catholic youth ministry presented in *Renewing the Vision*, and began

to incorporate all eight into his work with the teens.

The next year Ed submitted a proposal to the pastor asking for a budget of \$16,000 to implement a comprehensive model of youth ministry. On his way to the finance council meeting, the pastor called Ed over and asked him, “Do you know that you are asking for an 800% increase in the amount of money we spend for teens?” Ed replied, “Father, you’ve had \$2,000 in the budget for the last eight years, and you’ve used none of it; I’m just asking for that money back”—and the request was approved. Once he came on staff in 1998, the first thing Ed did was to ask the parish office for a print-out of all the registered adolescents in the parish, ages 12 to 18; there were about 1,500 kids.

Ed recognized from the start that prayer and worship would be key to the success of his ministry. So in addition to the variety of musical and prayer experiences he was incorporating into regular sessions, he

organized an Ash Wednesday celebration of the Word conducted entirely by the teens as a ministry to their peers. He also initiated a Triduum retreat for young people that engaged them in an experience of the Paschal Mystery in a way that relates to contemporary life. Both events continue to this day and are immensely popular among the young people.

Similarly, leadership development has played a critical role in St. Matthew's accomplishments. In 2000, a group of teens from the parish attended the Center for Ministry Development's YouthLeader program³ and began to exercise leadership among their peers in multiple ways. Parents and other adults in the community also stepped forward for training and to participate in the ministry. The community of communities model simply does not work if the parish expects the paid YML to do everything and be everything for the young people—it is only when the whole parish community takes responsibility for the ministry that it is possible to increase the scale of programming to its full potential.

The youth ministry at St. Matthew started with sacramental preparation, and a broad understanding of catechesis and faith formation continues to be at the heart of the work that is done there. Today, St. Matthew provides First Communion preparation to about 200 junior high students each year (grades 6 to 8) who did not receive the sacrament at an earlier age. They are formed into groups of about 15 students with two adult catechists assigned to each, and at the end of their weekly Saturday morning sessions, they all come together for a large group prayer and worship experience that builds on the catechetical theme of the week. An additional 50 junior high students and about 60 ninth-graders are also receiving faith formation each week, although they are not preparing for any sacrament per se.

Because St. Matthew provides continuous opportunities for faith formation at every grade, a significant part of the 150 high school-age students attending Confirmation

classes (10th grade) come in with a basic or better knowledge of the faith and an honest desire to grow in relationship with Jesus Christ and his Church. This has radically changed the spirit and culture of the Confirmation sessions, with young people taking the lead and setting the tone for the evangelization of their peers—many of whose families do not come to church regularly. In support of the Confirmation classes, faith formation is provided to parents in a series of four parent sessions, and monthly pot-lucks provide an opportunity for families to build community and share pointers for parenting adolescents.

Around 2000, Ed began going alternately to the Mexican American Cultural Center (now the Mexican American Catholic College⁴) and Instituto Fe y Vida's Summer Program⁵ every year. He knew that he needed to strengthen his pastoral vocabulary in Spanish and improve his outreach, especially to the immigrant youth, and these trainings provided a means to do that. Since 1998 Ed has been advising a *grupo juvenil* (peer ministry group of Spanish-speaking single young adults) called *Juntos con Jesús*. The group continues to this day with about 50 to 60 members, many of whom have also participated in Fe y Vida's training to enhance their leadership in this ministry to and with their peers, utilizing a variety of resources from Fe y Vida.

In 2002, the diocese invited St. Mary's Press to give a presentation on a new initiative called *Youth Engaging Scripture*. Ed participated in the training and soon grasped that *lectio divina* in the form of weekly reflection on the Sunday Scripture readings could enhance both faith formation and prayer and worship while building community among the young people. About that time he noticed that there were a number of teens wandering the parish halls on Thursday nights while the *grupo de oración* (a prayer group for about 300 adults in Spanish) was taking place. So he opened the doors to a teen Scripture study group,

which has evolved into four bilingual classrooms of junior high students and a pair of high school groups (mostly 9th graders), with about 15 youth in each class.

In 2004, Ed was approached by a group of four mothers who had recently immigrated from Mexico, and whose grade school-aged children were failing in school. He began to tutor them and was delighted to see their grades improving and their interest in school increasing. Ed recognized the need for advocacy on behalf of families in the public school system—especially when the parents do not speak English. He also saw the need for ongoing tutoring, so he contacted a local United Methodist ministry called Hope Tutoring⁶ and asked them if they would open a branch at St. Matthew. They did, and to this day tutoring has been incorporated into the pastoral care provided by the parish, and some of the parish youth participate as tutors for younger students as a form of service.

For many years, the parish *Quinceañera* program consisted of a several two-hour faith development sessions led by one of the deacons and his wife. Around 2005, Ed was doing some work on integrating an asset-building approach (Roehlkepartain, et al.) into his youth ministry, and he saw an opportunity to enrich the preparation of the girls and their families with a holistic developmental strategy that would complement the faith formation elements. Today, the program consists of five 4-hour sessions with the girls and their parents, in which the *quinceañeras* are given skills to be successful as teenagers and the parents receive tools to improve their relationship with their daughters and insights about how to guide them through adolescence. A team of young adult Latinas who have gone through the program now serve as presenters for this ministry.

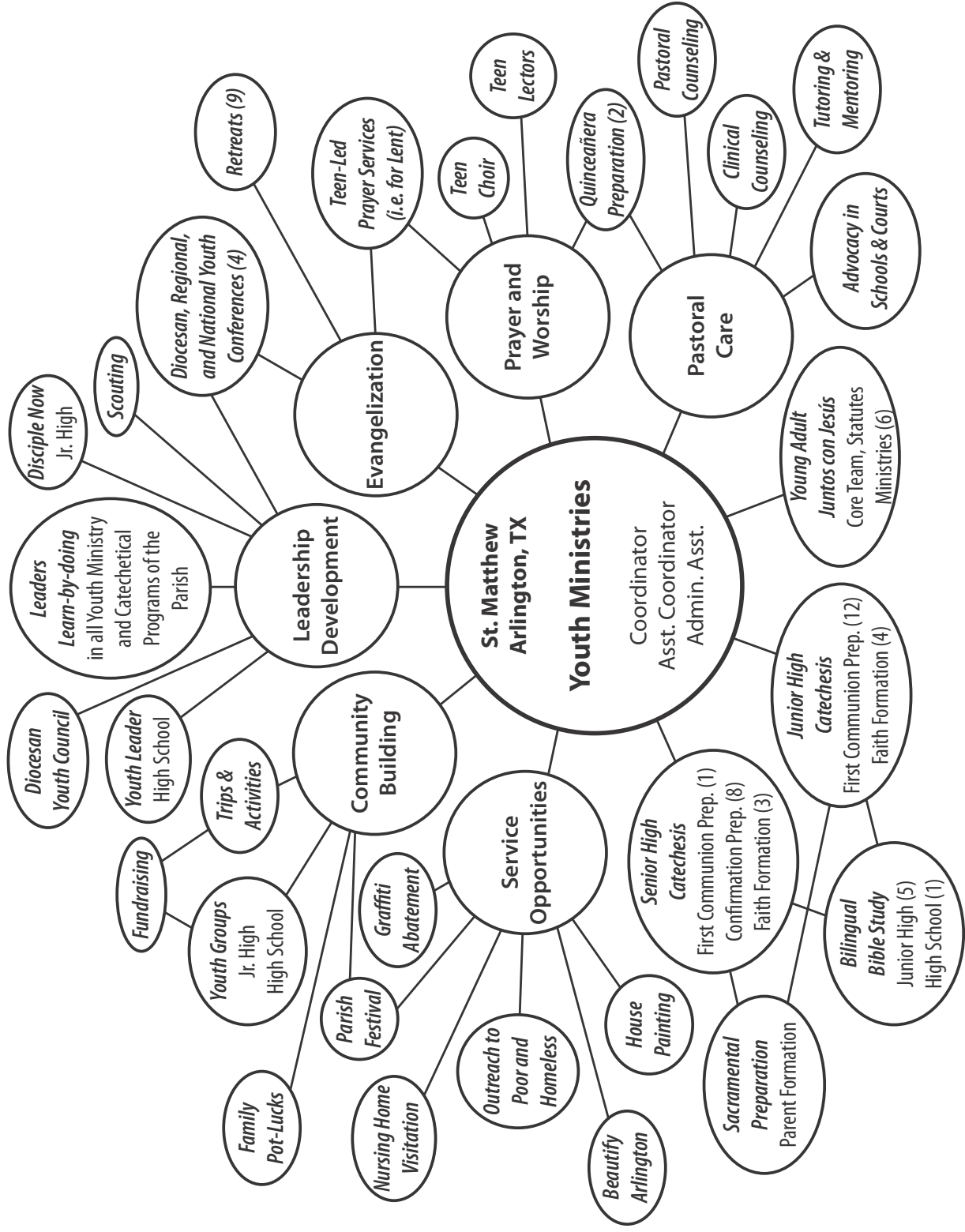
Much more could be written about the integration of the eight components in ministry at St. Matthew, but this is enough to give a sense of the approach and the process that has allowed youth ministry to flourish

there. In the 2012-2013 school year, Ed estimates that St. Matthew will serve a little more than 900 young people in the parish, with about 110 adult volunteers and more than 100 teen leaders contributing in some way to the 20+ programs and 50+ groups or classes in the various youth ministries. He describes this system as a comprehensive ministry that uses all eight components to reach out to the whole youth community of the parish, with many options for young people to connect and find their place. The parish now has a budget for a full-time youth minister, a part time assistant, and a part-time secretary. Clearly, this ministry did not develop overnight, but it is a wonderful example of what is possible when a comprehensive vision of youth ministry is implemented with a community of communities approach. Diagram 3 provides an organizational chart of St. Matthew's youth ministry as it stands today, with the number of groups, classes, or events in parentheses when applicable.

End Notes

- ¹ Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate (CARA), <http://cara.georgetown.edu/CARAServices/requestedchurchstats.html> (accessed March 15, 2013).
- ² Ken Johnson-Mondragón, "Catholic Youth and Young Adults in 2012," www.feyvida.org/research/catholic-youth-and-young-adults/ (accessed March 15, 2013).
- ³ See www.cmdnet.org/youth-ministry/youth-leader/program-overview (accessed March 15, 2013).
- ⁴ See www.maccsa.org (accessed March 15, 2013).
- ⁵ See www.feyvida.org/programs/summer.html (accessed March 15, 2013).
- ⁶ See www.hopetutoring.com/ (accessed March 15, 2013).

Diagram 3: Youth Ministry Programming at St. Matthew Catholic Church



Works Cited

Conclusions: First National Encounter for Hispanic Youth and Young Adult Ministry. National Catholic Network de Pastoral Juvenil Hispana – La RED. Washington, DC: USCCB Publishing, 2008.

Kurtz, Dennis. *Youth Engaging Scripture: Diving into the Sunday Gospels.* Winona: Saint Mary's Press, 2007.

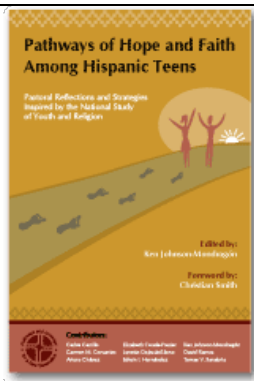
John Paul II, Apostolic Exhortation *Ecclesia in America*, no. 41. (Washington, DC: USCCB)

Roehlkepartain, Eugene, Peter Benson, Jennifer Griffin-Wiesner, and Kathryn Hong. *Building Assets in Congregations: A Practical Guide for Helping Youth Grow Up Healthy.* Minneapolis: Search Institute Press, 1998).

Smith, Christian with Melinda Lundquist Denton, *Soul Searching: The Religious and Spiritual Lives of American Teenagers.* New York: Oxford University Press, 2005.

United States Conference of Catholic Bishops. *Renewing the Vision: A Framework for Catholic Youth Ministry.* Washington, DC: USCCB, 1997.

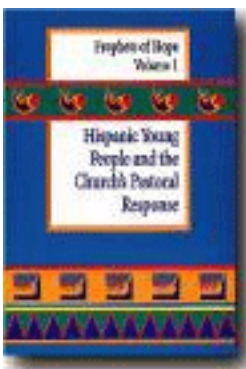
Resources from Instituto Fe y Vida



Pathways of Hope and Faith Among Hispanic Teens: Pastoral Reflections and Strategies Inspired by the National Study of Youth and Religion

Edited by Ken Johnson-Mondragón (Stockton: Instituto Fe y Vida)

Building on the largest national survey of teenage religion ever conducted, leading Catholic and Protestant experts recount in unprecedented detail the experiences of God, faith, community, youth ministry, and family among the fastest-growing segment of young people in the country—Latinos. Listen as young Hispanics describe their faith and hopes in their own words; gain understanding of the major issues affecting their religious development and life prospects; and improve your ministry or family life with insightful pastoral recommendations.



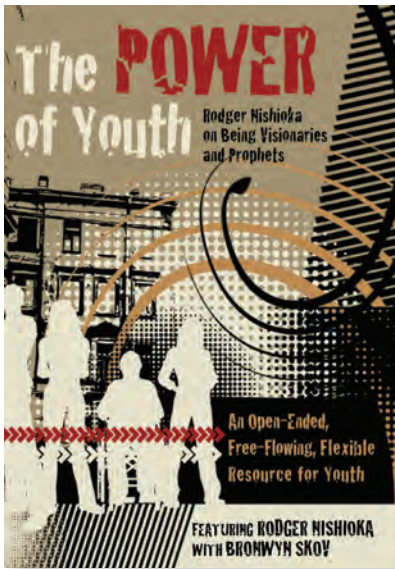
Witness of Hope Collection

Instituto Fe y Vida (www.feyvida.org/publications/witnesses.html)

The *Witnesses of Hope* collection, eight books organized into three series, lends strong support to ministry with Hispanic jóvenes (single young adults ages sixteen to thirty) by offering specialized resources for the development of small faith communities according to the *Prophets of Hope* Model. The model assumes and implements the goal of the National Pastoral Plan for Hispanic Ministry to help Hispanic jóvenes to live and promote by means of a Pastoral de Conjunto a model of church that is: 1) communitarian, evangelizing, and missionary; 2) incarnate in the reality of the Hispanic people and open to the diversity of cultures; 3) a promoter and example of justice; 4) active in developing leadership by holistic education; and 5) leaven for the Kingdom of God in society.

New Study And Prayer Resources For Youth

From Morehouse Education Resources: Two newly released programs for your church's youth and youth leaders.



The Power of Youth

An Open-Ended, Free-Flowing, Flexible Resource for Youth
An important new 8-session DVD study aimed at today's youth!

Contemporary topics include:

- Recognizing our importance to God
- Being both visionaries and prophets
- Asking the tough questions
- Claiming your power to change the world

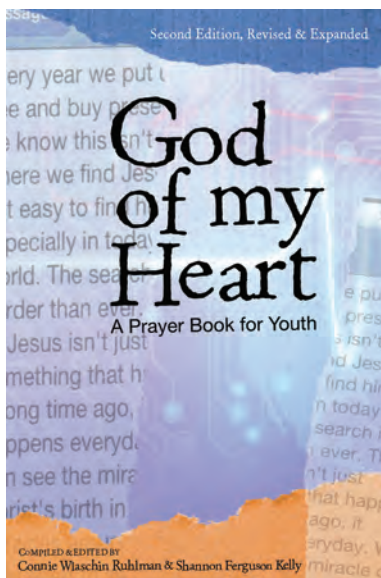
View a session video clip on



Single package includes a DVD with video content for each session and a CD with a printable Leader's Guide and reproducible handouts.

Led by Rodger Nishioka (Columbia Theological Seminary) and Bronwyn Skov (Youth Ministries Officer for the Episcopal Church).

846863019137 | \$49.95



God of My Heart

A Prayer Book for Youth

Now Revised and Expanded!

- An honest book for youth, coming from the heart of today's youth

In this newly released second edition, *God of My Heart* offers the voices of youth not only about their faith but also about their fear, hope, failings, regret, longing, joy, and passion.

Includes dozens of youth-written prayers and information on how, where, and when to pray. The book is perfect for teenagers, young adults, adults, and youth leaders—anyone looking to engage and understand young people today.

9780819228659 | \$18.00

These resources are available through Cokesbury at 800.672.1789, at Cokesbury.com, at Episcopal booksellers, and wherever fine Christian products are sold.

Follow us on  



CHURCH PUBLISHING INCORPORATED

Church Publishing • Morehouse Publishing • Seabury Books
Morehouse Church Supplies • Morehouse Education Resources