

October 6, 2020

Greetings Faith Formation Colleagues!

Here we are seven months into living our reality during this CoVid-19 Pandemic. Who would have thought back in March when our travel was curtailed that we would still be in this season today? Yesterday I was approached by a faithful parishioner after mass who asked, “can we please look at each other and acknowledge who is here at the very least during the sign on peace”? He said we are in desperate need of community right now, and we are not even looking at each other. He is right - people are hurting and feeling alone and isolated which is why our focus from the Faith Formation Team has been, “supporting welcoming and belonging in parish life during the pandemic.” As you may recall in July, we announced 6 new opportunities that would support parishes’ faith formation efforts over the next 12 months. They can be found [here](#) but I also wanted to give a brief report on the ones that are either completed or underway.



Our first initiative “Digital Ministry Workshops” has been completed. This initiative offered tools to facilitate a zoom meeting from the beginner to the more advanced. Here are some statistics from these workshops; Forty-three different people registered for one or more of the workshops, with four additional people attending without registering. Thirty-one different parishes were represented, and three participants attended all six of the different workshops offered. The workshops have been uploaded to our website as a resource for those who were unable to attend the workshops at the scheduled time. <https://www.eriecnd.org/workshops.html>



We are currently in the middle of our second initiative, which is Ministry and Leadership Development: A Cohort for New Ministers. Ministers will grow in human formation and in skills around planning for needs-based ministry, program assessment, and more. The 5 hour/week commitment will include weekly Zoom classes, 1:1 mentorship, and assignments that will lead to planning their Spring 2021 semesters. There are “12 recently-hired faith formation ministers from across all 3 vicariates are participating.”



Samuel Groups: Samuel Group invites young adults ages 20-30 who seriously desire to discern God's will for their lives. This seven-month journey provides the tools for how to discern properly with peace, joy, and confidence. Participants are called to discover whom and what they are truly made for, and how to embrace God's call in every stage of life. We currently have 17 young adults from all three vicarates participating along with 5 core team members and 15 spiritual directors.



The Marriage and Family Life Office was honored to join over 140 couples in celebrating milestone wedding anniversaries. In August, the couples shared their names and anniversaries as well as some vignettes, all of which are currently published online at the address above. We were happy to celebrate with them! Each couple enjoyed receiving a package that contained commemorative framed art, a certificate including them in a novena of Masses, and a certificate of congratulations from Bishop Persico. The anniversary celebrations always renew a sense of gratitude for these couples and the example they give of married love. We are already prayerfully anticipating a return to in-person celebrations in early August 2021.

<https://www.eriecd.org/familylifeoffice/ac.html#stories>



Love Thy Neighbor: Make a Difference at Home experience

An opportunity for high school students around the Diocese to come together virtually and, on-your-own, in-person to learn about Catholic Social Teaching issues affecting our community, build relationships with community organizations, and start change. It is a 5-day experience November 15-19 for a flexible two hours a day. To register and for more information, go here:

<https://www.eriecd.org/youth/lovethyneighbor.html>



Welcome Babies! For those who have not heard the big news, the Faith Formation Team will welcome two babies in the near future! Jessie Hubert and her husband Matt will welcome their 3rd child in mid-November, and Kate Wilson and her husband Chris will welcome their 1st child in mid-January. We are excited to welcome this new life into our Church and our team! We're committed to providing continuity of support to you as the Faith Formation team, even while two of our teammates will be out for several months. Jessie and Kate both plan to take 12 weeks to be home with their little ones, and the rest of us look forward to helping to cover for them while they're away. Please plan to reach out to Steve, Jillian, and/or Mary in the absence of one of our new mothers, so we can assist you!

As we continue to navigate this pandemic season, may we be aware of those around us; our school children who are living a different kind of school year, our teachers who have had to learn new ways of teaching, our homebound who are feeling isolated, our lay ministers who may have had their ministries postponed during this time, for those getting married, for student athletes and coaches, for parents who have had to adjust their routines, and especially for our priests and Bishop! We have many things to pray for, but we have been given many blessings too! May God continue to bless each one of you!

Sincerely,

The Faith Formation Team

Deacon Steve Washek

Mary Hickin

Jessie Hubert

Kate Wilson

Jillian Zaczyk