

ADULT RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

BUILDING COMMUNITY WITH ADULTS

The *General Directory for Catechesis*, (1997) continues to support the notion that adults must have the pre-eminent place in the catechetical mission of parishes. This theme has been consistently repeated in all catechetical documents since the Second Vatican Council including, John Paul II's apostolic exhortation on catechesis, *Catechesi Tradendae*.

One way to meet the needs of adults that has been effective in parishes around the world is Small Christian Communities. In the Diocese of Erie these groups are viewed not just as 'Tuesday night activities' but as a way for people to be Church for one another.

Small Christian Communities are defined as groups of persons who meet together on a regular basis. In the groups there is reading from Scripture based on the Sunday Liturgy, reflection on the reading, prayer, looking at the Scripture in light of their lives and then deciding what action might happen in one's own life or in the life of the group from what has been discussed. There is no pressure to share anything, so individuals are free to participate as they prefer. In the day and age in which we presently live, participation at Sunday Mass alone does not seem to be enough to nourish faith. Adults need additional ways to help them to grow as a spiritual people of God.

If a parish is interested in pursuing this vision, the Diocese, through the Office of Small Christian Communities, is very helpful and supportive. Parishes are invited to form Core communities or Core Teams who are responsible to work with the pastor to make this vision happen. The Diocese will provide training and assistance for every level of the process. This will involve the training of the Core Team, help in training facilitators, and assistance in choosing materials. This process can take anywhere from six months to a year. Much time is taken for the Core Team to understand the "Vision of Church as Community" as they are building the Church of the future, not just getting another program started in the parish.



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ADULT FORMATION TEAMS

The Adult Formation Team is a group of six to twelve people who come together to form community themselves and to minister by providing for adult religious education and small Christian community development in the parish.

Tasks include...

Helping parishioners understand the need for adult education.

Establishing goals and objectives for small Christian communities.

Planning and implementing programs for adult religious education.

Providing resources for adult faith development.

Communicating the work of the Adult Formation Team to parishioners.



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Whenever we gather people together in parishes, there is a desire to build community among them. Whether it is for pre-Baptismal classes or other sessions geared toward sacramental preparation, parishioners should not leave without having grown in faith and relationship with other members of the parish.

How can this be done?

Provide opportunities for participants to share something of their lives with one another at all parish meetings, i.e. finance council, pastoral council, wedding rehearsals.

Always make the questions simple so that people are not threatened by them.

Allow people to share in groups of two or three.

Prepare an opening prayer and include a question for sharing. Questions related to the Gospel or other Scripture readings can be useful. Another way to encourage sharing is to use a question based on people's experience of the sacrament that they are seeking for their child.

For example: What do you remember of your First Communion or Confirmation?

Why do you want to have your child baptized?

What value do you see in the Sacrament of Penance?

There are many resources available that offer these types of questions.

For example: <i>Exploring the Sunday Scripture</i>	phone #	800-321-0411
<i>Sunday by Sunday</i>	phone #	800-232-5533
<i>Quest</i>	phone #	860-423-9642

For more information about these resources or for other suggestions for help with prayers and questions for sharing, visit the Web page of the Diocese of Erie. (www.eriercd.org; click on "Religious Education;" then click on "Small Communities.")

Coffee and donuts accomplish social interaction but to build Christian community, prayer and the sharing of lives is essential.

For additional resources: > [Small Christian Communities](#)

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SMALL CHRISTIAN COMMUNITIES - CORE TEAMS

Some parishes have a separate team, apart from the adult formation team, that is responsible for small community development. This group is called the CORE Community or Core Team and their responsibilities are as follows:

Incorporate the five elements of community (prayer, support, sharing, learning and outreach) into the Core Team.

Pray and reflect on the vision of parish as being a community made up of many smaller communities and discern implications for the parish.

Establish goals and objectives for the development of small Christian communities in the parish.

Attend sessions that will enable the team to train small community facilitators.

Discern from the parish rolls those people who may have the gift for leadership of small communities.

Work with the pastor to invite potential facilitators to go through the training process.

Plan and coordinate leadership training sessions.

Plan and coordinate small community experiences for the parish.

Coordinate resources for use in small communities.

Plan, in consultation with the pastor, the monthly facilitator meetings.

Provide, with the pastor, ongoing support and formation for facilitators through the monthly meetings.

Assist the pastor in linking the small communities to the total parish.

Sponsor occasions which bring together all small community members.

Make suggestions for possible action or outreach for the communities as needs become known within the parish.

Coordinate recruitment efforts for new small community members.

Make every effort to link small communities to the RCIA effort.

Be available to assist other parish groups to develop a more communal style of meeting.

Evaluate progress and growth of small communities.

Maintain contact with the diocesan department for the formation of Small Christian Communities.