

Faith Formation Year-End Report 2015-2016

COMMITTEE TRANSITION AND GROWTH

In the transition of staff leadership from Judy Doonan-Twohy to Pat Howard, Fr. Doug and Pat H. decided to pause the meetings of the Faith Formation (then) Commission (FFC). This allowed three things to take place:

- 1) Provide time for Pat H.'s transition into new responsibilities as supervisor of the Faith Formation Team, of which he had been a member for sixteen years serving with Youth Faith Formation (and at one point Confirmation as well);
- 2) Move the FFC from commission to committee; and
- 3) Give the (GROW) Youth Engagement Study Group time and space to accomplish its mission and provide its findings to the FFC—thus giving a reconstituted FFC definite, concrete starting points in its work.

To that end:

- 1) Pat enjoys his work and is grateful for the opportunity to serve the people of St. John Neumann.
- 2) The FFC has a completely new membership as part of the -ission/-ittee conversion.
 - a. Fr. Doug and Pat H. concurred that a fresh set of eyes on the issues, especially any growing from GROW, would be beneficial.
 - b. The current membership has been by invitation and with Fr. Doug's approval to convey a sense of importance and urgency. The members of the renovated FFC are:
 - i. Bob Gerads
 - ii. Brad Neuman
 - iii. Joe Raasch
 - iv. Niki Rudolph
 - v. Lisa Stoll
 - vi. Terri Wong
 - vii. (Fr. Doug, Pat H.)
 - c. Lisa and Terri were members of the (GROW) Youth Engagement Study Group; they provide continuity and understanding of the end-product and the process/conversations that led to it—as well as their own perspectives and connections with faith formation at St. John Neumann.
 - d. The FFC has had one meeting, with a second scheduled for June 8. On the agenda for June 8 is the discernment of chair, etc.
- 3) The (GROW) Youth Engagement Study Group met from early October through the end of January to “enhance SJN's Faith Formation ministries so youth are fully aware of the relevance of their Catholic faith and are living as ‘fully engaged Catholics’, emphasizing the continued participation of those who have received Confirmation.”
 - a. The Study Group's proposal is available for any who have not had a chance to see it.
 - b. The proposal gives the FFC (and staff) a springboard for discussion and action. Both appreciate the work of the Study Group and look forward to continuing the exploration of the relevant topics, not to mention the work involved in meeting the real needs of the community's children, youth, and adults.

STAFF CHANGES

In May of 2015, Judy Doonan-Twohy retired and moved to Arizona; Pat was asked to consider stepping into the position of Director of Faith Formation. Pat officially began that work July 1, 2015.

Tammy Baker, after three years of volunteer work in SJN's youth ministries (and ten years of previous volunteer youth ministry in Florida plus work towards a Youth Ministry Certificate), was hired to join Steve Grass in youth ministry. Tammy and Steve have a re-shuffled re-configuration of Pat and Steve's previous job descriptions, consisting of Youth Ministry / Youth Catechesis / Confirmation Preparation.

Sad for us but good for her, Mary Brezinski has also chosen to retire, effective June 30. We currently are in the hiring process with hopes of a seamless transition. Responsibility for preparation for First Reconciliation and First Eucharist will shift to the new Director of Elementary Faith Formation.

NUMBERS

We are often asked about numbers. Below is a two-year chart showing the "big picture" for Faith Formation and Sacramental Preparation (1st Reconciliation, 1st Eucharist, and Confirmation). Numbers, of course, do not tell the story of the actual ministry taking place, but they are a helpful part of the conversation. Some number-change thoughts are provided on the next page.

<i>Faith Formation</i>	2013-2014	2014-2015	Change	2015-2016	Change	Two Year Change
Grades PK & K	117	119	+2	120	+1	+3
Grades 1-5	485	458	-27	431	-27	-54
Grades 6-12	587	526	-61	506	-20	-81
<i>Total Faith Formation Registration</i>	<i>1,189</i>	<i>1,103</i>	<i>-86</i>	<i>1,057</i>	<i>-46</i>	<i>-132</i>
<i>Sacramental Preparation</i>	2013-2014	2014-2015	Change	2015-2016	Change	Two Year Change
1 st Eucharist & 1 st Reconciliation	141	123	-18	127	4	-14
1 st Reconciliation only	13	0	-13	8	8	-5
Confirmation	179	146	-33	170	24	-9
<i>Total Sacramental Preparation Registrations</i>	<i>333</i>	<i>269</i>	<i>-64</i>	<i>305</i>	<i>36</i>	<i>-28</i>

A few thoughts on the numbers:

1. Sunday School (Pre-Kindergarten and Kindergarten) is just about steady from year to year.
2. Elementary grades saw a reduction each year.
 - a. Two years ago every class size decreased as they moved up one grade. The only exceptions are last year's second and tenth grades, as is typical with an increase in children and youth preparing for sacraments.
 - b. This past year there was a significant decrease in the transition from second to third grade (33 of the 141 second graders did not return, or 23%).
 - c. We are considering strategies for retention.
3. Middle School and High School grades saw a reduction both years, in good part due to fewer sixth graders entering than 10th graders moving out—class sizes have changed within the ministry. It would be wonderful if those older youth would stay for 11th and 12th grade formation, but those numbers have remained relatively unchanged through the years (approximately 13 per year).
 - a. We continue to have conversations regarding retaining those older youth.
 - b. It should be noted that many older youth serve in leadership and ministry roles (catechists, retreat teams, liturgical roles, etc.). “Not in Faith Formation” does not equal “moved on”.
4. Numbers for Sacramental Preparation are always fluid, depending on class sizes and family mobility. The number of younger kids is expected to be much lower (by 20%) this next year, while Confirmation preparation numbers will also be somewhat, (following the demographics). Our staff remains on their toes for planning.
5. A comparative study of local demographics, laying our Faith Formation registration patterns on top of local school class sizes, has not been done. This would be helpful:
 - a. to gauge effectiveness, and
 - b. for planning.

BEYOND THE CLASSROOMS

RCIA accompanied youth and adults into the Church throughout the year.

Bible Study...studied the Bible. The Parish Retreat was very well received; Fr. John Hatcher, SJ, gave beautiful reflections on God's love and our place in that love, individually and as a Church. Adult Formation also participated in several offerings with Social Justice.

Youth Ministry held weekly discipleship nights at the LightHouse called, appropriately, “LightHouse.” They also held game and movie nights, led the Stations of the Cross for the parish, and sent greeting cards to quite a number of older parishioners. Throw in a few retreats, preparing for the upcoming trip to San Lucas Tolimán, Guatemala, collaborating with Tweens, and developing youth's leadership skills through all these and more (not to mention Camp SonLight and Summer Stretch).

Children's Formation is preparing for Vacation Bible School at the end of July, which will come after Mary Brezinski has retired and her still-to-be-hired successor comes on board. Last year's VBS was a success—for this, for her great care for her catechists and kids, and for her good-natured-ness while tending to the details, we will miss Mary. Many blessings to her as she enjoys long books on the deck.

LOOKING AHEAD

The staff and the Committee look forward to continuously, creatively, and especially prayerfully fine-tuning our ministries to engage the parish in ongoing discipleship in Christ. We will examine and properly respond to “the numbers”. We will be attuned to “best practices” presented by modern research while seeking the deep wisdom of the Church. We will be collaborative, bringing Faith Formation ministries into meaningful conversation with each other and with other ministries.

Through all our work, we will seek God’s truth, to worship him faithfully and to serve him and each other with joy.

Presented: June 1, 2016

Pat Howard

Director of Faith Formation

Church of St. John Neumann