

## **Notes: Brainstorming Session on Youth Ministry, May 22, 2023**

**Participating:** Mary McKenna, Bill Faust, Barbara Cullin, Susan Tobia (Facilitator), Veronica Alvarado (Scribe), Sr. Ruthann O'Mara, Anji Johnson, Nina Heverin-Alvarado (15-year-old, provided teen responses post meeting), Mary Nolan (email)

Opened the session with an excerpt from "Why I Take My Teens to Mass" by Sherry Antonetti, *America*, May 2023

### **1. When we say youth ministry, what ages do you envision? Why?**

- Anyone ages 6+ years
- Can we draw from the school students?
  - Students from the school are not part of the parish.
  - Can students be invited?
- Grade 8-12 age group
- Segmented by grades/ages: K-5 grade (traditionally CLOW); 5-8 grade (traditionally Confirmation Prep); 8-12 grade (traditionally Teen Ministry); 18 – 21 years (Pre-Young Adult Group – 'Acutis Club')
- Teen response: teenagers 13-18 yrs.

### **2. What would a youth ministry at Holy Cross look like?**

- Youth group meeting with food and activities that meets monthly.
- Dedicated Leader needed, paid person perhaps.
- Sunday evening, 7- 8:30pm
- PREP (or CCD) program ongoing across the years, starting at K-8<sup>th</sup> grade, then you join the 'youth group'; PREP was mandatory program in past years in parishes.
- Teens need a group to belong to.
- 'Listening circles' to answer questions they might have may appeal to them.
- Disconnect in communication noted: for First Communion recipients, congregation was not informed; it would have been nice to know.
- Popular program: (VBS) Vacation Bible School targeting younger children; Sisters of the Holy Redeemer have a great model of VBS that they use; curriculum is comprehensive; many volunteers are needed to execute the program and at least 6-8 months needed for planning & preparation.
- HCPPC (planning committee) established years prior to the pandemic engaged children from the parish with nonreligious activities, such as a trip to Lancaster; adults and children alike participated.
- Education, socialization, and religious programming with food
- Side note: promote Kids Bible study more frequently in bulletin; perhaps start there to build YM.
- The FIAT Prayer Group has member children ranging from ages 7-15; might be a good first group to invite.
- Teen response: meets weekly for discussions and prayer; talk about current events and weekly readings perhaps; weekends preferred with food & fun games.

**3. Do you have any youth in your household? What would attract them to participate?**

- Children's Choir, living stations, PREP attracted the youth who wanted to be with their friends.
- The family / parents brought the children, so they became accustomed to coming to church.
- Kids need to be able to participate in the activities of the church (altar server, lectors, choir, greeters, ushers); give them leadership roles - Jr. PPC members / advisors.
- Listen to the kids; children need to feel seen and heard.
- Young families with infants and fidgety toddlers need to feel supported while at church.
- Children's Lending Library Bookshelf in middle pew was popular (borrow / bring a book).
- Teen response: an already active group that actually does stuff; well-advertised during Mass and in Flocknote.

**4. Who should/would lead a youth ministry program?**

- DRE or PREP coordinator
- CLOW is coming in a new form; previously facilitated by lay parent volunteers of participants and a nun and coordinated by a staff person.
- A younger (18–30-year-old) lay leader appeals more to teens, or relatable clergy; relatability is key.
- Side note: PREP programming with Sr Ruthann was recognized and acknowledged by a family over Easter to a Greeter.
- Teen response: a young adult, someone 25-35 years old; young enough to be physically active and more attuned to current issues and trends (social media is important).

**5. Close your eyes and think back to a time of your youth. Based on the ages you envision, what are events that we could realistically begin at HC that would welcome and engage them?**

- A 'Shepherd' for youth to attract and lead them.
- Archdiocese might have some point people available they can recommend to us.
- How many young people do we have to serve? At least a dozen plus between ages of 6-16.
- Focus groups which include young people would be helpful in planning something for them specifically; might start with inviting Altar Servers and Kids Bible Study participants to a conversation.
- There are many Archdiocesan resources that speak directly to ministering to children and teens that can be used as a framework and basis for what we develop at HCP.
- Teen response: to attract them – trip to the movies that is age appropriate (nonreligious, Mario Bros for example); more activities like the September picnic; game nights; outside games (corn hole, etc.). Final thought: market to specific age group; have a good lay leader; meet consistently; once a group is established, invite

them to share their ideas; start with food/light activities, then religious discussion and sharing – combining religious reflection and learning with fun activities helps build a friendly group experience.

- We need young families in order to have teens in the mix at some point! I don't know any in the neighborhood attending HC church or school. Are we still offering Liturgy of the Word at the 11? Is there any CYO sports happening in the NW section of the city? That was the key method of getting teens together 20-30 years ago: dances, bowling, roller skating, retreat days. Teens Inc.(Chestnut Hill) used to sponsor ski trips and still travels to Guatemala for regular service trips. Since our peoplepower is limited at HC, it feels like the best idea is to support/hookup with an already established program. Perhaps St. Raymond's has youth activities on their calendar.
- OMC's teen ministry is well established and active. They have 12 - 25 teens there any given week. The contact person is Paul Cillo, a young new dad and kind human. Kids love him.