What's Working in Adult Faith Formation

NCCL Online Conference
February 16, 2023
(1) One size doesn't fit all
Communities of Like Interest
“A product for everyone rarely reaches anyone.”

– Seth Godin

in *Small Is the New Big*
Seasons of Adulthood

Young Adults
20s-30s

Midlife Adults
40s-mid 50s

Mature Adults
mid 50s-mid 70s

Older Adults
75+
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<td>Hard work</td>
<td>Workaholics</td>
<td>Eliminate the task</td>
<td>What’s next</td>
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<td>Respect authority</td>
<td>Work efficiently</td>
<td>Self-reliance</td>
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<td>Sacrifice</td>
<td>Crusading causes</td>
<td>Want structure and</td>
<td>Tenacity</td>
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<td>Duty before fun</td>
<td>Personal fulfillment</td>
<td>direction</td>
<td>Entrepreneurial</td>
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<td>Adhere to rules</td>
<td>Desire quality</td>
<td>Skeptical</td>
<td>Tolerant</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>Question authority</td>
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<td>Goal oriented</td>
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<td>Work is...:</td>
<td>An obligation</td>
<td>An exciting adventure</td>
<td>A difficult challenge</td>
<td>A means to an end</td>
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<td>A contract</td>
<td>Fulfillment</td>
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<td>Leadership Style:</td>
<td>Directive</td>
<td>Consensual</td>
<td>Everyone is the same</td>
<td>The young leaders</td>
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<td>Command-and-control</td>
<td>Collegial</td>
<td>Challenge others</td>
<td>Century</td>
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<td>Ask why</td>
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<td>Interactive Style:</td>
<td>Individual</td>
<td>Team player</td>
<td>Entrepreneur</td>
<td>Participative</td>
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<td>Loves meetings</td>
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<td>Communications:</td>
<td>Formal</td>
<td>In person</td>
<td>Direct</td>
<td>Email</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td>Written</td>
<td></td>
<td>Immediate</td>
<td>Voice mail</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feedback &amp; Rewards:</td>
<td>No news is good news</td>
<td>Don’t appreciate it</td>
<td>Sorry to interrupt, but</td>
<td>Whenever I want it, at</td>
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<td>Satisfaction in a job</td>
<td>Money</td>
<td>how am I doing?</td>
<td>the push of a button</td>
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<td>well done</td>
<td>Title recognition</td>
<td>Freedom = best reward</td>
<td>Meaningful work</td>
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<td>Messages that</td>
<td>Your experience is</td>
<td>You are valued</td>
<td>Do it your way</td>
<td>Working with other</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>motivate:</td>
<td>respected</td>
<td>You are needed</td>
<td>Forget the rules</td>
<td>bright, creative people</td>
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<tr>
<td>Work &amp; Family Life:</td>
<td>Work</td>
<td>No balance</td>
<td>Balance</td>
<td>Balance</td>
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<td>Work to live</td>
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Core Questions

Middlescence: Who have I become as a person?

Young Adulthood: What is my calling?

Adolescence: Where do I fit?

Childhood: When do I want to be grown up?

Birth

Young Older Adulthood: How do I measure my success as a person?

Eldershood: What value-legacy have I added to people's lives?
Program for Young Parents

Our Program for Young Parents (PYP) is specially tailored to parents 25 years and younger. In PYP virtual groups, you will:

- Gain a greater understanding of your child
- Make new friends
- Learn positive approaches to discipline
- Learn stress management
- Build a support network

New group starts
April 6, 2021
from 6-7:30 pm.

BEST YEARS BOOK CLUB
A BOOK GROUP FOR SENIORS
Pay attention to what’s happening in life around us
Reflection Questions about your Experience of Sheltering-In and Opening Up

- What do you anticipate missing about sheltering-in if anything?

- What are your biggest anxieties about things opening back up?

- What have you learned about yourself in these last few months that was unexpected or meaningful to you?

- What have you learned about the country you live in, and how has that learning shaped how you want to show up as a citizen?

- Share a quintessential story of your sheltering-in — a small moment that really broke/touched/buoyed your heart that you never want to forget.

From Courtney Martin’s newsletter [https://courtney.substack.com/p/you-tell-me-will-we-miss-this?token=](https://courtney.substack.com/p/you-tell-me-will-we-miss-this?token=) May 27, 2020
(3) Small Groups

SMALL GROUPS
Developing deep rooted relationships with God and each other
Prayer
Sharing
Learning
Mutual Support
Mission
Small Groups

Study/faith-sharing groups
Small Groups

- Study/faith-sharing groups
- Gift discovery and strengths development groups
A Best Practice: Empowering the Living of Gifts

Do you remember the Hasidic tale of the Rabbi Zusya? When he was an old man Zusya said, “In the coming world, they will not ask me, ‘Why were you not Moses?’ They will ask me, ‘Why were you not Zusya?’” (Tales of the Hasidism: The Early Masters by Martin Buber, Schocken Books, 1975).

God calls each of us to be who we are, who we uniquely are created to be, with our gifts and strengths.

Perhaps that is one of the goals of our parishes, one of the goals of adult faith formation: to encourage and support each person — in the maturing and deepening of their strengths and gifts as they grow to be their best selves, who God created them to be.

One of the tools used today, by individuals, corporations, educational enterprises, healthcare professionals, employers — as well as churches — throughout the world is the StrengthsFinder from the Gallup Organization.

In 1952, a young graduate student, Donald O. Clifton looked around at psychology’s hyper focus on deficits and illness and wondered:

“What would happen if we actually studied what is right with people?”

In his career, Clifton was to be Gallup’s board chair and lead a team of Gallup researchers whose work today has resulted in helping people around the world identify their talents and develop them into strengths — for themselves and others.

As parishes and churches throughout the world have looked for ways to

the Clifton StrengthsFinder is one tool that is being used — in various ways — in every corner of the planet.

The beginning process is simple. Participants answer an online survey, which takes approximately thirty minutes to complete. Gallup has narrowed down personal attributes into thirty-four signature strengths. Within minutes of taking the survey, each individual’s top five signature strengths are emailed to them.

Gallup offers several publications which suggest various strategies for using and deepening these strengths: Living Your Strengths: Discover Your God-Given Talents and Inspire Your Community by Albert L. Winseman, Donald O. Clifton, and Curt Liesveld is the Catholic edition.

Most Americans do not know what their strengths are.
When you ask them, they look at you with a blank stare, or they respond in terms of subject knowledge, which is the wrong answer.

-Peter Drucker

In the Foreword to Living Your Strengths, Monsignor Bill Hanson (pastor of Church of St. Gerard Majella, Post Jefferson Station, New York) recounts that his parishioners have three reactions when they take the Clifton StrengthsFinder:
Small Groups

- Study/faith-sharing groups
- Gift discovery and strengths development groups
- Accountability groups
Small Groups

- Study/faith-sharing groups
- Gift discovery and strengths development groups
- Accountability groups
- Support groups
Curate rather than create

Offer playlists
Curator

- Research content and experiences
- Assess and evaluate
- Organize
- Make available
Playlists

The idea of a playlist is simple: it is a sequence of activities and resources on a topic designed for individual and/or small group learning, usually available on a digital platform.
When you have 5-10 minutes

Prayer/Meditation
- Breath Prayers - here are some suggestions from [Guideposts](#)
- 10 New Ways to Pray from [franciscan media](#)
- [Prayer Practices for Disciples: Creating a Life with God](#)

Devotion/Scripture Reading
- Read through the Gospel of [Mark](#) (or another book of the Bible) and write down your thoughts, questions, or things you notice in a notebook or journal.
- [Devoted: Discipleship Around the Globe](#)
- [Upper Room](#)

Acts of Compassion
- Write a thank you or a note of appreciation
- Collect food for a local food pantry
- Donate money or items to a non-profit in your community

Acts of Justice
- Become more aware of social situations by being attentive to a reputable media source (newspaper, podcast, tv, radio, internet, etc)
- Recycle (and if it is not available in your area, advocate for it)
- Return or donate can/plastic/glass returnables

Additional Ideas
- [Lifelong Faith](#)
- [Vibrant Faith @Home](#)
- [Building Faith](#)
When you have 10-30 minutes

Prayer/Meditation
- Praying the Scriptures (Lectio Divina)
- Praying the Psalms
- Intercessory Prayer
- Praying in Color
- Upper Room has a list of prayer resources with many, many ideas.
- Prayer Practices for Disciples: Creating a Life with God
- Podcast: Pray As You Go

Devotion/Scripture Reading
- Choose a book of the Bible (suggestions are Romans, Acts, Genesis, Exodus, or Psalms) and write down your thoughts, questions, or things you notice in a notebook or journal.
- Try Bible Journaling
- Devoted: Discipleship Around the Globe
- Upper Room Disciplines

Acts of Compassion
- Spend dedicated time with my child/children/partner/etc each day
- Connect with a family member or friend each week
- Practice active listening as a means of grace

Acts of Justice
- Practice responsible stewardship
- Speak out against racism, sexism, racism, classism, ableism among friends and family
- Pick up litter along the roadside or a local park
- Write a letter to an elected official about a cause you care about

Additional Ideas
- Read Streams of Living Water by Richard Foster
- Read The Spirit of the Disciplines by Dallas Willard
- Read A Shored Christian Life by Ben Witherington, III
- Read any books by Henri Nouwen
When you have 30 or more minutes

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Prayer/Meditation</th>
<th>Devotion/Scripture Reading</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- Prayer Practices for Disciples: Creating a Life with God</td>
<td>- Read the Bible in a Year</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Spend a longer time in prayer.</td>
<td>- When you read the Bible, try using an inductive approach as you read asking the following questions: “What does this passage say?” “What does this passage mean?” “What does this passage mean to my life?”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Consider a prayer journal to write down your prayer requests and celebrations. Look back over your past requests and celebrations to see how God has been present.</td>
<td>- Use Bible Study tools like a commentary, Bible dictionary, or other resources for deeper understanding.</td>
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<td>- Centering Prayer with Joe Stabile</td>
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**Acts of Compassion**

- Spend one hour a week visiting/calling/checking-in on someone who may be lonely
- Spend at least one house volunteering in your community
- Get to know a person or family of a different economic or ethnic background than you

**Acts of Justice**

- Actively support movements for justice, equality, and/or peace (here's an article with ideas about getting started)
- Become an advocate for a cause you stand for
- Take action to improve the natural environment (either local or global)

**Additional Ideas**

- Read *Celebration of Discipline* by Richard Foster
- Read *Three Simple Rules for Christian Living* by Jeanne Torrence Finley and Rueben P. Job
- Read *Spiritual Rhythms for the Enneagram* by Doug Calhoun, Adele Ahlberg Calhoun, and Clare Loughridge
**PRAY**

Pray together:

alleluia! The Lord is risen! He is risen, indeed! alleluia!
Risen Lord, we praise you! We celebrate your love for the
world through Jesus Christ. Help us to share the good
news that Jesus is alive! alleluia! amen.

**DO**

**Holy Moji**

A Journey to Easter

Add to your "Journey to Easter" display in your house for Easter.

Click here to get access to the coloring sheets and instructions.

Easter Scavenger Hunt

Great for children AND youth! Fill up your Easter basket with items
story of Easter.

Adapted from St. Luke’s Presbyterian, designed by Roselle Bradford.

Flowering the Cross

Flowers are a sign of new life in spring. Through the resurrection, we
Decorated your cross (from Good Friday) with flowers as a symbol
Christ. Click the image for instructions on how to make tissue paper.

**READ/WATCH/LISTEN**

Children’s Video

Watch this video that tells the story of Easter. Do you have a children’s Bible
at home? Lock up this story in your Bible after the video and read it
together.

Youth/Adult Video

Watch this creative, contemplative reading of the Easter story as told from
John 20. What words or images stir in you as you hear and see it?

**WONDER**

I WONDER...

- I wonder if you’ve even been surprised before? Share a good surprise with
your family.
- I wonder what Mary thought when she came to the tomb and it was empty?
- Mary and the women went to tell others the good news that Jesus is risen.
  What good news can you tell others about Jesus?

Have you ever wondered why Jesus doesn’t appear to people today?
Check out this video to learn more!
Want More?

Enjoy a time of Children and Worship together with the story of "Jesus is Risen".

Alleluia Poster
Create a beautiful Alleluia poster to hang in a window and share the good news with all who walk by! Thanks to Illustrated Ministry for this free resource. www.illustratedministry.com

Resurrection Practices
Engage in these resurrection practices during the season of Easter! (Did you know Easter is more than one day? The Easter season is seven weeks long!). Resource from Traci Smith: www.tracismith.com
A life of faith does not prevent us from experiencing periods of uncertainty. Those times can leave us feeling disoriented and uncomfortable, even questioning where God is. This experience is called *liminal—the time between what was and what is to be*. This playlist is designed to help you find faith, encouragement, and guidance for navigating through uncertain times.
Embracing Liminal Space

Watch

Psalm 13 (click here)

Read verses 1-2.

- Describe the Psalm writer’s complaint and feelings.
- Describe a situation when you have had similar feelings.
- How did you pray about the situation?

Read verses 3-4. The Psalm writer appears to be responding to a situation that lasts a long time without resolution.

- When you face this kind of situation, how are your responses like the Psalm writer’s? How are they different?

Read verses 5-6.

- What is your response when you receive an answer to prayer and resolution of a troubling situation?

Write a psalm or prayer of lament about an uncertainty in your life.
Vividly recall a time of great uncertainty in your life.
What factors created the uncertainty?
Identify all of the feelings you were experiencing.
What helped you live through the uncertainty?
What was not helpful?
What did you learn about yourself?
To what degree did you call upon faith to sustain you?

**Great Is Thy Faithfulness** by Ce Ce Winans
As you listen, meditate on how you have experienced or need to experience God’s faithfulness in uncertain times.

**Guided Drawing**
Lay a sheet of plain paper or drawing paper horizontally. Draw a line from the top to the bottom, dividing it in two.

Color the left side with a color that represents uncertainty for you. Take a bold, different color and draw symbols, words, pictures that represent uncertainty.

Color the right side with a color that represents hope. With a bold, different color, draw symbols, words, pictures that represent hope.
Experiences in Prayer & the Spiritual Life

We have selected a variety of excellent experiences for you - all designed to guide you in developing your prayer life and in growing the practices of the spiritual life. We have developed our offerings to make it easy for you to find a program or activity or resource that best addresses how you want to learn and grow in prayer and the spiritual life. You can select from a variety of large group, small group, and on-your-own activities - some are In-person, some online formats, and some have in-person and online components.

The learning activities are organized into three types of experiences. We also offer programs that are for all adults.

- **For adults who are just getting started or need a refresher:** We have activities that introduce you to prayer and spiritual practices. Look for the activities with *introducing* or *developing* in the title.
- **For adults who are growing:** We have activities that help you become more confident in your practice of prayer and growing in your spiritual life. Look for activities with *growing* in the title.
- **For adults who want to go deeper:** We have activities that will deepen your knowledge and practice of prayer and the spiritual life. Look for activities with *going deeper* in the title.
Experience #1 (all adults). Prayer Practices - A 5-Week Program

Experiences for adults who are getting started, need a refresher, or growing in prayer

Topics
Session 1. Prayer Styles & Traditions
Session 2. Fixed-Hour Prayer
Session 3. Contemplation & Meditation
Session 4. Spiritual Reading & Praying with Art and Music
Session 5. Sabbath Practices

Choose How You Want to Participate
- Join us in-person on Tuesday morning at 10 am or Wednesday evening at 7 pm in the church center
- Watch the experience streamed live on YouTube Live.
- Watch the video of each experience on our website.
Experience #3. Learning to Pray by Fr. James Martin
An 8-Part Book Study and Experience

Experiences for all adults from those just getting started to those who want to go deeper

Description

*Learning to Pray* explains what prayer is, what to expect from praying, how to do it, and how it can transform us when we make it a regular practice in our lives. A trusted guide walking beside us as we navigate our unique spiritual paths, Fr. James Martin lays out the different styles and traditions of prayer throughout Christian history and invites us to experiment and discover which works best to feed our soul and build intimacy with our Creator. Father Martin makes clear there is not one secret formula for praying. But like any relationship, each person can discover the best style for building an intimate relationship with God, regardless of religion or denomination. Prayer, he teaches us, is open and accessible to anyone willing to open their heart.

Format

1. Prepare by reading by one or two designated chapters.
2. Meet with your group to discuss the chapter and experience the one type of prayer.
3. Practice the type of prayer during the week.
4. Share your experience of praying with the everyone engaged in the book study using our "Learning to Pray" Facebook Group.

Choose How You Want to Participate

- Join a book study group that meets weekly at church.
- Join a book study group that meets at home.
- Host your own book study group.
- Hold a book study group online at Zoom.
Experience #5. Practicing Spirituality - Take an E-Course with a Spiritual Guide

Go Deeper with a Spirituality and Practice e-course delivered to you daily.

Practicing Spirituality with Parker J. Palmer

Parker J. Palmer is a remarkable visionary, writer, speaker, teacher, and social activist who over the past 30 years has boldly addressed the major challenges and vitalities of education, community life, spirituality, and contemporary culture and society. Palmer is the founder and senior partner of the Center for Courage and Renewal where he has done pioneering work on the inner dimensions of leadership and the heart-based possibilities of democracy. "Practicing Spirituality with Parker J. Palmer" is a 40-part e-course that will enable you to take to your soul this key question: "Is the life I am living the same as the life that wants to live in me?" Via his writings Parker will be our spiritual advisor stirring within us a freshness and a flourishing that only a master teacher, seasoned seeker, and wounded healer could provide. You will also be able to listen to a recording of a two-hour teleconference held when this e-course was first offered in which Parker answers questions on a wide variety of subjects.

For more information on "Practice Spirituality with Parker J. Palmer"

Practicing Spirituality with Joyce Rupp

Joyce Rupp describes herself as a spiritual "midwife," a title that perfectly conveys the nurturing she does in her writing and teaching. She encourages us to bring our spirituality into the light of our everyday lives. Her books, workshops, and presentations always contain concrete spiritual practices, likely anecdotes, inspiring poetry, thoughtful journal exercises, guided meditations, and unique prayers. She has a gift for reading her own experiences and finding hints of God's presence in her daily activities. This 40-part e-course is based upon her writings. Subscribers receive an early morning email containing a short passage from one of Joyce Rupp's books and a simple suggested practice to do during the day to bring its wisdom into your life. We also work with some of her rituals and poetry every week.

For more information on "Practicing Spirituality with Joyce Rupp"

Practicing Spirituality with Thomas Keating

Thomas Keating is one of the foremost teachers of contemplative practices in the Christian tradition. He is a Trappist monk, a co-founder of the Centering Prayer movement, a prolific and accomplished author, the spiritual guide of Contemplative Outreach which has groups around the world, and a pioneer in the multi-faith movement to foster understanding among the world's religions. This e-course consists of a short excerpt from one of Thomas Keating's books, a related practice or reflection question is then offered to encourage you to apply the teaching to your life. Weekly emails link to short videos of Fr. Thomas.

For more information on "Practicing Spirituality with Thomas Keating"
Experience #8. Find an App for Daily Prayer

3-Minute Retreat
3-Minute Retreat invites you to take a short prayer break right and spend some quiet time reflecting on a Scripture passage.
- Online: https://www.loyolapress.com/3-minute-retreats-daily-online-prayer
- Spanish: www.loyolapress.com/3-minutos-de-retiro-oracion-diaria-online
- App: iOS and Android

d365 - Devotions 365 Days a Year (Young Adults)
In these devotions, you will read honest struggles and questions, all in the context of real faith. As you read the thoughts of the writers, think about your own response to the scripture for the day. Let the writer's words serve as background for your own conversation with God. Instrumental music is available for your devotional experience.
- Online: d365.org
- App: iOS and Android

Daily Prayer
Daily Prayer is an experiential app designed to develop long lasting spiritual rhythms of prayer and scripture reading. Join in prayer and read scripture in the morning, midday, and evening.
- Online: https://www.rethinkme.com
- App: iOS and Android

Daily Prayer App (Presbyterian Church USA)
The Daily Prayer app provides simple, yet rich devotional resources for morning, midday, evening, and close of day. Each service includes psalms and readings from the confessions. Other elements include opening and closing words, biblical canicles, a thanksgiving for light and a prayer of confession. An advanced features menu allows users to customize which elements appear.
- App: iOS and Android

Jesuit Prayer - Daily Prayer
Jesuit Daily Prayer includes a daily Scripture, Ignatian Reflection, and Ignatian Prayer. The prayer experience is provided every day of the week, with reflections rooted in Ignatian spirituality.
- Online: jesuitprayer.org
- App: iOS and Android

Pray As You Go
Pray As You Go is a daily prayer session, designed to go with you whenever you go, to help you pray whenever you find time, and lasting between ten and thirteen minutes with music, Scripture and questions for reflection.
- Online: www.pray-as-you-go.org
- App: iOS and Android

SoulSpace
SoulSpace meditation app has been created to help anchor your thoughts to the love of God and the way of Jesus. SoulSpace seeks to rid the soul of fear and stress while filling it with truth and life. This creates the opportunity for true and lasting wholeness.
(6)

Be creative

Think outside the box
# Many Ways to do AFF

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Presentations</th>
<th>Online activities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Scripture Study</td>
<td>Apps</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Book groups</td>
<td>Independent Learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support groups</td>
<td>Mission Trips</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Service</td>
<td>Sacramental Preparation and Mystagogy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blended learning</td>
<td>Parent-Grandparent Programs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retreats</td>
<td>Milestone Experiences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Courses</td>
<td>Small faith-sharing groups</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Many Ways to do AFF

- OCIA sponsor formation
- Weekly parish bulletin and website
- Convoy learning (field trips)
- Intergenerational programs
- Mentoring
- Theology on Tap
- Book Fairs
- Spiritual direction
- Drama
- Art
- Ministry formation
- Film festivals
- Prayer experiences
- Museum visits
- Spiritual autobiographies
A Best Practice: A Process for Gathering Parishioners for a Parish Book Study

Book clubs, as a form of adult faith formation, are popular in many parishes (as well as throughout our culture). The following unique best practice describes a process which invited all parishioners to become engaged in a book study this past Lent (2011).

Something to Consider as You Read...
- How might you use the following process in your parish?
- Which book(s) might your parish be ready to explore in this way?

RENEW small groups had been well received in the growing parish. Thus, when Disciples in Mission (a parish-wide experience of evangelization fostering spiritual renewal) was offered by the Paulist National Catholic Evangelization Association (now Paulist Evangelization Ministries), the Catholic Community of St. Francis Xavier embraced it wholeheartedly. Over four hundred parishioners participated in small groups for three years.

Then the parish found itself in the midst of a pastoral change so the staff decided not to embark on Why Catholic, another small group opportunity, offered by RENEW, until the newly assigned pastor could have some input on his vision for the parish.

Through this transition and change, an opportunity for small group faith sharing never resurfaced.

In April 2010, Pat Allshouse, the Director of Faith Formation, assembled a group of parishioners, inviting them to brainstorm ways to jump start Adult Faith Formation at the parish.

This group met several times throughout the summer and into the fall. Shortly before Christmas, Pat was given a copy of a newly-published book. After reading it, she thought it might be worth looking into for the parish, so Pat:

- purchased copies of the book
- gave them to the team
- asked each person to read a specific chapter
- and be ready to discuss it at their January meeting
What’s working?

- One size doesn’t fit all

- Responding to the life in front of us

- Small groups

- Curate rather than only create

- Offer playlists

- Be creative; think outside the box