
TRUSTING IN CHRIST: A CALL TO DISCIPLESHIP

A PASTORAL PLAN FOR EVANGELIZATION FOR THE DIOCESE OF YOUNGSTOWN

Implementation Report – Pentecost 2017

DIOCESAN ACTIONS

Department of Catholic Charities Services added an Office for Hispanic Ministry, including a diocesan Coordinator of Hispanic Ministry who oversees migrant ministry, general Hispanic ministry, and the Encuentro movement. Project Assisi is a pilot project that develops a long-term relationship with clients to support them in addressing their particular situation with the goal of self-sufficiency. The ministry of Catholic Charities is supported largely through volunteers (over 10,000 hours last year), so the department is focusing on recruiting and expanding the volunteer base.

Missions/Propagation of the Faith continues to support the missions abroad, missions in the United States through programs such as the Kentucky Mission Trip, and missions in our diocese, especially through Café Augustine. Café Augustine is a program that trains at risk young adults in work and life skills through employment at the café.

Office of Lay Ministry Formation was once again staffed with a director and restarted the Foundations in Ministry Program. The office also sponsored Specialized Ministry Courses in areas such as Scripture, Leadership Training, Prison Ministry, and Ministry to the Marginalized. Ministry to the Marginalized was a collaborative effort among the Office of Lay Ministry Formation, Office of Pro-life, Marriage, and Family Life, and Office of Social Action that focused on ministry to groups on the margins of our parishes and communities.

Department of Canonical Services reported that the timeframe for the annulment process has been reduced. In addition, Bishop Murry eliminated any fees associated with the process.

Office of Pro-Life, Marriage and Family Life has facilitated ministry to divorced Catholics in various areas of the diocese. The office is also developing Project Rachel (post abortive ministry), including a toll free number and email for those suffering, as well as training for priests and parish ministers in this important ministry. In collaboration with other organizations, the office offered nights on the family with topics such as trends in family life, a summary of “Amoris Laetitia,” and panel presentations on bullying as well as depression and addiction, especially the opioid crisis. The office also held memorial services for children lost to miscarriage or stillbirth and is working to increase ministry in this area.

Office of Worship continues to facilitate the formation of Lay Leaders of Prayer, commissioning about 25 per year to be leaders of prayer in their parish. The Cecilia Project identifies and trains potential

pastoral musicians. One group has completed the project and a second has begun. Interest in Liturgical formation remains strong as close to 300 people participated in the Liturgy Day Conference. The office also provides on-going support, advice, and direction to parishes on liturgical matters.

Office of Religious Education spearheaded the collaborative effort of diocesan offices in bringing Innovation Labs to the diocese to inspire creativity in parish ministry teams in the area of family ministry and digitally enabled ministry. The office also reported an increase in the number of requests for help from parishes in developing family centered catechesis, which the staff has provided. The Diocesan Council for Catechesis developed a program called “Stories and Scriptures,” which is an opportunity for parents of pre-school students to develop skills to share faith with their young children. The office has seen success where parishes have been able to increase funding for parish programs for adults, adolescents, and children. While parishes recognize the need for increased funding in these areas, availability of funds makes progress difficult in most parishes.

Office of Catholic Schools continues to improve the quality of Catholic education in the diocese and provides vision and support for our Catholic schools. Through regional systems and a variety of curricular and extra-curricular programming, the schools continue to provide quality education and faith formation for the whole person, setting the foundation for discipleship and lifelong faith formation.

Office of Youth and Young Adult Ministry continues to offer online training courses in catechesis, evangelization, and other areas of ministry. The office facilitated discussions with parish minister on the recent National Initiative on Adolescent Catechesis document, “The Joy of Adolescent Catechesis.” Currently the office is surveying youth, young adults, and adults who work with them to gather information for the October 2018 Synod on “Youth, Faith and Vocational Discernment.”

Office of Development and Stewardship hired additional personnel to enhance efforts of promoting and supporting stewardship in parishes, including Parish Offertory Programs, Capital Campaigns, and Life and Estate Seminars. The Stewardship Commission continues to promote and revise the “Toolkit for Building Parish Communities” and promote specific initiatives, such as the “Joy & Gratitude” social media campaign during the Easter Season.

Department of Financial Services held mandatory meetings for parish bookkeepers and representatives of the Parish Finance Council to clearly explain diocesan financial policy and procedures. The Department of Financial Services is also initiating regular audits of parish finances. Each parish will be audited every three years, or when there is a change of pastor.

Office of Vocations added regional associate directors of vocations to increase the office’s presence in Catholic schools, parishes, and college campus ministry. The office has promoted a cultural of vocational discernment through an increased number of presentations as well as having seminarians present at diocesan youth activities. Men’s and women’s discernment groups at Walsh University have been growing in number.

The departments and offices of the diocese collaboratively contributed to a diocesan formation program to prepare Parish Leaders for leadership at parishes without resident pastors. Deacons, religious, and lay men and women participated in this year long program that put them into contact with diocesan leaders of the various areas of Church life and ministry.

PARISH ACTIONS BY THEME

CHRISTIAN SERVICE

- In addition to ongoing efforts supporting Catholic Charities and emergency assistance programs, currently raising awareness about the addiction epidemic, especially the opioid crisis, by highlighting area programs and events (St. Joseph, Mantua).
- Initiated a food give away to local school district families (St. Patrick, Leetonia).
- Affirmed the many active service organizations in the parish, but also recognized the need for more global outreach as a parish (St. Paul, New Middletown).
- Established a program to connect older parishioners who need help with yard work or small repairs with parishioners willing to volunteer their time and expertise (Christ the Servant, Canton).
- Established a relationship with a local soup kitchen to provide ongoing volunteer support and non-perishable food items through a weekly food drive at the parish (Christ the Servant, Canton).
- Set out to identify the needs of parishioners and people in the neighborhood through direct contact with them (St. Angela Merici, Youngstown).
- Working with the local government to install smoke detectors in homes (St. Columba Cathedral Parish, Youngstown).
- Encourage on-going support of the Dorothy Day House and Café Augustine, including material support and active parishioner participation (Holy Family, Poland).
- Initiated a community meal program inviting the community for free food and fellowship (St. Christine, Youngstown).

EVANGELIZATION

- Initiated the ALPHA program to proclaim the good news in a hospitable environment, focusing on inactive and non-church going participants, resulting in some new active church members (St. Jude, Columbiana and Our Lady of Lourdes, East Palestine - Collaborative).
- Planned evening prayer and “fireside chat” Q & A sessions around the fire pit on parish grounds with the pastor and deacon (St. Joseph, Manuta).
- Sent a letter to inactive parishioners to reach out to them and update parish records (Regina Coeli, Alliance).
- Formed an evangelization team with initiatives to partner current families with new parishioners including an invitation to dinner, a “welcome back” letter to inactive parishioners (3 people responded), and a parish retreat advertised to the local community (St. Ambrose, Garrettsville).
- Plan to have a float in the local community parade to celebrate the parish anniversary (St. Stephen, Niles).
- Promoted more joyful congregations through an active welcoming committee, new parishioners listed monthly in the bulletin, greeters at all Masses, and “nametag Sundays” to help parishioners get to know each other (St. Michael, Canfield).

- Used a written and on-line survey of parishioners to identify and address areas of need, such as outreach to inactive parishioners, physical and security concerns within the parish, and a re-evaluation of Sacramental Programs (St. Joan of Arc, Canton).
- Creation of a Stewardship Committee to increase active participation of the laity in parish life and ministries (St. Peter of the Field, Rootstown).
- Revitalized the welcoming of new parishioners, including a new welcome brochure, a letter from the pastor, and parishioner couples contacting new parishioners personally (St. Patrick, Kent).
- Established a “Pew Packing Sunday” event where each person invites a non-practicing Catholic friend or family member to church and includes a reception after Mass with refreshments and information on parish organizations (St. Thomas the Apostle, Vienna).
- Initiative to make the parish grounds more welcoming and the church building more accessible (Our Lady of Perpetual Help, McDonald).
- Planned a new member lunch, along with a stewardship fair (St. Joseph, Alliance).
- Developed small faith sharing groups, which were advertised through pulpit announcements and an invitation card (Ss. Philip and James, Canal Fulton).
- Use of the ALPHA Program to discuss faith with a target audience of non-active Catholics and the unchurched, which increased interest in RCIA, resulted in greater Mass attendance among participants, and created collaboration opportunities among parish groups who support ALPHA through meal preparation (Ss. Philip & James, Canal Fulton).
- Organized a welcoming committee to personally welcome new members and to recruit more greeters for Mass (Christ the Servant, Canton).
- Advertised summer faith fiesta in the community, which includes activities, food, a car show, and faith testimonies (St. Joseph, Austintown).
- Developed a ministry book which clarifies the mission of each ministry and provides contact information as well as upcoming events. Booklet distributed to new members and available for current members to use (Christ the Good Shepherd, Campbell).
- Promoted an evangelization tent at the parish festival to reach out to the community (Our Lady of Mt. Carmel Basilica/St. Anthony of Padua, Youngstown).
- Expanded the ministry of hospitality, including welcoming people at Mass, parish council members personally contacting new parishioners, and showcasing ministries in the bulletin (Holy Family, Poland).
- Increased communication with the parish and community through an updated parish website, a new parish app, and more creative use of the parish sign (St. Christine, Youngstown).
- Planning family celebratory events for the parish anniversary and encouraging parishioners to invite family members and friends who are not currently active church members (St. Edward, Youngstown).
- Began the ALPHA Program in January with excellent results, including 28 parishioners on the team and 32 participants. Many of the participants were already Catholic who renewed their faith and are now actively inviting others. A few of the non-Catholic participants have begun exploring the possibility of becoming Catholic (Little Flower, Middlebranch).

FAMILY LIFE

- Held an evening for married couples in February, Flowers for Mothers' Day in May, and Candy bars for Fathers' Day in June (St. Paul, Salem).
- Sent a personal letter and card from parish council members to all inactive members to initiate conversation about their thoughts and needs (St. Joseph, Mantua).
- Established a senior ministry offering bus trips, social gatherings, fundraisers, speakers and holiday celebrations (Basilica of St. John and St. Peter, Canton – Collaborative).
- Held events to gather parishioners for fellowship, including a wine & cheese evening in the summertime, a parish picnic, and a Halloween party (Regina Coeli, Alliance).
- Established a Bereavement Committee who attend calling hours and funerals, lead pray for the deceased as necessary, and provide outreach to the family of the deceased (St. Stephen, Niles).
- Hosted an evening on annulments to offer a clear understanding of the process (St. Rose, Girard).
- Plan to host a "Come back and meet the parish" night to reach out to inactive parishioners (St. Rose, Girard).
- Identified six specific target groups to focus on and provide support and programming for people who are on the margins of the community (St. Michael, Canfield).
- Provides a support group for parents with children who have special needs, but also identified the need for more support for people affected by divorce, drug abuse, and sexual orientation (St. Paul, New Middletown).
- Identified and trained 12 sponsor couples to meet with engaged couples (St. Patrick, Hubbard).
- Established a parish group for widows, widowers, and senior singles that meets monthly for social, spiritual, and service opportunities (St. Joseph, Randolph).
- Formed a wellness committee that surveyed the parish and used the results to plan programs to address healthy lifestyles and stress management, including cycling, hiking groups, and walking groups (University Newman Center, Kent).
- Organized a parish picnic for the region (St. Joseph, St. Barbara, St. Mary, Massillon – Collaborative).
- Organized support for family members of deceased parishioners (St. Joseph, Massillon).
- Educated parishioners about the annulment process and plans to reorganize and revitalize the divorce support group (St. Michael, Canton).
- Established family life events, such as Christmas in July, movie night, and outdoor food and fellowship opportunities (St. Columba Cathedral Parish, Youngstown).
- Increased outreach to various groups such as a prayer support group for people with family members suffering from addictions, support for families with special needs, and an audio looping system which allows people with hearing aids to hook directly into the sound system in the church (St. Christine, Youngstown).
- Invites children to participate in appropriate roles at Mass and provides a meal afterward for fellowship (St. Edward, Youngstown).

WORSHIP AND PRAYER

- Began an “Eat, Pray, and Give” program during Lent before the Stations of the Cross/Divine Mercy Chaplet prayer service to offer food and encourage donations of food and personal supplies to the community (St. Ambrose, Garrettsville).
- Established a Liturgy Committee with the assistance of the Office of Worship, including liturgical support, outreach to homebound parishioners, and the planning and implementation of monthly parish activities during the Year of Mercy (St. Stephen, Niles).
- Increased youth participation in visible roles, including recruiting college and high school members of Pastoral Council, and actively inviting high school students to be lectors and Eucharistic ministers (St. Charles, Boardman).
- Established an outreach program to contact non-active registered parishioners (St. Mary, Massillon).
- Provides for the Sacrament of Confession before all Masses to increase participation (Queen of the Holy Rosary, Vienna).
- Held monthly prayer services last year as well as weekly Stations of the Cross during Lent. Each prayer service included an outreach project, connecting worship and Christian service (St. Joseph, Maximo).
- Counted Mass attendance weekly to provide accurate information on Sacramental participation (St. Paul, New Middletown).
- Focused on improving the worship experience, including a greater focus on hospitality and welcoming, and the church speakers have been upgraded (St. Patrick, Hubbard).
- Invite and encourage high school and college-age parishioners to serve in liturgical roles (St. Patrick, Kent).
- Offer communal penance services four times a year (St. Joseph, Randolph).
- Create a more welcoming community through improving the music ministry and instituting the use of greeters at Mass (Corpus Christi, Conneaut).
- Initiated greeters before Mass and increased the versatility of the music program (Our Lady of Perpetual Help, McDonald).
- Modified the Mass schedule so it could be covered by one priest between the two parishes and also fit the needs of the parishes. Started by collecting and publishing data on Mass attendance (St. Louis, Louisville and Sacred Heart of Mary, Harrisburg – Collaborative).
- Coordinate volunteers to staff a welcome center after each Mass with parish information. Visitors are acknowledged from the pulpit and volunteers personally follow up with them during the week (St. Michael, Canton).
- Formation of liturgical ministers includes their responsibility to be the light of Christ to others during Mass and throughout all aspects of their life (St. Joseph, Austintown).
- Promotes a variety prayer and formation experiences, especially the Holy Door during the Year of Mercy and the Exhibit on Eucharistic miracles (Our Lady of Mt. Carmel Basilica/St. Anthony of Padua, Youngstown).

- Prays for each parish of the diocese in turn throughout the year (St. Columba Cathedral Parish, Youngstown).
- Commissions publicly the Eucharistic Ministers to those who are sick, homebound, or in the hospital on the Feast of Corpus Christi (Holy Family, Poland).

DISCIPLESHIP-FAITH FORMATION/CATECHESIS

- Held a “Christ Renews His Parish” Women’s Renewal the past three years and have plans for a Men’s Renewal in the future (St. Ambrose, Garrettsville).
- Organized a Vacation Bible School (four evenings) for the members of the parish and the greater community (St. Stephen, Niles).
- Organized a Holy Week Retreat for parishioners (Holy Trinity, East Liverpool).
- Focused on the stewardship of time and talent at the parish (Our Lady of Peace, Ashtabula).
- Highlight a different ministry each week at the information table in the vestibule and spotlight a parishioner once a month for their ministry to the church (St. Thomas the Apostle, Vienna).
- Held a yearlong adult formation program on prayer through art (Holy Spirit, Uniontown).
- Combined events between the two parishes, including adult religious education and a parish picnic (St. Louis, Louisville and Sacred Heart of Mary, Harrisburg – Collaborative).
- Plan on young adult nights with pizza, a movie, and a discussion of a faith topic that addresses some aspect of the move (St. Joseph, Alliance).
- Plan to hold focus group meetings with public high school students not participating in youth ministry to learn how to better minister to their needs (St. Michael, Canton).
- Established women’s small group fellowship open to the community that includes prayer, praise, discussion, and faith sharing (St. Joseph, Austintown).
- Established collaborative youth and young adults ministries (Christ the Good Shepherd, Campbell and St. Angela Merici, Youngstown – Collaborative).

FINANCES

- Reallocated resources to hire a youth minister to coordinate programs for grades 9-12 (St. Jude, Columbiana and Our Lady of Lourdes, East Palestine - Collaborative).
- Communicates regularly to parishioners about parish finances to encourage parish support (St. Rose, Girard).
- Promoted a stewardship appeal at the parish with the support of the Diocesan Office of Stewardship and Development (Our Lady of Peace, Ashtabula).
- Promoted a capital campaign and facilities improvement projects, and the parishioners have responded well (St. Paul, North Canton).
- Hired a part-time Pastoral Associate of Evangelization (Christ the Good Shepherd, Campbell).

ADMINISTRATION

- Developed a new parish website to inform parishioners and the community about upcoming events, especially celebration of the 165th anniversary of the parish (St. Stephen, Niles).
- Created a strategic plan through results from a parish survey, research on parish leadership, and visits to other parishes to learn best practices (St. Mary, Massillon).
- Plan to expand, grow, and foster open communication within the parish and with the greater community and to realign parish structures to adopt emerging models of parish Leadership (St. Mary, Massillon).
- Developed a new website as well as facebook and twitter accounts to increase visibility online (St. Patrick, Hubbard).
- Continue to identify, promote, and support current ministries and their lay leaders (St. Patrick, Hubbard).
- Developed a group of parishioners to study alternative forms of parish leadership and how to empower more lay leadership and participation at the parish (Holy Spirit, Uniontown).
- Invites young men to a vocations dinner at the parish to promote a culture of vocations (St. Joseph, Alliance).
- Assembled leaders from parishes in the region to discuss ministry and mass time collaboration. Various ministries, such as RCIA, Youth Ministry, and Confirmation are collaborative. (St. Joseph, St. Mary, St. Barbara, Massillon, Ss. Philip & James, Canal Fulton, Holy Family, Navarre - Collaborative).
- To promote a culture of vocations, seminarians speak at Mass, in the parish school, and during religious education programs (St. Paul, North Canton).
- Created a successful, new parish website, but marketing the parish and events is still a challenge especially with social media and advertising in the community (St. Paul, North Canton).
- Developed a team to research alternative forms of parish leadership (St. Angela Merici, Youngstown).