

Listening session #2

Faith Formation – birth through high school

5/19/24

Question #1:

Small groups for teens and young adults specifically. I have seen teens and young adults 18-35 develop their relationships that have them seeking each other outside of small group settings such as a mass.

Legacy team because teens are sharing their faith and stories with the tweens. Tweens have someone other than an adult telling them how important faith is.

Good Shepard Program as the young children explore their faith.

Wednesday night FF. There is an energy there as well as some students are receiving faith instructors that they do not receive at home.

Question #2

Church vs. School. Teach FF in the classrooms can be difficult as it seems like the teachers do not want us there. They cover their whiteboards, so we have nothing to write on. They leave stuff on the students desk so we have to stash it away before the kids arrive. We get small places to fit all our stuff in which would be fine if it fit all the items and sometimes it does not. We cannot use rooms for safety lessons. As a catechist, it can feel unwelcoming and if we mess something up, they will make it feel even more so.

Not having a youth room. The school has over the years consumed all the church's space which included the Youth Room. One youth minister fought to keep it, but when she left, it was taken over and that was it. Each time it was taken away, I saw the disappointment of the youth's faces and it was hard.

No services hours? We need those back. Many of those who served, served because of service hours while that may have been the wrong reason to serve, they at least served in some capacity. Some of them wanted more.

Question #3

Have more of priest presence at Elementary FF. Over the years, having a priest stop by has become less and less. As a 2nd grade FF catechist, many of my students do not go to mass thus not exposed / know who the priest or deacon are nor their role. At first Reconciliation, I saw the school kids run up to Fr. Talbot, excited to speak with him, but that was not the case with FF kids. Also Fr. Talbot greeted my class once when we were coming from the Adoration Chapel. The kids loved it. Giving FF kids the opportunity to meet and see our priests and talk to them regularly would be a great way to evangelize.

Multiples classes having difficult curriculum. There is at least two 2nd grade classes and none of us have a list of topics that we should be teaching. Therefore, each class seems like they are learning different things. At one time, we got a list of topics, and we were on the same page, but now it is more like teacher preference. It would be nice to have the same list of what should be taught.

Question 4: Obligation to past the faith.....

I am not sure how to bridge the gap as I have seen it grow over the last 15 years but I have heard from long standing parishioners say it has been there forever. There are several school families that do not attend church at St Hubert or do not attend church at all. Church would be a place to share the faith, but if they are not there, then what? I think that is something out there, but I am unsure what that is.

Question 5: I have seen this shift for Wednesday FF were it really is not that important to some families. In 2023-2024, of a class of 10, only half showed up every night. The kids would share that their sports take place on Wednesday or the weekend and they would miss Mass because of those sports. After they received their 1st communion, the majority of the kids, even my co-catechist & daughter, stopped coming. Therefore for 4-5 weeks, I had a handful of kids or less. FF nights have become more like “baby sitting” nights where if there is nothing more important, the kids will be there. The emphasis of faith and church is not there anymore and it shows has most the kids do not come to church. How do we get them to embrace their faith if they do not make it a priority? Maybe make it a thing where they need to be present for learning sessions or something like that?

Working well: Wednesday nights are very active, a lot of people here. If we look at the numbers we have a lot participating. 100 vs. 20

-Needs improvement: youth room, we used to have a beautiful youth room that was warm and welcoming. Got pushed to a storage room when preschool needed the room. Now there is no youth room. Having the space for that would be great.

-Working well: camps and retreats. Great experience for youth and middle school

-needs improvement: would like to see more for high school besides small group and Legacy. Unity day was good and would like to see more. A youth room to have a gathering space.

-Confirmation: confused about how people that don't go to the school find out about what's happening in the parish. Potential for communication. EDGE has some craziness in the beginning may scare people off a little bit because of confusion.

-friendships and responsibilities questions that can help them understand their impact. Clarity of who is invited to events. Is it just for faith formation youth or also for school youth?

-weekly communication about what's happening at certain events like EDGE – questions to be asked so parents can be Catechized/have discussion with their children.

-Teaching the youth to pray early on in the year is going to be more important than what is baptism, reconciliation. It will help develop the relationship. Could deepen the Encounter nights.

-Question: years ago Confirmation was in 10th grade and then they were handed a Bible at Confirmation. Do these kids all have their own Bibles? Are they engaged in Scripture? Answer: Some years they are given bibles, some years they haven't.

-Shared story about Grace Church's youth group going to the Holy Land. "Wow – we need to step it up!"

-Confirmation: working well, a lot of kids were confirmed.

-Not working as well: limited spots at camps (EFC) so you have to get online right at 6:00 and hope you get a spot. So we are losing people and they are turning away. If we can have more spots we should advertise that so people come back.

-In the past worked well: a lot of energy around youth and then it takes a dive – mostly from turnover. The NET team was great and there was fruit from that but then plateaued.

-Confirmation: bring back service hours. Not just FMSC, but helping elderly people rake their yards or others in our own community. A retreat that's more than 4 hours, overnight can be more powerful and life-changing. Make it a tw program. Should be low-cost or no-cost. Include the public school kids because they may need it more than the Catholic school kids.

-YDisciple: working well, son enjoys going to it. It's been great for their family. Only one group for the boys, Only problem is communication is spotty.

-youth room would be a great gathering place for a YDisciple group.

• Early Catholic Family Life is a program which St. Huberts may find to be a great fit.

- Early Catholic Family Life teaches young Catholic parents how to create a joy filled home with Jesus at the center. It is their mission to assist parents in teaching their young children our Catholic faith, and to assist Catholic parishes and schools in evangelizing their young families and building community.
- One may consider this program as an alternative to the Catechesis of the Good Shephard, which St. Huberts currently uses.
 - Early Catholic Family Life is less expensive than the Good Shephard but more heavily reliant on parish volunteers.
 - The main difference is Early Catholic Family Life focuses on teaching parents to model their faith to their children (rather than teaching children directly as the Good Shephard does). The catechism of the Catholic Church states that "Parents have the first responsibility for education of their children (in their faith)."
- Early Catholic Family Life may be a strategy St Huberts considers as part of the 3rd focus area of the Archdiocesan Synod "Forming youth and young adults in and for a church that is always young." Archbishop Hebda explained that the 3rd focus area includes "How can we assist parents, for example, in forming children as disciples who know and love Jesus and His church?"

- To be fair, i must share that I am biased! My parents (Joanne and Alan Foley) started the Early Catholic Family Life program many years ago.
- Here is the Early Catholic Family Life website: [HOME | ECFL \(earlycatholicfamilylife.org\)](http://earlycatholicfamilylife.org)

-A few years ago there was an entrance/exit interview with Confirmation to see their growth through the year. Helped leaders understand how to better help them throughout the year. Parents stayed in the back to watch the videos. 10th graders originally were Confirmandi and went down to 8th grade. This is a good time to catch them before they enter high school and get busier. Chosen may be a little too elevated for 8th grade. Teaching kids through these programs how to think versus what to think. Existence of God, gender identity, sexuality topics are important. Testimonies – right before Mass? Share what’s happening with the youth in our parish.

-Bridging the gap between SHS kids and non-SHS kids. Edge always has really great energy and on fire for their faith. Then after Confirmation, they don’t come back and do anything with the church after receiving the gifts of the holy spirit.

-Edge has the gym and physical energy. Switch up the schedule so both confirmation and edge can use the gym space – meet on different nights.

-Halftime in the summers is great. People came and brought friends. Clarification that EDGE is open to the SHS kids as well. We sign up and there is a cost, but can we bring a friend?

-Feels like the high schoolers don’t have a voice in general. The Confirmation kids drop off because they have nothing to look forward to in the parish. Would like to see more activities for high schoolers. It would have been nice as a high schooler to do the survey.

-The importance of having more core parishioners. If we have these young kids going up through early childhood and youth, if we forget about the high schoolers they won’t become the active adult parishioners.

-Halftime coming up soon. We don’t do paper invitations anymore. Maybe have a card handout that the Legacy team could hand out after Masses to invite the youth.

Notecards

-**What is working:** Having greeters to welcome people. I have heard many people comment on the welcome it brings. Having lots of opportunities to volunteers.

What is not working:

1. Lack of person invitation.
2. We had signups after mass for the Harvest Festival (on paper). When the Harvest Festival roles (not a parishioner led event), it was moved to the office, staff moved it online. When it was after mass, you got to talk to people/parishioners, you got to talk to people personally, you could help encourage people to sign up individually or as a family.

3. Online signup for everything. If you are only electronic, those are not computer savvy miss out in signing up.

Action Item:

1. We need to help facilitate a person's relationship with Jesus. I started to get involved out of love for Jesus before anything else.
2. Personal invitation opportunities like ministry fairs or signup for big events like festivals. When you can talk to people about the various ministries, and sign ups, it is inviting to Jesus.
3. When our youth have an experience with Jesus, they participate more in church and ministry. One young man had a moving experience at Extreme Faith Camp made him want to serve more. Students of certain Catholic Schools also like to serve.
4. Parent's involvement = kids' involvement. Parents who are involved encourage their kid's involvement and vice versa. i.e. walking by sign up Sunday for Harvest Festival, parents can explain the why, how, and family involvement is important.

Would a goal of Confirmation be "to know how to be an active parishioner after Confirmation?"

- What opportunities are there
- How to be involved
- How to have an active prayer life
- How to navigate/use the Bible

-Open up a dedicated donation option online for youth/young adult faith formation

-Return informal high school youth events (used to do movie for "fun" nights once a month after 6 p.m. Mass)

1. Please offer concrete examples of what you have seen working well with our early childhood and youth faith formation offerings at St. Hubert.

- Attendance at Wednesday faith formation
- Adoration at Wednesday formation with Reconciliation (mentioned more than once)
- 2nd grade sacrament preparation
- Weekly communication about what is happening and being discussed in faith formation
 - Opportunity to catechize the parents
- EDGE – a place for fun, faith, and fellowship
 - high schoolers/Legacy team involvement
- Kids and parents starting in the church before breaking out into classes
- YDisciple – kid enjoying group
- EDGE – kids enjoy having fun, keeps them coming back
- Edge kids moving to Legacy team
- Big Confirmation class!

- Camps are a good experience for those who can go
- Adult “core” team leaders

2. Please offer concrete examples of what you have seen that is not working well with our early childhood and youth faith formation offerings at St. Hubert.

- The peaks and valleys in the youth formation leadership: great energy, but struggle to pass the baton for continuity
- lack of dedicated space for middle and high school youth
- YDisciple was unorganized – minimal communication with parents of younger (14-16 yo)
- Faith formation – so many different programs
- EDGE – too crazy/out of control at first
- youth events are not promoted as much as other events
- Youth room? - moved around – feel homeless
- movie nights not happening, game nights, open youth room nights
- Camps – limited spots available – makes kids go elsewhere
- need more adult volunteers
- inconsistent leadership – historically – hope the new ones stay!
- some segregation between kids that go to school at St. Hubert and those that go elsewhere

3. What are your suggestions for helping to enhance our early elementary and youth formation offerings?

- Define what is the role/expectation of leader/co-leader for YDisciple
- Bond group of young people with how to be Christ to each other
- Make sure faith formation is the best faith and life series
- EDGE – promote to entire church not just the faith formation families (i.e. make sure the SHS kids know they can join)
- Youth room! Foundation for young adults
- ”force” kids to mix between SHS and non-SHS kids
- High school events! - not just small groups. Legacy is the only thing to do and too many kids in that for the number of middle schoolers
- Need more alternatives for them to be engaged
- Youth ministers need to engage with the SHS kids (e.g. go have lunch with them) to get them to participate in church youth events. This worked well in the past.

5. The Church teaches that parents are the first catechists for their children. What are some concrete ways the parish can better equip and accompany parents in their roles as the first teach of the faith for their children?

- Have parent programming during children’s programming

Sara's 2 cents:

- have childcare available for volunteers on Wednesday during programming – we could get more volunteers that way
 - Some parents would like a nursery available during Mass (not sure on the feasibility of that because of space constrictions and finding enough volunteers, plus with E3 rules I don't think volunteers can change diapers)
 - more personal invitations to people to get them involved as lectors, greeters, ushers, EMs, etc.
- Watching for consistent attendees at Mass/parents hanging out during faith formation and engaging in conversation with them.
- Tap into the school's ability to grow the kids in their faith. What are they doing at the younger ages to engage their faith and how can we apply that to faith formation in the limited time we have with them? How are they infusing the Catholic identity?
 - Help the catechists with lesson planning so that faith formation doesn't feel so much like being in a class at school. Make it more interactive and exciting.
- If we are calling the program "faith formation" we should be truly building up their faith and not just educating them about the religion.

This last thought of mine has more to do with the welcoming, but I'm unable to attend those sessions:

One thing that I saw work really well at St. Victoria is the Bienvenidos program they have. New members come in and meet with one of the priests (or a designated staff member that can help them connect to opportunities of involvement)

Have a quarterly dinner for new members so that they can gather together and get to know each other. Have a few longer term members in attendance as well to share their experiences of involvement and invite others in deeper.