



GREAT ENDEAVORS MINED & SHARED

from an International Adult Faith Formation Best Practices Study

#171 - August 1, 2022

A Best Practice: Building a Ministry for Maturing Adults (Part III)

In our **GEMS #167 and 169** we looked at the beginning steps to introduce and offer a ministry for maturing adults at St. Mark the Evangelist Parish, Indianapolis, IN. This issue will explore

- Some of their beginning programs
- The change in programming and services because of our Covid stay-at-home days

Before March 2020, the energetic committee designed and implemented a ministry for maturing adults with five areas of focus:

- Spiritual Growth
- Continued Learning
- Opportunities to Serve
- Opportunities to be Served
- Social Activities and Gatherings

Various people – some from the Steering Committee, some from the parish, all with an expertise and interest that was needed for the particular program – were recruited to develop and lead one of the programs. Sharing the workload, of course, means that no one – or the committee – gets burned out from overseeing and/or doing too much.

Many responded to be these leaders, because:

- People were hungry to be involved and more active at the parish.
- They were glad to be able to use their gifts, skills and interests to benefit others.
- The programs were needed; they reflected the genuine interests expressed during the Listening Sessions.

The Beginning Programs (prior to Covid)

Spiritual Growth/Faith Formation

- Pilgrimages
- Book Clubs

- Bible Study
- Spiritual Autobiography for Men
- Sunday School for Adults
- Six Spiritual Tasks of Aging
- Renewing Connections in Faith
- Spiritual Autobiography Journey



Continued Learning

- Dementia and Memory Care
- Caring for the Aging Adult
- Third Calling: What Are You Doing for the Rest of Your Life?
- Social Security Workshop
- Medicare Workshop
- Workshop and Dinner on Funeral Pre-Planning and Estate Planning

Opportunities to Serve

- Foster Grandparent Program
- Handyman Services
- Lawn-Mowing Services
- One-on-One Assistance to Parishioners
- Transportation Services



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Opportunities to be Served

- Tax Preparation Services
- Letters and Cards Sent to Home Bound and Facility-Bound Parishioners
- Rosary/Prayer/Communion Visits to Home Bound and Facility-Bound Parishioners
- Phone Calls to 115 Parish Elders to Determine Status and Needs

Social Events/Activities

- Parish Dinner Dance (not a MMA-Sponsored event)
- St. Patrick's Day Dance
- Town Hall Listening Session
- Ice Cream Social and Program Registration
- Christmas Party and Luncheon
- Sock Hop
- Soup Supper



The Programs and Services during the Covid Times

With the coming of Covid, the programming, of course, was altered dramatically. The Committee, though, worked diligently to stay connected with

the parish's maturing adults (those 60 and older) but with a special focus on their elders (those 75 and older).

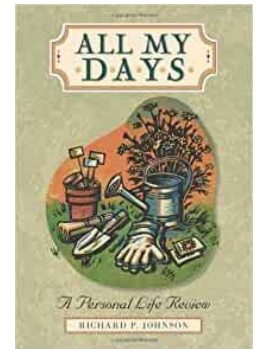
Telephone Contact Team

A group of MMA volunteers divided the list of elders in the parish with each volunteer taking 8+/- names. The volunteer calls each of their elders each week to ensure they are doing ok and ask if they need any assistance. The volunteer reports those instances in which the Elder needs assistance, usually transportation, and MMA volunteers respond.

Spiritual Autobiography Journey

Before COVID, the *Ministry for Maturing Adults* had offered a Spiritual Autobiography Journey – a series of eight week sessions where participants came together to discuss their writing and their ah-hah moments.

In these days, the two coordinators of this project have written two “stay-at-home” spiritual journaling opportunities. One is based on Dr. Richard Johnson's book *All My Days*. (They received permission from Dr. Johnson to print copies of this no-longer-in-print book.)



The second opportunity is a simpler journaling experience based on responding to a series of questions.

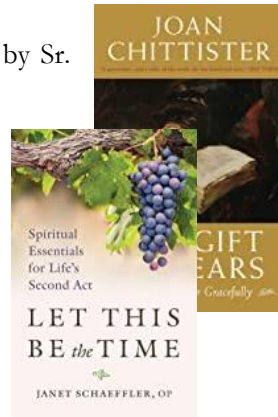
MMA volunteers deliver the requested packets to the older parishioners. Even though these opportunities are designed for people to do on their own, the two coordinators are glad to have phone conversations with anyone about their writings and experiences.

Book Clubs

Cohorts of about ten individuals read a selected title, sharing their reflections online through weekly guided questions. Two of the books that have been used are:

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- *The Gift of Years: Growing Old Gracefully* by Sr. Joan Chittister
- *Let This Be the Time: Spiritual Essentials for Life's Second Act* by Sr. Janet Schaeffler



Transportation Team

MMA volunteers take maturing adults to doctor appointments, medical treatments, and etc.

Handyman Team

MMA volunteers assist with light handyman duties, the most common requests: checking/replacing smoke detectors/batteries, cutting grass/yard work, simple plumbing repairs, simple carpentry repairs, etc.

Provisions from the Heart

MMA volunteers prepare, and deliver, meals to elders who wish to participate. Meals are delivered every other Wednesday and usually provide 2-3 meals for the recipient. The drivers also deliver items such as books, messages written by the pastor or deacon, and art work prepared by the grade school children.

Snail Mail

One parishioner is an expert in making cards and writing notes. Volunteers were solicited to write cards on a regular basis. MMA volunteers came together to make hand-made cards. Another larger group of MMA volunteers pick up the cards and write notes to many of their parishioners.

The list of card recipients includes:

- parishioners in the hospital
- parishioners in assisted living facilities
- seminarians and others in religious formation
- teachers at their K-8 Catholic school
- parishioners living alone at home or in an apartment
- individuals on the prayer list
- those who have lost a loved one



The coordinator of the Card Ministry has shared tips/guidelines for writing meaningful cards:

- Don't bother to buy expensive cards. Use hand-made cards by our MMA card-makers.
- Don't make a preliminary outline - it's fussy and takes too long.
- Don't worry about crafting poetic or perfect sentences.



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- Do spend a minute or two focusing on the recipient before you start writing.
- Do speak from the heart.
- Do clear away distractions. Turn off the TV and put away your phone.
- Don't fret about your messy handwriting, and if you make an error, just cross it out.
- Don't expect a response-but enjoy a grateful surprise when you receive one.

Good News Art Therapy

Adult coloring books and pens/pencils are provided to those maturing adults who would like to try their hand at this form of art.



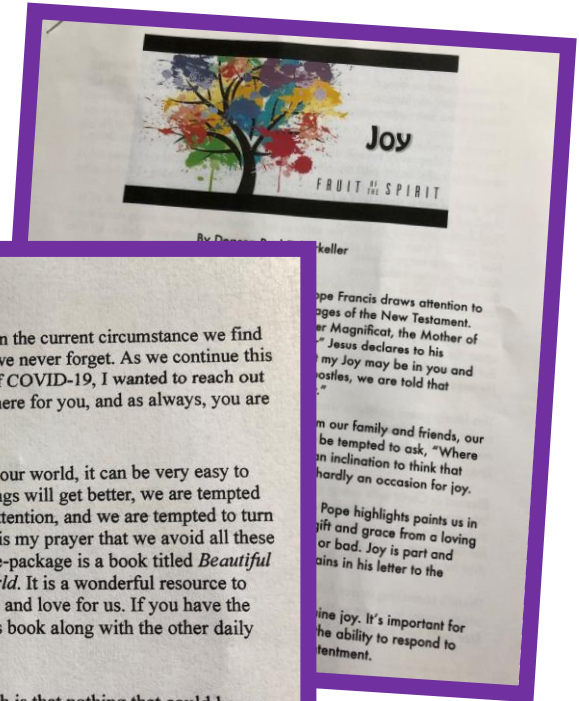
- a guide to dealing with the isolation of this pandemic

Dear Parishioner,

I hope this letter finds you well, especially given the current circumstance we find ourselves in! This will certainly be a time that we never forget. As we continue this period of social distancing to slow the spread of COVID-19, I wanted to reach out to all of you and let you know that St. Mark is here for you, and as always, you are in my prayers!

During times of prolonged isolation or crisis in our world, it can be very easy to lose hope. We are tempted to lose hope that things will get better, we are tempted to wonder if God is really with us and paying attention, and we are tempted to turn to the world instead of our faith for answers. It is my prayer that we avoid all these temptations during these times! Within this care-package is a book titled *Beautiful Hope: Finding Hope Everyday in a Broken World*. It is a wonderful resource to strengthen our hope in God's divine providence and love for us. If you have the time, I encourage you to read and pray with this book along with the other daily prayers you are engaged in at this time.

One of the most incredible things about our faith is that nothing that could happen in this world can take it away from us! As we concluded Lent and celebrated Easter this year, this was all the more apparent. The Resurrection of Jesus Christ, and his conquering of sin and death, is always the same. It is always the same.



Care Packages

Various volunteers from the committee prepared "care packages" for their maturing adults which contained:

- a letter from the pastor
- a spiritual reading book on hope
- a guide to praying the rosary
- some reflections by the deacon
- a book mark



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