



GREAT ENDEAVORS MINED & SHARED

from an International Adult Faith Formation Best Practices Study

#253 - January 2026

A Best Practice: Communities of Like Interest (Part II)

Last month we looked at the necessity, advantages and some examples of planning adult faith formation for people who have similar needs and interests. In this issue we view some other examples shared by various parishes.

When people share their stories of faith,
they awaken in others the courage to believe.

~ Henri Nouwen

Diana L'Herueux tells about some of many opportunities at St. Therese of Lisieux Parish, Sanford, Maine:

- ***The Empty Nest ... What Now?*** is a monthly gathering every second Friday of the month. During the kick-off session, a couple who are national speakers gave a presentation, followed by a question-and-answer session, and a social gathering with refreshments afterwards.
- ***Spending the Holidays Without A Loved One*** has been offered in December.
- Various sessions are offered throughout the year on specific topics such as:
 - ***Raising A Grandchild***
 - ***Juggling Today's Busy-ness In a Christian Household***
 - ***Help! They've Come Back to Roost***
 - ***Caring For an Elderly Parent***

Small communities make large faith possible.

~ Anonymous

Kris Rooney, pastoral associate for adult faith formation at St. Kateri Tekakwitha Parish, Schenectady, NY relates some of their offerings:

- ***A Faith & Play Group*** for stay-at-home parents meets every other week during the weekday. The children play while the parents discuss matters of faith. It's a small group but the group has been going for years. It's always transitioning as children age out and families move.
- Kris says: "As a matter of fact, I started the group when I had my firstborn and it's what led me to serving on the staff here now!"
- St. Kateri Tekakwitha Parish partnered with another local parish, Saint Madeleine Sophie, to host a 4 week session for ***young adults*** (ages 18-40). They met on Friday evenings at a local coffeehouse to go through *The Little Burgandy Book* from the Little Book series (<https://www.facebook.com/LittleBooksSaginaw/>). The 5th week the group engaged in a community service project together.
 - During the summer, the parish borrowed a labyrinth for a week. On one evening, they had ***an evening of reflection for caregivers*** which included prayers, gentle harp music and walking the labyrinth. It was based on the book *Passages in Caregiving: Essential Strategies for Caring for a Loved One* by Gail Sheehy which compares caregiving to a labyrinth (<https://www.harpercollins.com/products/passages-in-caregiving-gail-sheehy?variant=32206019035170>).

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In community, we find companions
for the journey, teachers for the soul,
and witnesses of God's love.

~ Adapted from Dietrich Bonhoeffer

Jennifer Ludtke, Director of Evangelization and Parish Outreach at St. Thomas Aquinas Parish, Madison, WI shares one of their programs: a series entitled ***Caring for Your Aging Parents.***

Their parish demographics include many folks in their 50s-60s-70s, and many of those older adults are caring for their parents.

The focus has been on providing practical support, but in the context of our faith and the dignity of all. The description states:

- “As our parents age, they may experience some decline. That can cause a sometimes difficult transition from being their child to being their primary caregiver.
- How do we address these changes and challenges with love, strengthened and supported by our Catholic faith?
- How do we care for ourselves, and remain grounded in hope? This series helps you respond to those questions.”

Caring for Our Aging Parents

As our parents age, they may experience some decline. That can cause a sometimes difficult transition from being their child to being their primary caregiver. How do we address these changes and challenges with love, strengthened and supported by our Catholic faith? How do we care for ourselves, and remain grounded in hope? This series helps you respond to those questions.

Join us from 7-8:30 pm for the following presentations:

October 2 in the St. Thomas Aquinas Social Hall, 602 Everglade Dr., Madison

Creating a Safe Environment for Independent Living *Wondering how to support your parent's independence and their quality of life? How do you help them live safely and comfortably without becoming overwhelmed and stressed? Are you familiar with the various resources right here in our community? Ann Albert with Supporting Active Independent Lives (SAIL) will address these questions, and talk about community resources including the SAIL program and its offerings.*

October 16 in the St. Bernard's Parish Center, 2015 Parmenter St, Middleton

A Discussion on the Palliative Care Option *Not to be confused with hospice, palliative care is the broader umbrella of helping patients cope with illness throughout their treatment, regardless of age or life expectancy. Adrienne Gasper, Nurse-Practitioner with the St. Mary Hospital Palliative Care Team, will present this overview of palliative care. She will offer background on palliative care, suggest / considerations for families, and discuss ways to begin important family conversation.*



October 30 in the St. Thomas Aquinas Social Hall

The Elderly and Grief *Loss and the resulting grief are a normal part of the aging process. The loss of physical abilities, the loss of independence, the loss of friends and family due to death, are all examples of normal changes as we grow older. Although normal, the losses are accompanied by grief and the difficult mourning of what was. This presentation will give an overview of grief and offer suggestions to help individuals navigate through the process. Cheri Milton, Grief Services Manager with AGRACE Hospice, will be our presenter.*

This series is co-sponsored by



ST. THOMAS AQUINAS CATHOLIC PARISH



St. Bernard
Catholic Church, Middleton

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Our adult faith formation ministry
must engage the particular needs and interests
of the adults in each local community.

~ US Bishops
in Our Hearts Were Burning within Us

Karen Melendez, Director of Christian Initiation and Ongoing Adult Formation at Our Lady of Nazareth Church, Roanoke, VA shares two of their offerings:

- YBYT (Your Body is a Temple) is a group that through faith sharing, scripture and fellowship strive to support healthy eating, cooking and taking care of our bodies. Research shows that meeting as a group increases the chances of keeping a healthy weight by 50%.

The schedule for their gatherings include:

- 5:30 Healthy snack and fellowship
- 5:40 Prayer, Rose and Thorn (<https://alohafoundation.org/a-mindful-way-to-reflect-rose-thorn-and-bud/>)
- 5:50 Lectio Scripture passage reading of the day, of the weekend
- 6:05 Healthy food tips and recipes for the week (shared by all in the group and some from the weekly leader)
- 6:15 Activity of the week: sharing ways to be more active
- 6:25 Goal setting and journal writing
- 6:35 Closing prayer and encouragement

They also meet monthly for family cooking class and sharing a meal.

- **Small Groups** are available for parents during the parish's elementary faith formation program. After just two gatherings the parents formed bonds that are strong; they quickly experienced the importance of "where 2 or 3 are gathered."
 - The rose and thorn sharing (<https://alohafoundation.org/a-mindful-way-to-reflect-rose-thorn-and-bud/>)

began strong and the parents are supportive of each other's struggles and successes.

- Scripture sharing Lectio Divina-ish illustrates the hunger for scripture sharing among the parents.



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Past issues of **GEMS** are archived at www.janetschaeffler.com

Additional ideas for Adult Faith Formation Planning and Best Practices can be found in:

- *Deepening Faith: Adult Faith Formation in the Parish*
<https://www.litpress.org/Products/4652/Deepening-Faith>
- *Guided by the Directory for Catechesis: Transforming the Vision and Practice of Parish Catechesis:*
<https://twentythirdpublications.com/products/guided-by-the-directory-for-catechesis>
- Lifelong Faith Training: <https://www.lifelongfaithtraining.com/>
- Lifelong Faith: <https://www.lifelongfaith.com/>
- Seasons of Adult Faith website: <http://adultfaith.weebly.com/>
- The Seasons of Adult Faith Formation:
https://www.lifelongfaith.com/uploads/5/1/6/4/5164069/seasons_of_aff_-_journal_special_issue.pdf