



# GREAT ENDEAVORS MINED & SHARED

*from an International Adult Faith Formation Best Practices Study*

# 59 - November 2015

## A Best Practice: Using Technology for Adult Faith Formation

Technology has changed everything about our lives today, whether or not we realize it.

Have you ever thought about what you don't do any longer because of technology? Take this fun journey: [50 Things We Don't Do Anymore Because of Technology](#).

Media can help us greatly...  
especially nowadays, when the networks  
of human communication  
have made unprecedented advances. ...

The internet, in particular,  
offers immense possibilities for  
encounter and solidarity.

This is something truly good, a gift from God.

- Pope Francis,  
marking the 48<sup>th</sup> World Communications Day  
(January 24, 2014)

It is not necessary to mention that in people's lives today, in ministry today, technology and media play a crucial role. To ignore that reality is detrimental.

There are fascinating and advantageous "best practices" occurring everywhere to merge the everyday lives of people, their faith lives, and technology.

This issue explores one endeavor within a cluster of three parishes, an endeavor which encompassed many facets.

## The C3 Project

In 2010 the archdiocese of Los Angeles organized its Catholic Communication and Collaboration (C3) Pilot to serve as a "test platform" to assess and enhance technology, professional development, content and applications at 25 selected parish, school and administrative sites.

Components of the C3 Pilot Program included upgrades to infrastructure, connectivity and equipment, professional development in the areas of change management, skills development and technology integration, and provided online content and applications to parish and school ministries.

The summer of 2014 marked the transition of C3 from a pilot to a robust technology program serving all locations within the archdiocese of Los Angeles.

One of the sites was the San Fernando Pastoral Region Office, Mission Hills, CA. The pastors and parish leaders from Our Lady of Lourdes, St. Mel and St. Euphrasia Parishes, in March 2013 identified needs and created the C3 San Fernando Pastoral Region Technology Cluster Project.

The committee decided that the identified pastoral needs would be met through sharing resources and developing new initiatives to enhance and expand parish ministries by the innovative use of current and trending technology. Based on their discussions the following objectives were identified:

- To create a multi-parish collaborative effort utilizing current and trending technology solutions.
- To cultivate an environment to promote strategic development of new initiatives and enhance/expand parish ministries by fostering partnerships, enabling functional integration and utilization of shared resources.
- To utilize change management strategies to foster parish visioning and strategic decision making to increase the long-term benefits of the project for participating parishes.

# GREAT ENDEAVORS MINED & SHARED

Thus, these three parishes worked together

- to pilot solutions for integrating technology into faith formation and evangelization
- to discover how the many communication and collaboration tools could be used to further the gospel mission of the Church

The C3 Technology Cluster Project Team decided to use the following measures as indicative of the success for this pilot effort:

- Positive feedback from parish community
- Increase level of proficiency by parish staff and volunteer ministry leaders in use of technology solutions
- Program efforts could be sustained once pilot phase ends
- Effective collaboration with other parishes in cluster on areas of common need and interest

Charlotte McCorquodale, PhD, served as the Pilot Project Consultant; a summary of the project and many of her reflections can be found at [Charlotte's Web - Reflections on ministry and solutions for ministry formation](#).

A look at a few of the technology integration projects that occurred throughout the pilot and what was learned (taken from Charlotte's summary):



## Training in Facebook and other social media apps for parish leaders to encourage their use by a variety of ministries within the parish

- “Social media training took place for parish leaders with a social media expert presenting on social media tips and strategies on how to contribute to social media platforms in the parish. *We learned that in addition to providing a general social media training, it is important that specific training on each of the various forms of social media, like Facebook, Twitter, Pinterest, etc. may be more important and a first step. ...*

*One of the most successful elements of the training was looking at actual Facebook pages and posts of parishes and evaluating them. It helped those present see what they would want to do and not do in order to engage their communities.”*



## Development of a parish social media committee to facilitate better use of website and parish social media sites

- “Each parish community identified a social media coordinator. In two cases, it is a staff member, and in the other, a school teacher from the parish volunteers in the role. The role of this coordinator in each parish involves publishing social media content generally and for various parish ministries. *We learned that for parishes that have done nothing in the area of social media having a social media coach to help get started is beneficial.”*



## Explore using QR codes in the parish bulletin to communicate about various aspects of parish life

- Staffs “participated in the training ... led by Charlotte and the parish used QR codes on flyers and in the bulletin to advertise both the Advent and Lenten Social Media Faith Formation Options. *We learned people are fascinated by QR codes. It was helpful to teach parishioners how to download and use a QR code reader to increase use. One good strategy used by one parish was to provide this training as parishioners were coming out of Mass on Device Sunday.”* (We will explore Device Sunday in **GEMS** #64.)



## Development of an accessible parish database and shared ministry calendar that can be updated by a variety of ministry leaders

- “Professional development funding by the project helped each parish get additional training on their database software. *We learned that all the parishes have invested in database software ... but they all are considerably under-using them due to lack of training. Also, it seems that keeping these databases up-to-date was a challenge for one or more of the parishes.”*



## Support the training of liturgical ministers by creating videos to be distributed online.

- “Early in the project a common goal that surfaced was the need for training ministerial leaders online. To that end the project developed a liturgical ministries video training series with a short intro to liturgical ministry in general, followed by four videos on ministries in the liturgy. The

# GREAT ENDEAVORS MINED & SHARED

five segments of the series have been filmed and edited. The videos (are) posted on the SFPR YouTube Channel.

Each video provides a theological and theoretical foundation for that ministry with tips of best practices for engaging in the ministry. The intent is for parishes to refer those interested in volunteering for a liturgical ministry in one of the four areas to first watch the video, then attend an abbreviated training at the parish to cover the unique details and directions for individual parishes. Another option would be to use the videos to advertise for volunteers and to possibly show the video at the gathered training events.

*We learned that projects with this size and scope may need paid personnel vs. volunteers. Originally, we had a very small budget for the project with the intention of having volunteers from the SFPR Media Committee assists with the filming and editing. After completing two segments with volunteers it was clear we needed a budget for the project to pay in part for these services. C3 generously agreed to the additional funds.*

*The video series was a collaborative effort among the C3 project team, staff of the pastoral region, the SFPR Media Committee, and the Archdiocesan Office of Worksop. While working collaboratively was much more time intensive, it was worth the time and effort. The videos resulted in having the ability for local archdiocesan experts to provide consistent training without having to deal with the distance and traffic.”*



**Seek ways to collaborate with other parishes in the cluster in reaching out to youth, young adults, and families via social media**

- “Three collaborative social media outreach efforts have been a part of this project: #AdventOn (during Advent), #40DaysCount (during Lent) and an initiative to reach out to young people...

*We learned that having one hashtag for the entire Lenten season (#40DaysCount) was more effective than the weekly hashtags used in the Advent season. Also, it helped tremendously to have postcards of the #40DaysCount logo and explanation in the bulletins and back of church during the Lenten season. Having content uploaded to a Google Doc was both a good way to curate content collaboratively and share updated content each week. A sample of the form used to curate content for Lent can be found here: <http://goo.gl/prZMf3>.*

*We also learned that before we could start using social media in a couple of the parishes the various Facebook pages that were associated with the parish community had to be identified since in some cases different volunteers had created pages for the parish and for specific ministries.*

**1<sup>st</sup> Week of Advent**

*“Therefore, stay awake! For you do not know on which day your Lord will come.”*  
— Matthew 24:42

**Daily Reflections**

3 Minute Retreats

Daily Advent Calendar

**Question of the Week**

Respond to the question of the week with a Facebook post, Tweet, Photo, or Video. Make sure to include this week’s hashtag.

#WaitingOn | How are you waiting this Advent?

Follow us on Facebook and Twitter for more Advent resources and reflections. Check Facebook every #familyfriday for ideas and projects you can do at home. Visit our sites on #quotememonday for a new Advent quote each week. Check us out on Sunday for an evening prayer and candle blessing.

**Our Lady of Lourdes**

Facebook | Twitter

A blog about the learnings in the Advent Social Media effort (#AdventOn) can be found at: <http://www.ministrytrainingsource.org/blog/2014/02/02/c3-what-did-we-learn-about-using-technology-in-adventon/>

## The Experience of One of the Parishes

Victoria Radleigh, Coordinator of Youth Ministry and Confirmation and Social Media Coordinator for Our Lady of Lourdes Parish in Northridge, CA., tells us: “When integrating technology into our parish, we started first with educating our community. We realized that a lot of people knew of the tools out there, but didn't know how to use them. So I held an open session for all parishioners (and required one representative from each of our parish sponsored ministries to attend).

We met four times over the course of two months. The first time we discussed the importance of media in a parish, and how social media in particular, can be useful in promoting parish and events. We also included a section on our ‘Electronic Communication Policy.’

### Some Suggestions from Electronic Communication Policy *Our Lady of Lourdes Parish, Northridge, CA*

All websites and social media pages are to have at least two administrators/owners. One of these administrators is to be either the pastor, or a representative designated by the pastor. *Safeguard the Children* mandates that adults are never left alone with youth – the same applies for our digital world.

Therefore, any contact with a minor (e-mail, text, instant message, etc.) is to include two Virtus-trained adults.

Websites and social media pages are to be regularly maintained by the designated administrators.

Information regarding the parish, or parish events, is to remain current.

The next three sessions, then, were hands on training on how to use these platforms. We did

- one on Facebook
- one on Twitter and
- one on Instagram and Youtube

In these sessions participants brought their laptops and we walked through making a profile, deleting and adding content, privacy setting, etc.

Throughout the year, we focused on how to best deliver content to information to our parishioners using the social media tools we had discussed. During Lent, and Advent we stuffed the bulletin with a special insert filled with ways for them to connect with us during that week, including discussion questions and #hashtags. ...

Our priests occasionally preside using an iPad. Members of the choir often use tablets instead of song books. When I have parent sessions for Confirmation, I use my phone for notes. These practices, combined with our previous efforts, helped to foster a culture of acceptance towards devices in our parish.”

## Suggestions from the Parishes

Charlotte McCorquodale, PhD shared the advice that the three parishes would give to others wishing to integrate technology into faith formation and communication:

- “Staying on the ‘cutting edge’ of technology, including preparing a new website, using a ministry scheduler, beginning online giving, and striving to reach out to those interested through social media.”
- “The biggest obstacle I found was time ... it was very difficult for me to be able to commit as much as I had intended to. I definitely find this topic extremely important but I know a huge help would be to implement a committee at our parish that involves both youth and adults.”
- “It is essential to have an enthusiastic and highly skilled individual or team committed to the integration of technology and faith formation.”

# GREAT ENDEAVORS MINED & SHARED

- “Having a plan and a social media coordinator to take the lead on organization and implementation of the projects. Having someone dynamic who can help coordinate efforts, think creatively, and knows the needs of the staff and parish is crucial. This helps efforts be tailored to their parish needs. This C3 initiative is not a one-size-fits-all procedure.”
- “Be honest about the amount of time this takes. The social media coordinators indicated that after the initial (site) is set up to manage the various forms of social media, that it takes at least an hour a week to load the content provided by others. This does not include curating content or editing content given by parish leaders.”

## Reflections on What Happened

Charlotte McCorquodale, PhD, consultant for the project, summarizes “three things have become very clear about technology integration into ministry settings.

First, supportive leadership is critical. ... Because technology can make things that once took a lot of time and effort happen easier and faster does not mean that it happens magically. Someone has to develop plans, test solutions, and implement action steps intentionally in order for progress to be made in technology integration. The commitment from the Archdiocesan C3 Work Group and the entire C3 Parish Pilot Project Team was very evident!

Second, training and continuing education must be done at the beginning, as well as often and throughout. ... I knew that in any change process learning and adapting are critical. However, I did not realize that before we even took time to assess needs and set goals, we should have done some basic training to get everyone on the same page.

The professional development funding came about halfway into our project, which means many of the educational opportunities and training programs did not take place until late in our efforts. While ‘better late than never’ holds true in this situation, the entire project team believes our successes would have been multiplied by starting training for staff and ministry leaders much sooner.

Finally, at the heart of social media and the new digital technologies is the ability to communicate and collaborate more easily, which means it makes

sense that parish communities with limited resources would benefit in collaborating in order to accomplish technology goals and priorities. While collaboration does take more time and effort because relationships must be built, trust established, and common goals identified, the benefits in this area truly exceed the effort required.

Simple things like -

- common hashtags for seasons of the liturgical year
- curating content around common themes or needs and
- sponsorship of efforts like Device Sunday

are made easier and more of a priority by doing it across multiple parishes.”

Likewise, Victoria Radleigh commented, “I think the biggest things that we learned and are still learning, are that:

- You can have the best content in the world, the most creative #hashtags, and someone to manage social media - but if the community doesn't understand how to use the technology, and your parish doesn't have the correct set-up (Wi-Fi accessibilities, etc.) then your efforts will be lost.
- Media integration has to be ongoing and consistent - across all aspects of parish and ministry life.”

## Some Further Resources

- As mentioned previously, consult [Charlotte's Web - Reflections on ministry and solutions for ministry formation](#) for Charlotte McCorquodale’s summary of the project.
- Using a panel format the project team shared the findings of the project at the C3 technology conference. A digital copy of the presentation can be found at: [www.slideshare.net/charlottemccorquodale/c3-panel-workshop-on-cluster-project](http://www.slideshare.net/charlottemccorquodale/c3-panel-workshop-on-cluster-project)

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## An Important GEMS Reminder

As you read this, are you feeling: “I don’t have time to do one more thing”?

Remember -

- Be patient with yourself.
- Ask yourself: what is the first step I can take?
- Remember: You don’t need to do everything at once.  
Remember: You don’t need to do it all by yourself. Who – in the parish – could be part of a parish technology committee?



## Still to Come ...

Next month’s issue of **GEMS** (December 2015) will continue to explore this project, especially the celebration of Device Sunday.



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Past issues of **GEMS** are archived at [www.janetschaeffler.com](http://www.janetschaeffler.com)

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

- *The Seasons of Adult Faith Formation*  
[http://www.lifelongfaith.com/store/p25/The\\_Seasons\\_of\\_Adult\\_Faith\\_Formation.html](http://www.lifelongfaith.com/store/p25/The_Seasons_of_Adult_Faith_Formation.html)
- *The Seasons of Adult Faith Formation website*  
<http://www.seasonsofadultfaith.com/>
- *40 Tips: Getting Started in Adult Faith Formation*  
<http://www.ecatechist.com/ebooks/> (scroll down)
- *Parish Leadership for Improved Adult Catechesis*  
<http://store.pastoralplanning.com/iboplbeprfor.html>