



GREAT ENDEAVORS MINED & SHARED

from an International Adult Faith Formation Best Practices Study

#64 - April 2016

Best Practices: Support for Grandparents

Some interesting facts about grandparents of today:

- Grandparents are younger than most people think. The average age of a U.S. grandparent is 48, and more than half are Baby Boomers.
- Some people who were raised by their grandparents: Maya Angelou, Carol Burnett, Bill Clinton, Willie Nelson, Jack Nicholson, Barack Obama and Oprah Winfrey.
- About 3 out of 4 grandparents think being one "is the single most important and satisfying thing in their life." And 9 in 10 "enjoy talking about their grandkids to just about everyone."
- Grandparents are in the workforce. 60% have a full-time or part-time job; 23% have started their own business.
- Grandparents like to spend time with their grandkids. 60% live close to their grandchildren. 46% wish they could live even closer. 70% see their grandchildren at least once a week. 66% travel with their grandchildren. 81% have their grandchildren for part or all of their summer vacation.

Sources:

- <http://www.grandparents.com/food-and-leisure/did-you-know/fun-facts-grandparents-day>
- <http://www.grandparents.com/food-and-leisure/did-you-know/surprising-facts-about-grandparents>
- The average American will be a grandparent for half of his or her adult life. The average age of becoming a grandparent is 48, according to [AARP's 2002 Grandparents Study](#)
- One tenth of American children live with a grandparent. This [U.S. Census Bureau](#) figure includes both grandchildren being raised by grandparents and multi-generational households (those with

grandparents, parents and children). Most of these households include at least two grandchildren, and many include more.

- Grandmothers outnumber grandfathers, but that could change. Because women live longer than men, grandmothers outnumber grandfathers about 124 to 100, according to Census Bureau figures quoted in the [MetLife Study](#). That is expected to drop significantly by 2020, however, and the numbers could continue to even out.
- About 15% of grandparents care for grandchildren while the parents work. This figure, from the AARP report, includes grandparents who are eager to provide child care and those who help out mainly because of the expense of conventional day care. Some grandparents are the sole child care providers; in other cases, they are part of a network of child care options.

Nobody can do for little children
what grandparents do.
Grandparents sort of sprinkle stardust
over the lives of little children.

- Alex Haley

Today's realities – in every area of our lives – bring many and various needs. A few of the many experiences of today's grandparents include:

- Desiring to share the vitality of life and the gift of faith with their grandchildren
- Raising their grandchildren
- Wanting to unite in prayer for their families and the needs of the world
- Staying connected when their children/grandchildren live at a distance
- Experiencing the death of a grandchild

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- This – and the following issue – will explore some of the ways parishes are responding today to the various life situations of grandparents.



Grandparents-Grandchild Camp

A couple of years ago, Jolana Peard (Pastoral Associate of Elementary Ministries at St. Robert of Newminster Parish, Ada, MI) had a co-worker hand her an advertisement for a grandparents-grandchildren camp at Michigan State University. Recognizing that grandparents want to know how to pass on the faith, Jolana thought, “We can use an opportunity like this to help grandparents be involved in their grandchildren’s faith growth.”



The Grandparent/Grandchild Camp takes place during the summer, an opportunity for grandparents and grandchildren (ages 8-12) to come together for a three-day learning experience of faith sharing, a lesson concentrating on various aspects of family and the Catholic family, prayer, games, and crafts. Scheduled from 9:30 – noon, the days begin with a simple breakfast.

The over-all themes for each camp have always been something from which “family relationships” (and the activities, learnings, and prayer) can flow;

e.g. “The Jesse Tree;” “The Twelve Tribes.” Some of the activities which have been included are:

- Writing a family prayer using a recipe
- The apple doesn’t fall far from the tree: an activity for grandparents and grandchildren to find out what they have in common.
- Jesse Tree bingo
- Planting a sapling after painting the pots
- Garden stone handprints in cement
- Family tree worksheet
- Jeopardy game of basic Catholic knowledge
- Exploring the 12 tribes of Israel; exploring family geographic origins
- Painting together an acrylic painting of a desert scene with professional artist
- Creating tribe flags and family flags
- Making memory boxes
- A scrapbook of the three days



Who has participated in the camp?

- Grandchildren (who are parishioners) bring their grandparents
- Grandparents (who are parishioners) bring their grandchildren
- Some grandparents, from the parish, have volunteered to be surrogate grandparents for children who desire to come, but don’t have grandparents in the area

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- Some grandparents are from other parishes who read about it via the online bulletin or because of their participation in the Scripture study at St. Robert's.
- One grandparent told Jolana that she tells various groups about it (e.g. her book club). She said she is going to keep telling people until other parishes start offering the same type of camp for their grandparents.



Some important procedures which have added to the success of the camp:

- Because of a beautiful space in their newly constructed Parish Life Center, breaks between each activity are included: for restroom visits, quick coffee/snack refills, and a brief basketball game. Although the breaks are only a couple of minutes between each section of the morning, the basketball game always gets the wiggles out of the children, helping them to return and focus on a new activity.
- Grandparents are asked to bring only two grandchildren at a time, so personal attention can be given to each one.
- No parents can participate as helpers, so that children can give their full focus to their grandparents.

The task of the second-half of life is to become the quiet, blessing grandparent who no longer needs to be the centre of attention but is happy simply watching the young grow and enjoy themselves.

- Ron Rolbeiser



Grandparents in Prayer

In some parishes grandparents have joined – in various ways – for prayer.

Because of 9/11, some grandparents at Our Lady of Victory Parish, Centerville, MA, wondered what they could do to help in some way. They knew that many people were praying, but a group wanted to gather for prayer, starting a novena to St. Anne, the grandmother of Jesus. They did just that, beginning on July 26, 2002 (the feast of Sts. Anne and Joachim).

Since then, the *Gathering Grandmothers Novena*, a group of twelve to twenty grandmothers has met every Friday at noon. After opening prayer, the grandmothers share particular situations which are need of prayer. They then pray that Our Father, Hail Mary, Glory Be and Hail Holy Queen, then ending with the Litany of St. Anne.

- <http://www.catholictradition.org/Litanies/litany14.htm>
- <http://prayerbook.com/Litanies/litaanne.htm>

The idea has spread, other parishes beginning something similar, sometimes meeting monthly, some also expanding to do a few weekend gatherings a year with families, including grandparents. Dianne Gilligan, from Our Lady of Victory, remarks: “For us, I think the simplicity and short time requirement have contributed to our success and longevity.”

For more information, see:

- <http://olvparish.org/gatheringgrandmothers.html>
- <http://www.facebook.com/olvgrandmothers>

“One of the groups that was inspired by *The Gathering Grandparents* is the Grandparents Group at St. George Parish, Worcester, MA,” says Ruth Viens, from St. George Parish. One difference is that Ruth wanted to be sure to include grandfathers as well.

This group in Worcester meets at 11:00 am (for approximately 45 minutes) on the third Friday of the month, September through May to pray for the safety and well-being of their grandchildren. Their gathering includes prayers to Saint Anne and Saint Joachim, grandparents of Jesus, and the rosary. Copies of the prayers we use are always available in the church hall for anyone unable to attend but who may wish to pray from home.

They currently have what Ruth calls a “core group” of about eight grandparents. The group is open to any grandparents who wish to come and plans are underway to continue to the advertising, inviting more grandparents to join them:

- Notes on their diocesan website
- Faxed weekly to all parishes in the diocese
- Always mentioned in the calendar section of the weekly diocesan paper
- The parish bulletin, parish website a monthly parish e-newsletter

Another prayer idea can be found in the booklet, *Daily Meditations (with Scripture) for Busy Grandmas* (<http://www.thepastoralcenter.com/251.html>).

The very fact that you don't look or act or feel like the grandparents of even a generation ago does not mean that you are less, but that you are more - in effect, an evolved form of grandparents, primed to do a bigger and more challenging job than any group before you.

- Arthur Kornhaber



Grandparents at a Distance

According to a recent survey by the American Association of Retired Persons (AARP), 66% of American grandparents live more than twenty-five miles away from their grandchildren; 75% wish they could see their grandchildren more often.

In responding to my question regarding what was happening in parishes to support grandparents, Mary Caputo, of North Brookfield, MA commented, “My parish does not have any programs for grandparents, but it does have a large elderly population that would greatly benefit from something like this. I, myself have grandchildren living at a distance. I would love suggestions on how to stay close.”

Mary echoes the feelings/desires of many grandparents who are at a distance. Here are a few ways to connect (many of these could be for **all** grandparents (and great aunts and uncles), not just those at a distance:

- **Connect With Far-Off Grandchildren:**
<http://www.grandparents.com/grandkids/long-distance-grandparents/connectingtime>
- **Stay in Touch with Grandkids!:**
<http://www.cyberparent.com/gran/intouch.htm>
- **Best Ways to stay in touch with Grandchildren:**
<http://denisehandlon.hubpages.com/hub/Best-Ways-to-stay-in-touch-with-Grandchildren>
- **Long Distance Grandparenting: How to Keep in Touch:**
http://www.parentingweekly.com/grandparents/long_distance.htm
- **Long Distance Grandparents:**
<http://www.fiftyisthenewforty.com/family/long-distance-grandparents/>
- **15 ways for grandparents and grandchildren to bond:**
<http://www.sheknows.com/parenting/articles/810863/15-ways-for-grandparents-and-grandchildren-to-bond>

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- **Ideas for Grandparents to Stay in Touch and Close to Grandchildren When Living Far Away:**
<http://everydaylife.globalpost.com/ideas-grandparents-stay-touch-close-grandchildren-living-far-away-5780.html>
- **Staying in Touch with Grandchildren:**
<http://www.nanascorner.com/staying-in-touch-with-grandchildren/>
- **Stay Close to Your Grandchildren At a Distance:**
http://ncpen.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/03/Stay-Close-to-Your-Grandchildren-at-a-Distance_NC1.pdf
- **How to bond from a distance:**
<http://www.grandparents.com/grandkids/long-distance-grandparents/how-to-bond-from-a-distance>
- **Ways to Grandparent Older Grandchildren:**
<http://www.lifeway.com/Article/Ways-to-grandparent-older-grandchildren>
- **Tips for staying in touch:**
<http://www.cyberparent.com/intouchtip/>

GEMS Wondering

- In this issue
 - what surprised you? what challenged you?
 - what sparked ideas in you for the needs of your parish?
- In your community are there any stereotypes about grandparents and grandparenting that need to be examined and challenged (e.g. grandparents shouldn't be raising their grandchildren; in some cultures it's always the grandparents that raise their grandchildren, etc.).

More to Come

More ideas – for the support of and the involvement of grandparents with their grandchildren - will continue in our next two issues. Thanks, everyone, for sharing so many things that work – things that respond to the life needs of today's adults.



Golden Nuggets from You

“What a wonderful GEM ([GEMS #38](#)). While I always find these monthly newsletters interesting and helpful, I was very interested to see the variety of movies and formats, and the possibility of these as evangelization tools, for parishioners, as well as those not of our faith. I really appreciate all the resources you share with us.

- Catherine Cornue
Diocesan Director of Faith Formation, Syracuse, NY

(We welcome your comments, thoughts, suggestions, ideas, etc. Your views and practices continually support and encourage others. Email them to jschaeffler@adriandominicans.org any time.)



Janet Schaeffler, OP
www.janetschaeffler.com
jschaeffler@adriandominicans.org

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
- *The Seasons of Adult Faith Formation website*
<http://www.lifelongfaith.com/2015-adult-faith-formation-symposium.html>
- *40 Tips: Getting Started in Adult Faith Formation*
[http://www.ecatechist.com/ebooks/\(scroll down\)](http://www.ecatechist.com/ebooks/(scroll%20down))
- *Parish Leadership for Improved Adult Catechesis*
<http://store.pastoralplanning.com/iboplbeprfor.html>