St. Joachim Parish Council Report – Youth Ministry

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Reported by: Sylvia Catania and Kathy Lewis

Introduction

Our mission is to assess the current offerings available to our youth and to envision a vibrant future for our ministry. By identifying both our strengths and areas for growth, we aim to build a dynamic, faith-centered program that nurtures spiritual development, fosters community, and empowers young people to live out their Catholic faith with purpose and joy.

Our Youth Program Now

Our Youth Ministry is currently led by a dedicated part-time Director who balances this role alongside a full-time career and family life, including a spouse and young children. Despite these commitments, they continue to serve our parish with passion and care. The ministry currently includes two core programs:

- **Edge** – our Junior High youth program
- **Confirmation** – our High School faith formation program

Vision for Growth: What We Hope to Achieve

1. Hire a Full-Time Youth Minister To provide consistent leadership, mentorship, and program development that meets the spiritual and social needs of our youth.

2. Establish a Dedicated Youth Space Transform Annex A & B into a flexible, youth-centered environment with a movable partition, ensuring it remains available to other parish groups while prioritizing youth engagement.

3. Form a Youth Council Empower young people to take ownership of their faith journey by giving them a voice in planning, leadership, and service opportunities.

4. Deepen Youth Involvement in Parish Life Foster stronger connections between our youth and the broader parish community through liturgical participation, service projects, and intergenerational events.

5. Appoint a Second Deacon to Support Youth Ministry Ideally bilingual, this additional clergy support would enhance pastoral care and spiritual formation, especially for our diverse youth population.

Things to Avoid

1. Creating an Unwelcoming Environment Every youth should feel seen, valued, and safe - spiritually, emotionally, and socially within our parish community.

2. Relying on Untrained Volunteers and Catechists Proper formation and ongoing support are vital to ensure our team can effectively minister to and guide our youth.

3. Centering the Program Around a Single Individual While strong leadership is important, a sustainable ministry must be built on shared vision, collaboration, and community ownership, not solely on the youth minister.

4. Providing Insufficient Support to the Youth Ministry Team Volunteers, catechists, and leaders need encouragement, resources, and recognition to thrive in their roles.

5. Ignoring Feedback from Teens and Parents Listening attentively to those we serve helps us remain responsive, relevant, and rooted in the real needs of our parish families.

Expected Outcomes: Transformative Impact of Our Youth Ministry Goals

1. Deepened Faith and Vocational Discernment Inspire young people to grow in their relationship with Christ and explore how God may be calling them, whether to religious life, marriage, or service in the Church and world.

2. A Welcoming and Safe Gathering Space Provide a dedicated environment where youth feel at home, build lasting friendships, and experience the joy of belonging to a faith-filled community.

3. Empowered and Equipped Leadership Team Develop a team of well-trained, passionate leaders who bring both experience and enthusiasm to their ministry with youth, ensuring consistency and spiritual depth.

4. Intergenerational Connection Through Service Create opportunities for youth to serve alongside parishioners of all ages, fostering mentorship, shared mission, and a deeper understanding of Catholic social teaching.

5. Engaging Youth Through Modern Communication Leverage social media and digital platforms to meet youth where they are, share the Gospel in creative ways, and keep them connected to parish life.

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1. Hiring a full-time Youth Minister

Some added support from our Diocese

According to the Director of Youth and Young Adults, Armando Cervantes, the Diocese has a program to assist parishes with youth ministry through the following:

1. Salary to the youth minister
2. Our starting salary range recommendations usually is the following Experience (Educ), Formation/Education (Form/Educ)
    a. Little or no Exp or Form/Educ = $55-65K (hourly)
    b. Combination of Some Exp, Some Form/Educ = $66-$70K (minimum salary)
    c. Combination of lots of Exp, lots of Form/Educ = $75-$80K
3. Pastor needs to make a formal request through email to me for next fiscal year, in it he should include how much he is requesting, why that amount and how the parish will be investing in YYA Ministry.
4. We do have a house and taking applicants currently for women ministers – the house is in La Habra with rent approximately $600 a month.

Material has been collected by conversation with the Director of Youth Ministry at St. Joachim, and by speaking to the Diocese of Orange in the Youth Ministry office.

2. Establish a Dedicated Youth Space

Site Visit Summary: St. Boniface Youth and Faith Formation Center

I had the opportunity to connect in person with Nohemi Gutierrez, Youth Director at St. Boniface Catholic Church in Anaheim. Our meeting took place at their dedicated Youth and Faith Formation Center and included the following:

1. **Tour of the Youth Facilities** We walked through the youth space to observe how it is organized, utilized, and designed to foster community and engagement.
2. **Discussion on Program Structure** Engaged in a Q&A session with Nohemi to learn about the framework of their youth ministry, including leadership roles, program offerings, and strategies for outreach and retention.

What their current layout is:

<u>Meeting Summary: Insights from St. Boniface Youth Ministry</u>

Leadership Structure: Nohemi has served as full-time Youth Director for three years, supported by a part-time team (25 hours/week and 5–10 hours/week).

Youth Space: Their dedicated youth room, in use for nearly a year, hosts a variety of events including study sessions, social gatherings, and workshops.

Community Support: Most furnishings and supplies were donated by parishioners, reflecting strong community involvement.

Funding Strategy: They emphasized the importance of applying for grants, especially those focused on leadership development and vocational discernment, not just religious education. Their "Peer Leaders Program" is a cornerstone of this approach.

Program Size: Approximately 200 post-confirmation youth are actively involved.

Diocesan Engagement: Participation in events like Youth Knotts Berry Farm Day fosters inter-parish networking and leadership development.

Open Hours: The youth room is accessible Monday–Thursday and Sundays from 3:30–5:30 PM.

Collaboration Opportunity: St. Boniface expressed openness to partnering with St. Joachim.

Implications for St. Joachim's Youth Ministry

Based on this visit, we identified several actionable opportunities:

1. **Establish a Dedicated Youth Space** Create a welcoming environment for youth to gather outside of formal religious education, supporting both social and spiritual growth.
2. **Pursue Grant Funding** Begin identifying and applying for grants that support leadership formation, vocational discernment, and youth empowerment.
3. **Promote Diocesan Events** Keep our staff informed about diocesan youth activities to encourage participation and connection with the broader Catholic community.
4. **Building a Core Ministry Team** Hiring a small, passionate team will be essential to launching and sustaining these efforts effectively.

3. Formation of a Youth Council

Establishing a Youth Council at St. Joachim will empower teens to take an active role in shaping the spiritual and social life of their peers. By giving them a voice in decision-making, we foster ownership, leadership, and deeper engagement with parish life.

Following a conversation with Luis Ceja, we already have a handful of confirmed students eager to participate. To launch this initiative, we recommend forming a core team with the following typical roles:

President/Chairperson – Leads meetings, sets agendas, and represents the council in parish discussions
Vice President – Supports the president and steps in when needed
Secretary – Takes meeting notes, tracks attendance, and communicates updates
Events Coordinator – Plans and organizes youth activities, socials, and service projects
Spiritual Life Leader – Helps integrate prayer, liturgy, and faith formation into council initiatives
Communications Lead – Manages outreach, including social media and parish bulletin updates

Based on successful models from other parishes in our diocese, we propose starting with monthly meetings (1–2 hours) focused on:

- Defining the council's mission and values
- Identifying youth interests and needs
- Planning action items for parish involvement and service

This council will serve as a bridge between our youth and the wider parish community, cultivating leadership, faith, and fellowship.

4. Deepen Youth Involvement in Parish Life

To cultivate a vibrant and intergenerational parish community, it is essential that we create meaningful pathways for our youth to engage beyond religious education. By integrating them more fully into the life and mission of the parish, we not only nurture their spiritual growth but also empower them to become active contributors to the Church.

Key Strategies for Engagement:

1. **Liturgical Participation** Invite youth to serve as lectors, altar servers, ushers, and choir members. These roles foster a sense of belonging and reverence while helping them experience the Mass more deeply.
2. **Service Opportunities** Organize parish-wide service projects, such as food drives, community clean-ups, or visits to care homes - where youth can work alongside adults, learning the value of Catholic social teaching through action.
    - Offer community service hours for their participation
3. **Mentorship and Intergenerational Events** Pair youth with adult parishioners for mentorship in faith and life. Host events like "Faith & Fellowship Nights" or "Generations in Service" to build relationships across age groups.
    - Match an adult parishioner with a small group of 2-3 teens to collaborate on a shared activity
    - Invite adults to give short talks or testimonies to youth, with refreshments provided to create a welcoming and relaxed environment
4. **Youth-Led Initiatives** Empower the Youth Council to propose and lead parish events, such as retreats, fundraisers, or social gatherings. This builds leadership skills and gives them ownership of their faith journey.
    - Partnerships with local businesses and organizations that support youth-focused community initiatives
    - Currently in communication with Kathleen Nielsen, Engagement Specialist at the OC Catholic Foundation, to discuss potential collaboration and funding opportunities
5. **Visibility and Recognition** Regularly highlight youth contributions in parish bulletins, social media, and during Mass announcements. Celebrate their milestones, such as Confirmation, graduations, and service achievements.
6. **Digital Engagement** Use social media and parish platforms to share youth reflections, promote events, and create content that speaks to their experiences and questions about faith.

Expected Impact:

- Stronger sense of belonging and identity among youth
- Increased Mass attendance and parish engagement
- Formation of future parish leaders and vocations
- A more dynamic, inclusive, and mission-driven parish culture

5. Appoint a Second Deacon to Support Youth Ministry