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## ST. BENEDICT CATHOLIC CHURCH

### AUGUST 31, 2020: UPDATE ON 2020-21 FAITH FORMATION

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As we approach the beginning of the school year – minding that this year's beginning is anything but normal – it is important that I give a complete update on the current prospects for this year's faith formation at St. Benedict Church.

In addition to the global events of 2020 that have affected all of us, last spring brought the departure of Grace Woitalla from the position of youth minister. While we initially set out to consider our own hiring process to fill this position, God in his providence revealed an opportunity for our parish to work with the neighboring parishes. First, I learned in April that the Cathedral of Our Lady and St. Mary Star of the Sea parishes would also be seeking a new youth minister. Any initial idea of collaboration, however, would soon need to be put on hold in mid-May, with the further change of Fr. Peter Muhich from the Cathedral being appointed bishop of Rapid City, SD, postponing any possible conversations about collaboration until new leadership at the Cathedral and St. Mary Star of the Sea would be assigned. In early June, the appointment of new priests for the Cathedral/St. Mary Star of the Sea was announced, along with another, surprise appointment of a new priest for St. John's in Woodland/St. Joseph in Gnesen. Last of all, I would also learn that St. Michael's in Lakeside also needed of a new person to lead their youth program. All these circumstances were a clear signal that now is the time for an entire "East End" conversation regarding shared faith formation.

Since late July, the priests from all the parishes named above have been meeting to discuss and work toward collaboration in faith formation. Initially thinking that such collaboration would only impact St. Benedict in our programs for grades 6-12, additional opportunity for a stronger family formation program for grades K-5 surfaced (as the other parishes became interested in using the family formation program that we have used for several years). Presently, we are close to having final decisions on how we will collaboratively carry out all of the faith formation and sacramental preparation for grades K-12 in all of our parishes.

As of this writing, a job posting for the grades 6-12 director of faith formation has been made public and is open for application. In addition, it has been decided that K-5 family formation will be utilized, with each parish hosting its own parishioners for each monthly session. Finally, (and most significantly for us), the EDGE (grades 6-8) will be held at St. John's Church (Woodland) and the DEEP (grades 9-11) will be held at the Cathedral of Our Lady of the Rosary. Soon, more details on schedules and formats for the coming year will be finalized (such as how we are dealing with the additional situation of the COVID-19 protocols).

While this move will have a definite impact on St. Ben's (and in particular the beautiful Wednesday Evening communal life that has come to be here at our parish), I believe that such collaboration will serve our young people well - especially since so many of them already know one another from such events as Camp Survive and other Catholic youth events. Please know that as we move in this new direction, we will all be learning and adjusting to change. Please pray for our young people and for this collaborative effort to do the will of God. **Please feel free to contact me if you have questions or concerns.**

I believe the Lord Jesus is already blessing this endeavor. May we support one another in prayer as we navigate this time of transition. May God bless you all.

In Christ through Mary,  
Fr. Joel Hastings