



PLANS OF HOPE

HOUMA-THIBODAUX PARISH PLANNING

DIOCESAN PLANNING PRIORITY NO. 2: ADULT FORMATION

CHAPTER 11

SECTION 7



HOW?

John 15: The call for pruning and the need to bear fruit that will last

The current blueprint for parish-based evangelization in the United States is the 2017 USCCB document entitled *Living as Missionary Disciples*. There, we read:

“The parish must be concerned with **bearing fruit** throughout the discipleship process. **This shift in focus** ensures that attention is directed toward pruning what is ineffective so that new life and fruit can occur. Throughout Scripture, the metaphor of fruit is used many different times and in many ways in reference to mission. Jesus commands the disciples to ‘go and bear fruit that will remain’ (John 15:16). The work of pastoral planning ought to **bear fruit** and also involve effective pruning through planning, organization, and implementation so that new life and growth can occur.”

“A planning framework focused on **fruitfulness** suggests an approach to pastoral ministry that discerns what will be **fruitful**, what needs to be pruned, and how weeds will be separated from new growth. This means, at the start of the process, identifying the overall **fruit** and outcomes that a parish or diocese desires for its ministry and aligning programs and ministries to achieve this result.”

If we expect to see renewal within our parishes we must begin to discipline ourselves with the practice of **focus**. Practically speaking, parish leaders would do well to ask specific questions in order to remain focused on the mission that has been given to us. It is important that we ask **why** we are doing something so that we can ask ourselves **what** do we expect to see in people’s lives because of what we are doing? Thinking with the mind of *Living as Missionary Disciples* requires us to know **what** we are doing and so that we are clear what type of fruit we expect to see in someone’s life.

If authentic and sustainable growth is to happen in the parish and in the lives of parishioners, it is critical that each parish take an honest look at existing ministries as well ensuring on-going assessment of any new initiatives. This assessment cannot be driven by subjective impressions or the fear of infringing upon relationships that may have existed in the parish for a number of years. There must be an honest evaluation of “**What is bearing fruit?**”

The assessments mentioned by the US bishops are objective evaluations based on fruitfulness within the discipleship process. The Bishops state, “This means, at the start of the process, **identifying the overall fruit** and outcomes that a parish or diocese desires for its ministry”.

So, what are the “outcomes that a parish or diocese desires for its ministry?” What is “good fruit” within a discipleship process? The strategic planning process in 2016 the Diocese of Houma-Thibodaux articulated nine dimensions of a fully mature missionary disciple. Commonly known as “the nine”, these dimensions reveal the very fruit that is intended in one’s life because of healthy formation. The “nine” now becomes the benchmark for what we hope to see in the lives of those who engage in ministry in the parish. These are nine signs of maturity; nine dimensions of a fully mature missionary disciple.

In a sense, they are the fruits of one who is coming to know Jesus, to live with Jesus, and live like Jesus. If we see these nine dimensions visible in someone’s life, we see the “good fruit” of formation:

RELATIONSHIP	They have a personal, ongoing relationship with Jesus Christ
CONVERSION	They have taken steps, intentional steps, to remove sin and vice
GROUNDING	Their relationship with God is based on emotion or “feeling” His presence
DISCERNING	They don't ask God to bless their ideas; they regularly ask God to show them His will
HOLINESS	You see the virtues in their life: prudence, justice, temperance, and fortitude
SACRAMENTS	Mass every Sunday. Confession regularly.
COMMUNITY	They have people in their life who hold them accountable and support them in Christ
OTHERS	They “see” people in their human dignity; they serve willingly
EVANGELIZATION	They are unafraid to share their story with others

Of course, this doesn’t just happen. Parishes have to be intentional about partnering with God so that this happens in people’s lives. Formation ministry that expects to see this type of fruit must be intentional about focusing on bearing this type of fruit. Unfortunately, in the past, most of the ministry and parishes was simply designed to keep people busy. It was as if the “active parish” was the description of a healthy parish. Our parishioners were busy, they were active. However, we did not always see the fruit of spiritual maturity. If we are going to see the outcome change, we must see the input to change. In other words, if we expect to see fruit in people’s lives we must change our approach so that this change is intentionally facilitated. In many parishes, this begins not with new initiatives but with an honest evaluation of our current ministries.

Jesus himself gives us an image of this process in John 15. Jesus speaks of pruning in order to bear fruit. Pruning is directly connected to bearing fruit, especially in parishes. *Living as Missionary Disciples* states, “A planning framework focused on fruitfulness suggests an approach to pastoral ministry that discerns what will be fruitful, *what needs to be pruned, and how weeds will be separated from new growth.*”

The first step for many parishes is an assessment of current ministries. Again, you may find that despite a lot of activity in your parishes, there may not be much that is intentionally designed to accompany the average parishioner through a process of spiritual maturation, especially in a way that helps them flourish as a disciple of Jesus Christ (“the nine”). While this may be true, this is where the process begins.

If it is the case that there are many activities and ministries that do not naturally evidence fruitfulness, it will be necessary to take some steps towards pruning in the parish. This will not be easy. This is not an enjoyable part of leadership. It requires a commitment to discerning well.

This is important. Without **pruning**, complexity is assured. Without pruning, we will not be **focused**. The parish must be united around a singular commitment of forming disciples. The parish must be aligned around the process of making disciples. According to our research, there is a significant relationship between church vitality and pruning.

Every parish has a limited amount of resources; people, time, and finances. At the same time, those parishes see the same people doing several things. The struggle for most parishes is that they dilute their impact by spreading parishioners too thin. Parishioners may have to choose between something that is really *good* versus something that is *better*. Far too often the “best” option of adult formation is compromised because people choose other “good” options that are on the parish calendar. If we are to be good stewards of our resources, and if we want to **focus** our efforts on that which we believe will bear good **fruit**, we must make the decision to perhaps cut some of the ministries that are not maximally bearing fruit by way of the discipleship process.

It is important to consider that these discerned decisions may go against the subjective account of parishioners. For example, an annual event, such as a Family Fun Day that has been held at the parish for many years, may be something that parishioners feel is wonderful. However, when you really assess it, while it may be a one-day social event, it may not facilitate ongoing connections or lead to anyone entering more deeply into intentional discipleship process. Furthermore, it may be found that it is taking a lot of time and resources to pull it off. A parish might discern discontinuing this event until they have established a stronger focus of adult formation.

Our next section will take us one step further. In Section 8 we will look at alignment and movement. However, let us offer a few ways you can evaluate ministries. Doing so will better equip you to discern what needs to be pruned.



PLANS OF HOPE

HOUMA-THIBODAUX PARISH PLANNING

RESOURCE A



Assessing *all* existing ministries in the parish. Are they bearing fruit of discipleship growth?

TO BE USED BY Parish Implementation Teams, Adult Formation Teams or Parish Staff

PURPOSE Assessing current ministries in order to determine, to what extent, they naturally support the process of discipleship formation, using “the nine” as a benchmark for fruitfulness and “the five” as a roadmap for the process of formation.

HOW TO USE This assessment should be administered by way of an interview with current ministry leaders and most importantly, a percentage of ministry participants. This assessment can be used as a guide to facilitate that discussion.

What are the five aspects of forming disciples?
CONNECT » ENCOUNTER » CONVERSION » GROW » MISSION

Why five aspects? Because formation (forming disciples) is a verb, it is a process. The word process implies movement. Formation implies that there is a sequential process, an intentional movement from where a person was to where a person can be.

- “If our wanting is to be wholehearted, then what we want must be linked with the rest of reality. It has to be grasped not merely in itself, but in its connections, in what it portends to the whole.” (*Robert Johann, Wanting What We Want*)
- It’s not enough to want, we must be intentional about what we want. The question is not if parishes want parishioners to grow spiritually. The question is **how intentional are we** in helping make that happen?

The best way to understand “the five” is to keep our eyes focused on parishioners: it’s about people, real people. The results of the Disciple Maker Index (DMI) clearly indicate the hunger within the parishioners of our diocese. At least 44% of the people who responded to the DMI explicitly indicated that they are wanting to grow spiritually. In essence, 44% of the people who responded to the DMI are asking the parish “to help them” rather than their getting involved in serving the parish. It’s a different way to look at things isn’t it.

Yes, we want to help parishioners “get plugged into the parish.” **However, some ministries are intentionally designed to help parishioners grow as a disciple. Other ministries are historically postured to serve the ordinary function of the parish.**



Let's meet Matt.

- Matt is a 35-year father of two.
- He's been a parishioner since birth.
- He participates in Sunday Mass ... and that's about it.
- For a variety of reasons, Matt is hungry.
- He wants more.
- He wants to grow in his relationship with God.
- He wants to grow as a disciple.
- And ... Matt is looking to the parish to help grow.

Some ministries will **directly assist** Matt mature through “the five” ... and some ministries will not.

For example, some ministries simply serve the *ordinary function* of the parish: Altar Servers, Extra-Ordinary Ministers of the Eucharist, Ladies Altar Society, Pastoral Council, Finance Council, etc. They are important. They are essential. However, they exist for a very particular reason. They are probably not the first step for Matt, nor will they be what Matt needs from the parish to grow as a disciple.

The majority of currently active ministries will *not* naturally and easily serve Matt who wants to move through “the five.” Again, these ministries are important. They serve the ordinary function of the parish. They are important, but we need a different answer for Matt when he looks to the parish to help him grow.

Some currently active ministries **will intentionally help** Matt mature through “the five.” These ministries meet the criteria of the assessment. For example: *Art of Living*, ACTS retreat, a Wednesday morning men's group, etc. These ministries are no more important and no less important than the ministries listed above. The difference is in their intentionality. They are more designed to help form Matt. **Let's call these “formation ministries.” Formation ministries naturally and easily serve Matt who wants to move through “the five.”**

So ... some ministries will fit into one or more of “the five” ... and some will fit into a different category – let's call that category “Ministries that serve the ordinary function of the parish.”

The purpose of this assessment exercise is not to force currently active ministries into “the five.” The focus here is on “Matt” not “the five.”

- Some ministries naturally fit into “the five.” Let's identify if you have any of those ministries in your parish.
- Some ministries serve the ordinary function of the parish. Let's identify if you have any of those ministries in your parish.
- Be encouraged. You'll probably have more ministries in the category “Ministries that serve the ordinary function of the parish” than you do in the category of “the five.” It's not a competition. It's merely a first step in our assessment of how we help people like Matt.

“THE FIVE”

- CONNECT** The most natural “first step” for most people is to **CONNECT** with people. Research clearly indicates that people are more prone to persevere through the process to refinement if they are connected to other people who are walking with them.
Examples: small groups that people commit to on an on-going weekly or twice monthly basis
- ENCOUNTER** We want to connect people to people, but we want those small groups to focus on Jesus Christ. Thus, it is important for disciples to have an **ENCOUNTER** with the person of Jesus Christ. Parishes should have intentionally crafted programs or experiences that help facilitate a life-changing **ENCOUNTER** with the person of Jesus Christ. **ENCOUNTER** is perhaps the most influential part of the process. It is the energy that animates an on-going personal relationship with Jesus Christ.
Examples: retreats, mission trips, classes on prayer, nights of Eucharistic Adoration, etc.
- CONVERSION** Once people have an authentic encounter with God, the most natural response is contrition. It’s simply how God designed us. It’s important to have intentionally crafted programs or experiences that help facilitate life change and **CONVERSION**. **CONVERSION** is the second most influential aspect; however, it’s often the most overlooked – and it is often the one most people resist. Without receiving the grace of saying “no” most people are not able to sustain the “yes” experienced in their encounter.
Examples: “General Confession”, AA, spiritual direction
- GROW** Once people have encountered God and a fundamental renunciation of sin in their life, it’s important to ground their subjective experience in the objective reality of the Bible, the Church, and the Sacraments. Parishes should have intentionally crafted programs that teach the art of living in the reality of living in my conversion. The fire of emotion must be grounded in the truths of the Bible, the Tradition, and wisdom. People are now called to **GROW** in virtue, healthy spiritual exercise, and knowledge of God.
Examples: Bible studies, etc.
- MISSION** God always calls us out of ourselves. We are all called to participate in His mission. Parishes should have intentionally crafted programs or experiences that help equip the laity for the **MISSION** of evangelization. While service at the parish is a way of participating in the **MISSION**, the true aim is to equip the laity to walk others through the five-step process of forming disciples.
Examples: Called and Gifted

SECTION II
WHAT TO DO

- 1ST** Work with your pastor in deciding the best way to get a list of all ministries within the parish.
- 2ND** Working with your pastor, decide on the best way to get accurate contact information on the most reliable “leader” of each active ministry.
- 3RD** Work with the pastor and the other members of the parish implementation team as each person picks which ministry leaders they will contact. Divide and conquer. Divide the list amongst you.
- 4TH** Contact the “leader” of each active ministry. Ask for either a phone interview or face to face conversation. Should take about 15 minutes.
- 5TH** Interview each ministry leader and ask them to explain to you in detail what they do and why they do it.
- 6TH** Using the assessment tool determine if the ministry naturally fits into any of “the five” aspects part of the process of forming disciples. Be careful not to force a ministry into “the five.” Remember, in order for a ministry to naturally fit into any of “the five” there should be evidence of such and that evidence should be in a number of people.

CONNECT

How do we know if ministries are really helping people connect with other people?

“May we encounter the other, not just seeing, but looking; not just hearing, but listening; not just passing people by, but stopping with them.” *Pope Francis, Morning Meditation, September 13, 2016*

“The Church will have to initiate everyone, priests, religious and laity, into this ‘art of accompaniment’ which teaches us to remove our sandals before the sacred ground of the other.” *Pope Francis, Joy of the Gospel*

- Connecting people to people helps build a bridge of trust needed before a person can take a next step in their relationship with God.
- The connection is also intentional to help the person feel a sense of belonging to the parish community as well as help them know how to take the next step in their relationship with God.
- Connect should be an element of the process that can happen prior to a person being involved in any ministry as well as during all elements of the 5-step process.

YOU CAN SAY THAT A MINISTRY IS DOING A GOOD JOB WITH “**CONNECT**” IF MOST OF THE FOLLOWING ARE TRUE:

- _____ It is easy to see that people feel seen, heard and acknowledged in regular and consistent relationship with other parishioners
- _____ A person who is new to the parish or ministry is greeted and talked to because of an intentional effort within the parish
- _____ A person who is new to the parish has a built-in system of getting to know others in the parish in regular and consistent relationship. In other words, the pressure is not on the “new person” to get to know others. Rather the parish has built-in systems that intentionally integrate the “new person” into regular and consistent relationship with other parishioners.
- _____ There is an intentional mechanism in place for follow up with people. In other words, follow up isn’t left up to the charism of a single person. Follow up is connected to someone’s responsibility or a ministries responsibility.
- _____ There is a built-in system within the parish for updating contact information of parishioners and contact information used within specific ministries
- _____ There are small groups in the parish that are established by the parish and monitored by the parish
- _____ People in the parish know about small groups. They know why they exist. They know how to join.
- _____ Those involved in “connecting” with others are relevant and relatable to those people they need to reach. These leaders are trained and held accountable to someone within the parish.

ENCOUNTER

How do we know if ministries are really helping people encounter the person of Jesus Christ?

“Being Christian is not the result of an ethical choice or a lofty idea, but the encounter with an event, a person, which gives life a new horizon and a decisive direction.” *Pope Benedict XVI, God is Love*

- Connecting people to people helps build a bridge of trust needed before a person can take the next step in their journey. The aim with “encounter” is for the parish to become “architects of encounter.” This means helping nurture an environment in which a person has the opportunity to encounter the living God personally.
- Encounter awakens a person to the reality of the beauty of Jesus Christ and His personal love.

YOU CAN SAY THAT A MINISTRY IS DOING A GOOD JOB WITH “**ENCOUNTER**” IF MOST OF THE FOLLOWING ARE TRUE:

- _____ A person moves from “talking about God” to sharing about a concrete, personal experience of God
- _____ We may hear things like, “God felt so real, so near to me” ... “I now know God is real” ... or “Because of this (ministry) I felt His presence”. In other words, people are able share an account of experiencing God in a personal and real way
- _____ People experienced the presence of God because of the atmosphere created by the ministry or because of what the ministry actually did (talk or teaching given, prayer experience that was facilitated). In other words, without the ministry, or what it provided, there is no real evidence that the encounter would have happened.
- _____ People move from a general experience to recognizing something is meant for them personally

Please note: A special comment about the dignity of the Holy Mass or the Sacraments in general. Objectively speaking every time someone celebrates the Sacraments they have objectively encountered the presence of God. However, each of us understands how this objective grace may not be subjectively appropriated. Therefore, in order for us to say that a ministry is successfully assisting in “encounter” we measure how well the ministry is aiding the person in their subjective appropriation of the objective reality.

CONVERSION

How do we know if ministries are really helping people turn away from sin and see real change in their life?

“Christ's call to conversion continues to resound in the lives of Christians. This endeavor of conversion is not just a human work. It is the movement of a ‘contrite heart,’ drawn and moved by grace to respond to the merciful love of God who loved us first.” (*Catechism of the Catholic Church, no. 1428*)

“Conversion is the change of our lives that comes about through the power of the Holy Spirit. All who accept the Gospel undergo change as we put on the mind of Christ by rejecting sin and becoming more faithful disciples in his Church. Unless we undergo conversion, we have not truly accepted the Gospel.” (*Go and Make Disciples*)

“We know that people experience conversion in many ways. Some experience a sudden, shattering insight that brings rapid transformation. Some experience a gradual growth over many years. Others undergo conversion as they take part in the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults—the normal way adults become members of the Church today. Many experience conversion through the ordinary relationships of family and friends. Others have experienced it through the formation received from Catholic schools and religious education programs. Still others have experienced ongoing conversion in renewals, ecumenical encounters, retreats, parish missions, or through some of the great spiritual movements that have blessed church life today.” (*Go and Make Disciples*)

- How do we intentionally help people continue to recognize God’s loving presence in their lives and orient their lives towards Him in a way that supports ongoing conversion?
- Conversion allows us to begin the path of discipleship, following Jesus and placing Him as the center of our lives.
- Conversion is an on-going process, learning to say “no” to certain things so as to say “yes” to Him fully.

YOU CAN SAY THAT A MINISTRY IS DOING A GOOD JOB WITH “**CONVERSION**” IF MOST OF THE FOLLOWING ARE TRUE:

_____ It is clear that there is a movement in a person to place God first and at the center of his/her life. **And ... this happens because of the ministry.** The key is to be able to explain how the ministry actually facilitates the change of heart and the call to action.

_____ There are certain necessary disciplines which are put into place in the person’s life (for example: regular prayer, Sacraments, reading of the Word of God, making choices that dispose him/her to grow in virtue). **And ... this happens because of the ministry.** The key is to be able to explain how the ministry actually facilitates the change of heart and the call to action.

_____ There is a recognition of the effect of sin and a healthy experience of repentance. **And ... this happens because of the ministry.** The key is to be able to explain how the ministry actually facilitates the change of heart and the call to action.

_____ People begin to surround him/herself with others who are serious about their journey of faith. **And ... this happens because of the ministry.** The key is to be able to explain how the ministry actually facilitates the change of heart and the call to action.

_____ There is evident accountability in place.

GROW

How do we know if ministries are helping people live in their conversion and stimulate spiritual growth?

“I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing. If you do not remain in me, you are like a branch that is thrown away and withers; such branches are picked up, thrown into the fire and burned. If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. This is to my Father’s glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples.” (*John 15:5-8*)

- Growth is an essential part of the discipleship process that helps us to learn and be more firmly rooted in a life in Christ.
- It grounds one’s subjective experience of God in the objective reality of the Bible, the Sacraments, and the Tradition of the Church.

YOU CAN SAY THAT A MINISTRY IS DOING A GOOD JOB WITH “**GROW**” IF MOST OF THE FOLLOWING ARE TRUE:

- _____ The ministry exhibits evidence of learning the essentials of the spiritual life (for example: prayer, learning to read and pray with the Word of God, etc.)
- _____ The ministry intentionally helps a person learn how to live a life of docility (being led by God)
- _____ The ministry intentionally helps a person learn how to discern on a daily basis and listen to God’s voice
- _____ The ministry intentionally helps a person learn how to deepen their relationship with God such that God becomes a part of all elements of life (instead of living a compartmentalized life)
- _____ The ministry intentionally helps a person become more aware of their true identity, who they are personally to God
- _____ The ministry intentionally helps a person grow in knowledge of the teachings of the Church, Sacraments and the Word of God.

MISSION

How do we know if ministries are really helping people become equipped for service and evangelization?

All the baptized, whatever their position in the Church or their level of instruction in the faith, are agents of evangelization, and it would be insufficient to envisage a plan of evangelization to be carried out by professionals while the rest of the faithful would simply be passive recipients. The new evangelization calls for personal involvement on the part of each of the baptized. Every Christian is challenged, here and now, to be actively engaged in evangelization Every Christian is a missionary to the extent that he or she has encountered the love of God in Christ Jesus: we no longer say that we are 'disciples' and 'missionaries', but rather that we are always 'missionary disciples.'" *Pope Francis, Joy of the Gospel*

YOU CAN SAY THAT A MINISTRY IS DOING A GOOD JOB WITH "MISSION" IF MOST OF THE FOLLOWING ARE TRUE:

- _____ The ministry intentionally helps a person identify their primary charisms (gifts)
- _____ The ministry intentionally helps a person identify how they may use their charisms (gifts) in service to the church or in the mission of evangelization
- _____ The ministry intentionally helps a person recognize and respond to individual calls from the Lord or vocational paths.
- _____ The ministry intentionally helps a person in deepening their communion with God in day to day life
- _____ The ministry intentionally helps a person such that there is an evident concern for others and an outward focus

ASSESSMENT

These active ministries **naturally** and **easily** serve parishioners who wants to move through “the five.”

IF THEY FIT HERE THEY ARE YOUR FORMATION MINISTRIES				
CONNECT	ENCOUNTER	CONVERSION	GROW	MISSION

These active ministries serve the **ordinary function** of the parish

SERVING THE FUNCTION OF THE PARISH



PLANS OF HOPE

HOUMA-THIBODAUX PARISH PLANNING

RESOURCE B



Specifically assessing adult formation ministries in the parish. Are they bearing fruit of discipleship growth?

TO BE USED BY Parish Implementation Teams, Adult Formation Teams or Parish Staff

PURPOSE Once all existing or new adult formation ministries have been identified, this resource is meant to help provide some considerations for assessing fruitfulness of the adult formation ministries in the parish.

PLEASE NOTE Adult formation ministries are those ministries in the parish which have been identified as assisting people to entering into, and remaining with, the discipleship process.

GENERAL INFORMATION

- Name of ministry or small group:

- How often does the group meet?

- How long has the ministry existed?

- Have new leaders naturally come out of the group?

“THE FIVE”

- Assess whether aspects of “the five” are evident, natural, and consistent within this ministry.
- Consider the following questions.
- A “yes” most likely indicates fruitfulness.

CONNECT Does the ministry have a small group component?
 YES Are people establishing intentionally and ongoing “connection” with others?
 or Does meaningful relationship between others in the ministry naturally grow?
 NO Does everyone feel as though we are on the “journey of faith” together?
 Does the comfort and “depth” of personal sharing increase over time with those involved?

ENCOUNTER Does discussion center more on personal relationship w God vs. “facts” about God?
 YES Is the group noticing and naturally sharing about God’s action in their lives?
 or Have people shared about a moving and deep encounter with Jesus?
 NO Have people shared about an experience of being personally loved by God?
 Have people involved naturally grown in comfort with silence in or outside the ministry time?

CONVERSION Have people shared about their desire to put God at the center of their life?
 YES Have people made necessary changes in their life to more closely follow Jesus?
 or Have people grown in awareness of their response to God’s grace in their lives?
 NO Have people grown in awareness of their resistance to God’s grace in their lives?
 Within the group, are you confident that everyone has at least a few people that know their personal resolutions and hold them accountable?

GROW Does the group provide ongoing opportunities for everyone to grow in prayer?
 YES Is there evidence of that growth in prayer?
 or Does the group provide ongoing opportunities for everyone to grow in understanding of
 NO Scripture, the Sacraments and knowledge of the faith ?
 Is there evidence of growth in these areas?
 Have you noticed discussion grow in depth and move beyond sharing “feelings” about God?
 Have people shared often about how disciplines in their lives have helped them grow?
 (daily prayer, reading scripture, weekly Mass)
 Do people become more aware of what is needed to remain in and grow in my faith?

MISSION Has participation in this ministry helped people feel comfortable sharing with others about what
 YES God has done in their life?
 or Have those in the group evidently grown in confidence to respond to opportunities God offers to
 NO reach out to others and share His love and truth?
 Through this ministry, have those in the group become aware of particular spiritual gifts God has given them?
 Have those in the group evidently become more aware of times when God has used them as a vessel of His love?
 Has this ministry had an impact on helping people feel strengthened for their vocation (marriage, parenting, etc), occupation (my work) and call to bring His light to all areas of life?

“THE NINE”

- Consider what you observe in peoples lives over time through participation in this ministry.
- Some “entry level” formation ministries (such as a retreat or mission trip) may evidence a “start” or “impact” in a short amount of time.
- Consider the questions. The questions indicate what you might observe that indicates fruitfulness and growth in this area. Then, highlight or underline all those that you have observed as growth in peoples lives, because of involvement in this ministry.

- RELATIONSHIP** Have people established a personal encounter with Jesus?
Has this relationship evidently offered them purpose and direction?
- CONVERSION** Has Jesus become the center of their lives?
Are they aware of what they need to say “yes” to so as to stay in relationship with God?
Are they aware of what they need to say “no” to that which pulls them away from God?
Are they aware of why accountability is so important to remain in relationship with God?
Has there been growth in the practice of: Confession, examination of conscience, etc?
- DISCERNMENT** Have those involved in the ministry learned how to discern “the little things”?
Is discernment and a posture of “I want what God wants” modeled in the ministry?
Do participants naturally begin to ask “God what do you want”?
Have participants grown in their ability to “hear God’s voice”?
- SACRAMENTS** Have the Sacraments become a regular part of the lives of participants?
Has additional reception of the sacraments been expressed? (For example: daily Mass, monthly Confession, Eucharistic Adoration, etc.)
Have participants grown in their understanding of the sacraments?
- HOLINESS** Have those in the ministry grown in their ability and practice of prayer?
Have they grown in virtue and a desire for holiness?
- GROUNDING** Is there growth noticed in regards to knowledge of the faith (Church teachings?)
Is there growth noticed in the Word of God?
Is it evident that relationships with God are rooted in something deeper than “feelings”?
- COMMUNITY** Have those participating in the ministry come to understand their need for accountability?
Have they given permission to others to keep them accountable in their relationship with God?
Have they come to want to journey with others in the spiritual life?
- OTHERS** Is it evident that the group has helped people move from a posture of faith that is centered on “me and Jesus” to now recognizing they are part of one “spiritual family”?
Has there been growth in recognizing the needs of others and responding to those needs?
Do members fundamentally see their gifts as “gifts” for others?
- OTHERS** Has this ministry helped those participating recognize “the story” of what God has done in their lives?
Are those participating in this ministry able to share about their story with others?
Has there been growth in recognizing opportunities God is opening to share their faith with others? And, have they grown in their response to that opportunity

CONSIDERATIONS REGARDING ALIGNMENT OF MINISTRIES AND ENTRY INTO THIS ADULT FORMATION OPPORTUNITY

- How did most of the people in the ministry find out about it? (Circle responses)
Personal invitation
Announcement at Mass
Bulletin
Website
Other
- Are there opportunities for inquiry about the ministry and follow up?
- Have we made it easy for people to join and begin participating in the ministry?
- Have we taken time to consider what obstacles might be there for people and taken steps to remove those obstacles?
- Do people understand how this ministry will help them take the next step in the their faith, in a way that is appropriate for where they are on the journey?
- What opportunities or ministry “feed” participation into this ministry or provide a natural entry into this ministry?
- How could we better align opportunities in a way that helps people see this ministry as an easy “next step”?
- Are there opportunities within this ministry for leadership growth of participants?
- Where do we hope people might move on from this ministry?
- What ministries might be a “next step”?
- What might be indications that they are ready to take a next step?