

Diocese of Trenton

2021 Pre-Cana Updates and Procedures

1. **Eventbrite** – we will continue to use Eventbrite as the platform for online registration for all parish and diocesan Pre-Cana events. For a refresher on Eventbrite, [click here](#) for the 2020 Pre-Cana Procedures.
2. **Pre-Cana Materials:** Parish teams that are not on the list of pilot teams for the new *Better Together* format and who will continue with the current *Before “I Do”* format will receive their Pre-Cana materials as they have in the past. We will change delivery of materials when we all move to the new *Better Together* format beginning in January 2021 (see #7h below).
3. **Expense allowance:** The Pre-Cana expense allowance is increasing to \$70 per couple starting with all January 2021 Pre-Cana events but we are eliminating the \$100 parish stipend for increased efficiency.
4. **Recruiting of new team couples** (especially young couples) is a priority throughout the diocese. Team couples may be from surrounding parishes. We suggest holding a recruitment social (pot luck dinner or dessert gathering) at least once annually. Parishes should include an invitation to the social in the parish bulletin, announce at mass, post on parish facebook page and on parish website. Personal invitation is always best!
5. **Pre-Cana Team Couple Information:** In order to keep all Pre-Cana team couples informed of all formational and enrichment opportunities available through the diocese, we ask each team to provide us with an updated team list that includes each couple’s names, mailing address, email, and cell # (optional).
6. **Covid-19 Response:**
 - a) Covid-19 updates from the State of NJ are constantly changing, but as of June 9 many restrictions on the capacity for indoor and outdoor events are being lifted. However, until the pandemic is officially over, we will continue to limit all Fall 2020 parish Pre-Cana events to 10 couples.
 - b) When we return to full capacity as set by each Pre-Cana team, we will resume the current practice of enabling Pre-Cana teams to add more couples via the promo code feature in Eventbrite (see instructions from 2020 Pre-Cana procedures).
 - c) Should there be a resurgence of Covid-19 that forces the return of major restrictions, the Diocese can assist with technology if fall or winter parish Pre-Cana sessions need to be virtual. Special training in the virtual format can be provided to parish teams upon request.
 - d) The diocese has assembled a team of 8 couples from various parish Pre-Cana teams to undergo a special training to run small group virtual Pre-Cana sessions (up to 5 engaged couples). These trainings will enable us to offer additional virtual sessions if there is a need and will help teams transition to the new *Better Together* model.

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7. Transitioning to the new *Better Together* format for Pre-Cana events:

- a) According to the original timeline for implementation of the new model for Pre-Cana, **all Pre-Cana events beginning in January 2021** will be based on the new *Better Together* format.
- b) The [training document](#) that has been sent via email to all Pre-Cana Teams is designed so that each team couple can run through the entire program on their own and complete a self-paced training or work together with their team. All detailed instructions and materials for running a Pre-Cana using the new format are included in the document including links to all videos and specific page references and links for the [Leader's Guide](#). These pages in the Leader's Guide contain the content that should be used as the talking points and leader's script for the facilitating couple for each segment.
- c) The [Pre-Cana Couple's Book](#) for *Better Together* is the workbook for engaged couples that coincides with the training document.
- d) The **Better Together videos** included in the training document for each segment have all been carefully selected. They are almost exclusively instructional. The witness aspect (includes personal stories) is provided by the team couple who is facilitating the particular segment. If the team chooses not to show the recommended video(s), the facilitating couple can include the teaching points in an extended witness talk (15-20 minutes). When videos are used, the witness talks should always be kept to a 5-7 minute timeframe. (link to training doc and couple's book)
- e) **The following teams have been selected to pilot the new *Better Together* format for 2020 events:**
 - June 6, 2020 diocesan Pre-Cana (held as a virtual event)
 - July 18, 2020 diocesan Pre-Cana (will be held as a virtual event)
 - August 1, 2020 parish Pre-Cana, St. Clement, Matawan (planning to hold as a virtual event)
 - September 12, 2020 diocesan Pre-Cana (planning to hold as a virtual event)
 - October 17, 2020 parish Pre-Cana, Nativity, Fair Haven (hoping to hold as an in-person event but will be virtual if needed)
 - October 23, 2020 parish Pre-Cana, Co-Cathedral of St. Robert Bellarmine, Freehold (hoping to hold as in-person event but will be virtual if needed)
 - November 14, 2020 parish Pre-Cana, St. Benedict, Holmdel (hoping to hold as in-person event but will be virtual if needed)
- f) **In the event that a virtual format is needed for fall Pre-Cana events**, those teams that are not among the pilot teams may choose to move to the *Better Together* format for their Fall Pre-Cana event if they feel ready, as this format is more conducive to a virtual platform. However, non-pilot teams are permitted to use their current format if they prefer. While our hope is to return to in-person Pre-Cana events this Fall, social distancing restrictions may force us to hold all events virtually. We will provide assistance and any needed training to teams for virtual events.
- g) **Training in *Better Together* format:** Since All parish Pre-Cana events beginning in January 2021 will use the new *Better Together* format, we will hold two virtual training events in August and September. Both will be four evening sessions, 7:00 – 8:30 pm. Team couples will be given specific instructions on how to prepare for each training session. We will hold live, in-person trainings as needed as soon as the pandemic re-opening guidelines allow.

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- h) **Pre-Cana Materials for the Better Together format** – In addition to the Couple’s Workbook, we would like to give each couple a special gift bag as a remembrance of their Pre-Cana experience and in keeping with a new retreat-style format for our Pre-Cana sessions.
- We are working on items for the gift bag and have these ideas:
 - A large custom designed refrigerator magnet with the scriptural quote from the Couple’s workbook: “I am my beloved’s and my beloved is mine.” The magnet will contain a link to a special web page created just for newly married couples that will contain all the resources they’ll need for their first years of Catholic marriage - www.dioceseoftrenton.org/new-marriage-helps (page not created yet)
 - Beautiful framed prayer, St. Patrick – Celtic Benediction p. 234 Couple’s Book;
 - [Cross made of Olive Wood](#) from the Holy Land Materials will be delivered to parish and distributed at a team meeting (gift for the couple)
 - The **Pre-Cana Couple’s workbook for Better Together** will be available for download for all teams who will then be able to make their own copies. Certificates and evaluations will also be available for teams to copy. This will eliminate the cost of mailing materials and any delays you may be experiencing in receiving your Pre-Cana materials.
 - Please note that teams who are unable to make copies of Pre-Cana materials at the parish may still request copies from the diocese.
 - **Evaluations and Certificates:** we are working on a digital evaluation that couples will complete on their phones or devices at the end of Pre-Cana which will then automatically produce a digital copy of their Pre-Cana certificate.
- i) The following is a summary of **core requirements** for the new Better Together format for all Pre-Cana Teams. Once the core requirements are fulfilled, teams should feel free to incorporate their own activities and best practices and may include additional topic areas (e.g. an additional segment on Finances/Money):
- **All Pre-Cana events will include these topic areas:** 1) Your Dreams for Marriage; 2) Seven Levels of Intimacy; 3) Prayer and Spirituality (including a special prayer ritual); 4) Conflict is Inevitable; 5) Sexuality; 6) Family (includes NFP segment); Final Segment – On the Day (The Difference Between a Wedding and a marriage).
 - **Witness talks** will be given for these topic areas: 1) Marital Communication – the Seven Levels of Intimacy; 2) Prayer and Spirituality; 3) Conflict is Inevitable; 4) Sexuality; 5) NFP Witness (if an NFP couple is available); Witness talks are limited to 5-7 minutes when videos are shown but can be 15-20 minutes to include teaching/instruction when videos are not shown.
 - **Small Group Sharing:** Pre-Cana evaluations have indicated a clear preference for couple reflection and discussion time versus small group sharing time. Many couples are uncomfortable in small group sharing situations, therefore we suggest that teams limit small group sharing to twice throughout the Pre-Cana session to allow enough time for couple discussion time (we recommend small group sharing for Marital Communication – *Seven Levels of Intimacy* and *Conflict is Inevitable*).
 - **Integrating Best Practices into new model:** All segments in Pre-Cana are based on the Better Together sessions, however team couples should feel free to incorporate effective content from their current Pre-Cana program.