



# GREAT ENDEAVORS MINED & SHARED

*from an International Adult Faith Formation Best Practices Study*

#89 - May 2018

## A Best Practice: Formation Leading to Action

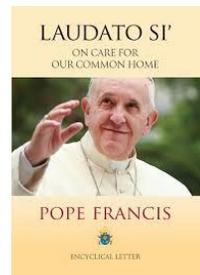
There's a church in my area which has a one-way driveway for entry and exit to its property. The posted signs say: "Enter to Worship" and "Exit to Serve."

That is our Baptismal call. One of the results of our increased concentration on adult faith formation is, hopefully, the deepening of people's awareness, desire, abilities and skills to **act**, to be missioned for their role in the world.

*Our Hearts Were Burning Within Us* reminds us of this so well in the third of its major goals for adult faith formation: "to call and prepare adults to act as disciples in mission to the world. The Church and its adult faithful have a *mission in and to the world*: to share the message of Christ to renew and to transform the social and temporal order. ... faith formation seeks to help each adult believer become more willing and able to be a *Christian disciple in the world*. As salt of the earth and light for the world (cf. Mt 5:13-16), adult disciples give witness to God's love and caring will so that, in the power of the Spirit, they renew the face of the earth." (#72-73)

Jeanne Schrempf (former director of catechetics for the diocese of Albany, NY and active parishioner at St. Thomas the Apostle Parish in Delmar, NY) tells of a recent (and on-going) experience St. Thomas Parish which is a vibrant and inspiring example of adult faith formation leading to action, specifically action for the needy of the world. In reality, the two – formation and action – are intertwined continually in their endeavor.

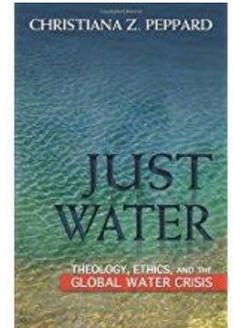
## It Began with Formation



Lent 2016 saw an opportunity for prayer, study and discussion of Pope Francis' encyclical *Laudato Si' – On Care for Our Common Home* for parishioners who were part of Father Tom Hayes' Lenten study group.

Because of this Lenten study, a parish committee was formed to help parishioners know and understand that *Caring for God's Creation* is one of the seven principles of Catholic Social Teaching.

In the fall of 2016, Father Hayes led a guided study of the book *Just Water* by Christiana Z. Peppard, a professor of ethics, theology and ecology at Fordham University. This book presents the theology, ethics and crisis of water in our world.



The parish committee became the Creation Care Team and decided to help the whole parish know and reflect on Pope Francis' encyclical by publishing small weekly reflections with suggested action steps in the bulletin.

## Action (and Continuing Formation) Quickly Followed

In the winter of 2017, the Creation Care Team decided to design and market reusable grocery bags to help to reduce the use of disposable plastic bags and to raise money for Catholic Relief Services which is dedicated to helping those in need world-wide and to fund water projects in areas through the world.



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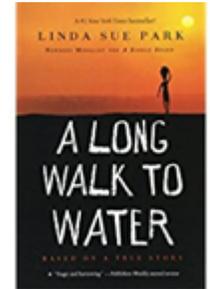
The weekend before Ash Wednesday 2017 became a special Mardi Gras celebrative and educational environmental fair complete with

- Dixie Land music at one of the liturgies
- a Mardi Gras themed display
- environmental education
- activities for families
- fundraising to aid water projects



The parish was able to send \$500 to Catholic Relief Services and then decided to take on a larger project of raising the funding to build a well in Africa.

The committee used the book *A Long Walk to Water* as an educational tool to help the parish understand the many reasons why they wanted to build a well and fund water projects.



The town of Delmar, NY had recently completed a "rail trail" through the town. The committee planned a Sunday fundraiser which invited families to walk one, two or three miles (the distances women and children in third world countries have to walk to get clean water) on the Rail Trail. At different mile markers they placed large containers of water to give the walkers that experience.



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The committee learned – through researching national/international organizations that work with Third World countries - that they needed to raise a minimum of \$12,000.00-15,000.00 to build a well. In deciding upon an organization to work with, the committee established criteria that would include:

- A solid reputation in the use of donated resources
- Experience in third world countries
- A track record of working with local organizations that empower local communities and train them in building, managing, and overseeing their use into the future
- A “fit” with the expectations of the parish and an opportunity to receive regular updates, reports and communication

After research, personal contact, and discussion, the Creation Care Team chose The Water Project, a faith based organization in Concord, New Hampshire with a ten-year history of water projects in Third World countries.

They offered the parish the opportunity to build a well in southeastern Kenya, Africa for the Kivani Community which would provide clean, safe and accessible water for the 500 children and adults who live there.

As the word spread – via the bulletin and personal contact - that the parish wanted to build a well, parishioners, neighbors and family members gave very generous donations.

- Their recently retired pastor Father Tom Hayes had been the inspiration and support for this project through his homilies and book studies. Many people donated funding for this project at his retirement reception.
- The young people of the parish added to the funds through the CLYNK bottle drive (<https://www.clynk.com/>) and other fund-raising efforts.
- Some donors gave money in memory of family members and others involved their adult children in a family effort.

By mid-summer 2017 the parish had surpassed their initial \$15,000 goal; by fall 2017 they were two-thirds of the way to the funding for a second water project. Some donors had hoped that memorial donations for family members could be inscribed on the well. The committee, in contact with all well-building organizations, learned that it is not possible to guarantee this. In its place, the parish placed an appreciation memorial in the church gathering area after the project was finished.

- The Kenyan well bears the inscription on The Water Project website that this well was given through the generosity of the St. Thomas the Apostle Community in Delmar, New York and through the inspiration of their former pastor, Father Thomas Hayes.



- The additional second water project is also dedicated to the parish community.

In October 2017 the Kenyan well was dug adjacent to a sand dam system. As rainy seasons occur over time, sand will build up behind the dam, storing and filtering water that will fill the well and raise the water table in the area.

A self-help group from the Kivani Community and two other villages also attended training on sanitation and hygiene, planning to share what they learned with their families and neighbors.

The parish continues to follow the operating of the well as well as meeting the Kenyan community through the website:

<https://thewaterproject.org/community/projects/kenya/shallow-well-project-4784>



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One of the updates on the site – on January 19, 2018 – said:

Shanjero Primary School in Kenya now has a new source of safe, clean water thanks to your generous donation.

A new rainwater catchment system has been built, and there are now six new latrines being used.

Two hand-washing stations have been installed, and students have received training in sanitation and hygiene.

Just imagine the difference these resources will make in the lives of these young students!

We trained 15 students, three school board members, and a teacher on hygiene and sanitation practices.

(While schools in Kenya can access government funding for buildings and at times even computer technology, the government does not subsidize water infrastructure.)



During fall 2017-winter 2018 the parish continued to complete the fund-raising for the second water project. Donations continued to pour in. The parish sold children's books which many people purchased as birthday or Christmas gifts.

The Creation Care Team stays in contact with the parishioners through a weekly bulletin article. As Lent 2018 began, the parish was invited to their second Mardi Gras celebration:

## MARDI GRAS!

This month St. Thomas Parish enters the season of Lent which begins Ash Wednesday, February 14.

Our parish Creation Care Team invites you to our 2nd "annual" Mardi Gras celebration after all the liturgies next weekend – February 10-11.

Mardi Gras has many cultural traditions especially in the south and Caribbean islands. We would like to invite you to "New Orleans North" to join with our parish community for a festive and educational celebration in the Gathering Area after all the Masses.

- We will host a Mardi Gras celebration after each Mass with a Kings' Cake, coffee, punch and baked goods with hands-on activities and educational resources for children and adults.
- We will distribute Rice Bowls from Catholic Relief Services to help us journey through Lent by prayer, fasting and almsgiving.
- We will share the good news of our two wells and water projects in Kenya made possible through the generosity of our parishioners.
- We are introducing an expanded recycling program beyond granola bar wrappers to include squeezable snack pouches and personal care/beauty items. Your recycling efforts have kept over 5000 wrappers out of landfills and provided clean drinking water for 26 people for one year through the Terracycle project.

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## Formation and Action Continue

With the completion of the two wells in Kenya, that portion of the efforts at caring for our common home have been brought to a close; but the endeavor of study and action on behalf of Earth continue.

- The parish has joined the Creation Care Covenant (<http://christiansustainability.org>), an excellent source of education and inspiration.
- Having completed an energy audit of the parish, the suggestions from the committee are being implemented, making the parish more aware and active in environmental consciousness.
- Much effort is directed toward recycling, encouraging its use throughout the parish and school. The committee is assisting with the St. Thomas School Garage Sale to promote the necessity and benefits of recycling.
- World Water Day (<http://worldwaterday.org/>) will be observed with a prayer celebration.
- The committee is hosting the second “Long Walk for Water” on the town rail trail.
- A visual report from the committee on all that has been done will be given to the parish council.
- St. Thomas Parish has committed to work with St. Vincent Parish, Albany to share ideas and collaborate whenever possible. The parishes agreed to support each other’s major projects and not schedule in conflict with them.
- The Creation Care Team of St. Thomas parish joined with others in a major gathering in February 2018 (initiated by St. Vincent Parish) to begin to network in care for creation in their wider community.

## GEMS Suggestion

Now that you’ve finished reading this, why not forward it immediately to:

- your pastoral staff
- your Christian Service Commission
- your Justice and Peace Committee
- someone in your parish who has expressed an interest in the water problem in our world



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Past issues of **GEMS** are archived at [www.janetschaeffler.com](http://www.janetschaeffler.com)

Additional ideas for Adult Faith Formation Planning and Best Practices can be found in:

- *Deepening Faith: Adult Faith Formation in the Parish*  
<https://www.litpress.org/Products/4652/Deepening-Faith>
- *The Seasons of Adult Faith Formation*  
[http://www.lifelongfaith.com/store/p25/The Seasons of Adult Faith Formation.html](http://www.lifelongfaith.com/store/p25/The_Seasons_of_Adult_Faith_Formation.html) and <http://www.lifelongfaith.com/2015-adult-faith-formation-symposium.html>