

July 14 &16, 2020

In-Person Youth Ministry Observations

Notes from Diocese of Gary
Youth Ministry Leaders' Gatherings



IF YOU HAVE MET FOR IN-PERSON MINISTRY:

What did in-person ministry look like?

- Approval first from pastors before any events are planned.
- Expectations are laid out at the beginning of the gathering (or before via emails or social media).
- Masks are worn inside, just like when going to Mass.
- Outside, masks are not required if social distance (6 feet apart) can be upheld or when eating while being socially distant.
- If doing something inside, the environment was intentionally set up so people are spaced out. Some used assigned seating or the first seat a person sat in was their space for the rest of the day. Family units were able to sit together.
- Food:
 - Served prepackaged food
 - "You touch it, you take it" rule.
 - One person serving food so multiple people don't have to handle serving utensils.
 - Pre-portioned or already plated food.
 - Servers properly wash hands before serving food, wear a mask, and properly wear gloves.
 - Hand washing before food is consumed
- Most youth ministry gatherings have been held outside with games that keep people active, but also socially distant.
- Plans in place for sanitizing surfaces
- When passing out documents, use folders so they only have to pick up what they need.
- Small groups were easier to enforce social distancing.
- Some parishes/schools have postponed events off parish/school campus until 2021, such as field trips or service events. Some
- parishes are ok with having off campus events if priest and parents are ok with it. Some are ok with off campus events if there is a small number of people attending or if it is outside.

IF YOU HAVE MET FOR IN-PERSON MINISTRY:

What has worked during in-person gatherings?

- Games: anything that can be verbal, games that don't involve touching others, listening games, relays that are spaced out.
- Using outdoor space for activities like picnics, bonfires, lawn games.
- Allowing teens time just to talk and be together.
- Encouraging people to bring their own supplies like water bottles, folding chairs, pens.
- Keeping some things the same/routine or trying to keep it as close to routine as possible.
- Setting clear expectations early and sticking with them and enforcing them.
- Setting up the environment with social distance in mind.
- Asking parents for input. Some families are not ready to send their children to an event. Some are. Get a feel for the needs of your families.
- Creating a plan for your ministry. What is it going to look like now? What am I going to do when a person gets sick? Do the parents know that they have to be on call in order to pick up their son or daughter if someone starts displaying the symptoms of Covid?

IF YOU HAVE MET FOR IN-PERSON MINISTRY:

What hasn't worked or has been a challenge during in-person gatherings?

- As much as you enforce it, having kids be social distance is hard.
- As much as you enforce it, having parents be social distance is hard.
- Coming up with games that keep kids active but apart is hard.
- If it rains, then the event has to be canceled.
- There are a lot of things to take into consideration when planning an event.
- Everyone is at a different place when it comes to wearing masks or staying socially distant. Some people become upset when you say that masks have to be worn.
- Managing expectations: Understanding that things can't be like how they were in the past, but we can try as much as possible. Example: events for graduates.
- Getting enough supplies for individual use.
- It's hard to invite people when you can't physically see them. Example: if a lot of event recruiting took place at Mass or during religious education, when that is happening or teens are coming to Mass, there are no moments to recruit.
- Trying to create a hybrid option (in-person and online) is challenging.
- This is a stressful time for parish ministry leaders.

IF YOU HAVEN'T MET FOR IN-PERSON MINISTRY:

What have you been experiencing?

- Parish is not allowing in-person ministry just yet. Some are just starting to open up for Mass.
- Some do not have the physical space to be socially distant.
- Still attempting to do online ministry/Zoom sessions.
 - Some teens and adults are experiencing screen fatigue. Also, when things began opening up, the attendance during online events decreased.
 - Allow teens to lead the ministry (such as leading a Bible study for peers or covering a topic). Allow teens to take ownership of the online ministry.
 - Doing other things online, such as prayer chains or Instagram posts (example of St. John Kanty youth creating a "spiritual bouquet" for a grieving family and challenging peers to do more.)
- Care Packages or mail is still a way to reach out to families and teens.
- It's been hard to plan when we don't know the future or don't know what we are allowed to do.
- Also hard to plan when you are a parish that draws people from different areas, near a state line, or borders another county. Different locations and local governments have different expectations because of different rates of outbreaks.
- Want to make sure that holding a youth ministry event won't put other people at risk, but it's hard keeping things straight.
- Some parish leaders feel like they've missed a moment to build relationships teens in their parish.
- Some parents are frustrated because things aren't happening.
- This is a stressful time for parish ministry leaders.