

September 21, 2017

Dear saints,

In Matthew 19:14, Jesus said these timeless words, "Let the little children come to me, and do not stop them; for it is to such as these that the kingdom of heaven belongs." St. Paul famously wrote to young Timothy these empowering words, "Let no one despise your youth, but set the believers an example in speech and conduct, in love, in faith, in purity."  
(1 Timothy 4:12)

Young people are our present and our future. One of the privileges I have is to witness and bless young people regularly through the sacramental rite of Confirmation. To me, it is a rite that marks a young person's willingness to be a servant-leader in the community where they live and the faith community where they belong. Over the past three years, we have invited disciples, through 225 Confirmands, and 356 Baptisms. Confirmation, is only a small window that marks the presence and growth of the children and young people entrusted to our care.

The formation of our children and young people is foundational to the future growth and development of our congregations. While we can provide opportunities for youth gatherings to facilitate enrichment of relationships across the Diocese, formation of young people is inextricably intertwined with the development of our congregations. Hence, going forward, our strategy of youth and children's formation must be a benchmark of our congregational development. How we do this is going to require a combined discernment of strategy by clergy, vestries, lay youth and youth peer-leaders in context. We know from our congregational development experience that there are no cookie-cutter solutions. We also know that without some intentional leadership development, a positive movement in this "neglected" area of ministry is not going to have a sustainable development for the future. Therefore, here are a few things I am recommending to Council:

- *Discontinue the existing Parish Children and Youth Grants for the 2018 budget, directing those resources to strategically develop a "college for youth and children's leadership development."*
- *Discontinue the part-time Youth Coordinator position for the Diocese and redirect those resources to the youth college/youth program development.*
- *Appoint a Congregational Development Task Force for Children and Youth to recommend an immediate and long term plan design to the Bishop that is then adopted by Council.*
- *Work with Congregational Development Partnership Committee to monitor the progress of this strategic priority*
- *Convene the organizing groups of leaders to sustain and energize the planning, publicity, enrollment and shepherding of Diocesan Formation Events like RISE, ROC the Diocese, Missionpalooza, Confirmation Encounter, and Youth witness at Convention.*

These are my preliminary thoughts. I believe, we have all we need to realign our resources to invest and monitor the progress of our children and youth as they are formed and developed as disciples of Christ and leaders in church and society.

Your fellow servant in Christ,

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