

Formation for Mission

any age, any number, any size, any where....

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An Open Invitation!

Let us hear from you!

The Christian Education and Formation commission

wants to hear YOUR questions, understand YOUR concerns and listen to YOUR solutions.

When we listen and share, everyone benefits....and this

as close to Dear Abby as

we can get! Send your thoughts to

[Judy Kile](#), CEFC Chairman.

VBS....and beyond for children

There is such variety in the way we bring about formation throughout our diocese - whether we come from a large parish or small - there are great ways to help new and old members of our church become friends! Here's some thoughts from Kathy Sheppard....

Children and Church at Christ Episcopal are very busy even in the summer!! During the summer young children, ages 4-7, attend **Children's Worship** at the 10:00 am service. They hear a children's sermon about the gospel and many times we go outside and enjoy God's world and return to their parents during the Peace. We also offer two **Vacation Bible Schools**, one for children ages 3-5 and another for children Kindergarten-5th grade. Each year is a different theme - this summer we'll be learning how to be good stewards of our Earth.

Other opportunities within the school year are continued in the summer. For instance, KFC - Kids for Christ - is group of children ages 4 years old-5th grade, who meet twice a month during the school year but continue to meet once a month during the summer. They share a family dinner together and then volunteer at a nursing home, Ronald McDonald House, sort clothes for the needy or any place that will accept children and adults volunteers. Our **Polo** group, Parents of Little Ones (for parents and children, ages birth - 4 years old) also meets monthly for fellowship and continues during the summer months too.

Kathy Sheppard, Children's Formation Director
Christ Episcopal Church in Springfield

Travel as pilgrimage.....Cori Pursell

Each year hundreds of families, couples and individuals look forward to summer as a time of relaxation and vacation. There are some who will make a pilgrimage to the Holy Lands for the first time while many of us will revisit our favorite vacation places; heading to the lake, visiting family or taking in a national park. While we are away from our church home for a time we can see this as an opportunity to become a summer pilgrim. To become a pilgrim we begin making travel plans intentionally with God in mind as our host and passenger; being receptive to where this may lead.....

All pilgrims know the importance of getting ready. Reading through The [Summer Pilgrim](#), a [Blessing Prayer for when you're about to leave on a journey](#), and a [Thanksgiving Prayer for a Safe Return](#) will help you along the way. May you have an enriching, meaningful time....wherever God leads you.

Reel people and flick philosophy

Movies and discussion go together like popcorn and soda. When you add a unifying theme, a strong Christian message, discussion questions or fun activities you have the ingredients for a meaningful experience - at any age! There are two very good resources out there to help you make the most out of movies - and bring people of all ages

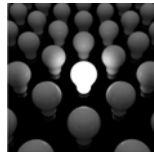


closer to God through an undeniably popular medium!

[Reel to Real](#) is available in digital format through Cokesbury, but the first 20 volumes are also still available in printed format through Amazon. And, also check out [WingClips](#) online. Both offer great opportunities for you to "illustrate and inspire"!



Best Practices - good things going on in our diocese!



Honoring Our Graduates

Picture this during a Sunday morning celebration of Holy Eucharist at St. Oscar's of the Ozarks:

Celebrant: Will all those who will be graduating please stand. Let us give them a round of applause. And the Blessing of God almighty, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, be upon you this day and remain with you forever.

For some graduates these coming weeks that may be all the recognition they get in their congregations. If this is all we do we miss an opportunity of Christian Formation for our graduates and their loved ones. Our graduates are celebrating a completion of hard work and dedication. Their families may be celebrating something they wondered at times if it would ever happen. A new chapter in the life of the graduate begins. How will we send these persons off? What can we do to make this transition truly God-filled? What tools can we give these persons for their journey?

I happen to "make" walking sticks. We give a walking stick to each of our graduates as a reminder that God walks with them every day. The stick serves as a symbol of our love and prayers which go with them in their journey. I read about a congregation with two graduates this year. They had a covered dish lunch in honor of the graduates. The families of the two girls posted pictures of the girls on the walls of the parish hall - from babies to young adults. Many of the graduates received gifts from the congregation such as bibles, prayer books, meditation books, etc.

What will you do for your graduates? Have members of the congregation write "Advice to a graduate" on a card and present these cards to the individuals as part of the Sunday liturgy. Family members, parents, spouses, even children, may write a blessing for their graduate. Then they can lay hands on their loved one and read their blessing in front of the whole congregation. Let your creative juices flow as we give thanks to God for our graduates and recognize their accomplishments.

The websites below give you some liturgical guidelines and suggestions for developing your own liturgy as well as a Blessing of Graduates.

From the Evangelical Lutheran Church - [Recognizing Secular occasions and holidays in the liturgy.](#)

And, a [Christian Chronicle article discusses how churches support and sustain spiritual lives when we celebrate the milestones of our members lives.](#)

The Reverend Frank Sierra
St. Philip's, Joplin

What's been happening in your parish that has made a positive impact? Send in your Best Practices, along with any pictures, to Judy Kile, CEFC Chairman.

Book Club -

BOOK CLUB

This section will contain titles and a little bit about the book to peak your interest. We hope that eventually this can develop into an online discussion forum, but for now, the purpose will be to simply suggest a book recently read by either members of the commission and/or something that one of our readers suggests.

Organic Prayer, Cultivating Your Relationship with God by Nancy Roth. This Cowley Publication of 1993 is one of my favorite books. It can be used for personal meditation or as the basis for a group retreat. The author uses soil, seeds, water, compost, pests, and harvest for meditation and reflection on our relationship with God and each other. She suggests activities and prayer exercises at the end of each chapter. Nancy Roth is an Episcopal priest and teacher of meditation to adults and children. Other books include *The Breath of God*, *A New Christian Yoga*, *Praying: A Book for Children*, and *We Sing of God: A Hymnal for Children*.



Prodigal Summer by Barbara Kingsolver. Another of my favorite books, *Prodigal Summer*, is the kind of novel to curl up in a hammock under the shade tree to read. Quoting from the jacket cover -"Barbara Kingsolver, a writer praised for her 'extravagantly gifted narrative voice', has created with this novel a hymn to wildness that celebrates the prodigal spirit of human nature, and of nature itself." There are three stories of human love woven within the forested mountains and small farms of southern Appalachia. Over the course of one humid summer, the characters find connections to one another and to the flora and fauna with which they share a place. "Their discoveries are embedded inside countless intimate lessons of biology, the realities of small farming, and the final, urgent truth that humans are only one part of life on earth."

