

Master Planning and the Needs of Faith Formation

We are called to serve the current and future needs of our parish through faith formation and religious education. Educating our children and young people, as well as continuing the education of adults in the ways of our faith is essential to the life of the Church.

As the parish Master Planning Committee started to explore our own particular needs at Saint Edward's, particularly the requirements in regard to Faith Formation, we were faced with some stark realities.

In 1969, when our Faith Formation space was initially constructed, it was meant to accommodate 650 students. Last year we had 1550 students that were enrolled in our program; and next year we expect a higher number. Growth in our area is moving at a rapid pace, and we expect to expand by approximately 10% in the coming 10 years.

The Faith Formation offices were moved to their current location as a result of the 1996 renovation. This created more office space, a library, modest storage space for Faith Formation, and allowed us to accommodate offices for our coordinators. We have 8 classrooms in the Faith Formation wing, with two double or flexible rooms that utilize a dividing panel. These dividing panels were also added during the 1996 renovation. We need much more space to meet the present and future demands of our Faith Formation program.

The number of students is a major growth element, but there are other aspects to consider in regard to faith formation. We have already seen movement from what was once a standard classroom setting for religious education, to a more dynamic approach. The use and impact of technology and interactive learning have to be factored into whatever future we envision at Saint Edward's. We also need to be ready to have flexible and adaptive space that can serve numerous needs with ease.

With this and other input provided by the parish in mind, we began to examine multiple approaches in regard to the passing on of our faith.

A linear response that would simply create **more** space alone was not the answer. Our goal became how to create more **effective and adaptive** space that would suit both current and future needs, at multiple levels. We did this with data on hand, interaction with faith formation and pastoral leadership, and through our meetings with the parish.

In order to address our needs, hopes, and plans for the future, we envision the creative and adaptive use of classroom space. Space needs change frequently; a plan that includes flexible space is essential. Sometimes a function will have few students, other

times, many students. The ability to adapt easily and frequently based on the number of people participating and other criteria is important.

We need to be able to use the space for a wide variety of programs including our vibrant Children's Liturgy of the Word, child care during mass, pre-school through high school education, classes employing multimedia learning, Vacation Bible School, Music Camp, Youth Center, and other uses which are still emerging.

We also envision extensive use of technology and resources. When our Faith Formation wing was designed, no one could have imagined the explosive technological growth that we live with today. As in any educational setting, integrating technology must be a top priority. Creating an integrative space that addresses things such as Internet, interactive training, the use of TVs, DVDs, and Power Points, while incorporating Internet safety and security is a must. The incorporation of a Library/Computer instruction center, configured for multiple uses is integral to our plans.

An effective Faith Formation program requires a lot of things beyond books, eTeaching, engaging youth, and even creative playing. This all involves many supplies, tools, and craft materials. Practical, accessible, efficient storage is an important component of our plans.

Immediately upon moving into the new Worship Space we free up much current space for use by our Faith Formation program. We will not need to wait until subsequent phases to have our youth see significant progress in what is being provided to them through their Faith Formation and Youth programs at Saint Edward's.

If you have any further questions about our Faith Formation or Youth Center plans, please review the materials on our parish website (www.stedwardsny.org) or contact a member of the Master Planning Committee.