The Religious Education Initiative Plan

Six-Phase Rollout for Family-Equipping Ministry with Supplementary Details

Overview and Rationale for Each of the REI Rollout Phases

What is Family-Equipping Ministry?

- “Existing activities and events are reoriented to equip parents to disciple their children. In short, existing activities become a launch pad to train parents! These set the stage for parents to disciple their children at home. Indeed, this model transforms what churches are already doing.” —Family Ministry Field Guide, Timothy Paul Jones.

- In the book, Family Ministry Field Guide, there are five foundations that include, on average, between 2-3 chapters. Each of the five foundations has a corresponding worksheet and activity that the family core team works through. This takes time, perseverance and intentionality.

1. **Phase 1: Family Core Team**
   - The purpose of developing a family core team and a support team is not just to solicit help with Religious Education Initiative tasks, but to get a better understanding of what parents are doing at home to disciple their children, how parents see themselves as disciple-makers, how to transition churchgoing families from being inactive to active disciple-makers at home and how the larger parish community can support this family-equipping ministry.

2. **Phase 2: Team and Self-Assessment**
   - Assessing team dynamics is essential for a success implementation of the REI rollout. The integrity of parish leadership will determine how fruitful any discipleship process is implemented at the parish. What is more, discipleship is best carried out at the parish when it is being practiced at home. This is especially important for parish leaders. As
Timothy Paul Jones, author of *Family Ministry Field Guide* argues, faith should be rehearsed at home and reinforced at church. This happens to be the teaching of the Catholic Church. As such, it serves as the foundation for family-equipping ministry.

3. **Phase 3: Map the Gap: Families at the Table**
   - Mapping the gap involves a parish-wide survey that identifies important data about churchgoing families. What are they doing at home? How do they see themselves? What do they expect the parish to do on their behalf, etc.? On the other hand, knowing what discipleship-based families are doing to successfully pass on the faith to their children is also essential for developing concrete goals in family ministry and serving their pastoral needs. Bridging the gap between the former and the latter is at the essence of the REI!

4. **Phase 4: Vision Casting | Rethinking Our Goals**
   - Motives matter! Motives on the part of the faith formation team at the local parish and motives on the part of parents. As for the former, retention rates and numeric gains cannot serve as the primary motive for doing family-equipping ministry. But they often are! Rather, motives that are centered on getting more people to love Jesus lead to fruitful missions!
   - As for the latter, parents will make sacrifices for their children’s academic and athletic success. But most parents will not make the sacrifices to make their children into disciples. The solution is not to add more programs or activities. But rather, it is to get parents to see themselves in a new light. This requires communicating a vision for parents (not just on Wednesday evenings but during the weekends) in light of the Gospel and developing corresponding goals to fulfill this need!

5. **Phase 5: Family Equipping Church**
   - Assess and reorient pre-existing programs and activities so that such ministries cannot work without the parental participation. This also involves inspiring an expectation culture for parents at the local parish.

6. **Phase 6: Community Impact**
   - This is a collaborative effort requiring the family core team, the REI diocesan team and potentially the Parish Life Mission Team to develop specific objectives that are adapted to each of the Faith Formation Pilot Parishes and the larger community. This outreach may include but is not limited to the following: 1. Equipping parish leaders and parishioner to be an invitational parish. 2. Developing pre-evangelization opportunities that that fulfill the following basic needs- social, parenting, marriage, crisis, etc. Creating onramps to parish life.
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Family Core Team

First Phase: Developing a Family Core Team (FCT) and a Support Team (ST)
- Meet with the Faith Formation staff and explain overview
- Meet and Greet Orientation, June 21st
  - Overview of the REI process
    - Responsibilities of Family Core Team and Support
    - The Five Foundations in the Family Ministry Field Guide
  - Networking opportunity with all REI parishes
  - REI Discussion Questions with Team
- Recruit intercessors for faith formation and the REI process

Team and Self Assessment

Second Phase: Team and Self-Assessment
- Identify potential and problematic areas
- Five Dysfunctions of a Team Assessment
- Self-Assessment

Map the Gap: Families at the Table

Third Phase: Map the Gap | Identify Discipleship Families
- Foundation 1: Map the Gap
  - Enlist family core team and support team members to assist in surveying the parents in the parish that you serve, using Worksheet A: Family Discipleship Perceptions and Practice Survey.
Once the survey has been collected, summarize the results of the survey in a series of charts to provide a snapshot of how families are functioning when it comes to spiritual formation.

- Carefully compare what is actually happening in the families in your parish with what should be happening. Where do you see causes for celebration?
- Where do you see a gap between what is and what ought to be?
- What gaps will be the most difficult to close?
- Which one is most urgent to narrow as soon as possible?

- Do exercise as a team found in Foundations 1: Map the Gap worksheet: Think about it Together (found on page 6 of your outline).

  ▪ Profiling: With the help of the Family Core Team (FCT) and Support Team (ST), identify discipleship-based families in your parish. Gather them:
    - Consult families about their best-practices
    - Identify the essential practices for parents passing on the faith from themselves to their children
    - Identify how these parents understand their role as the primary evangelists and educators of their children
  
  ▪ Refine the profile down to 5-7 practices
  
  ▪ This profile of a discipleship-based family will serve as goals for your family ministry. Without this profile, family ministry is aimless.

Vision Casting: Rethinking our goals

Fourth Phase: Vision Casting | Rethinking Our Goals

- Foundation 2: What goal is motivating your movement toward a family ministry model?

  - Gather your family ministry team. Work as individuals through the first part of the Motives Matter Worksheet, “Problem-Centered Planning: Developing Goals in the Wrong Direction” and compare your results. Discuss points of agreement and disagreement. Then, work as a group through the second part of the worksheet, “Gospel-Centered Planning: Developing Goals Based on God’s Promises.” Work toward consensus on what belongs in each box under “Gospel-Centered Planning.” (Found on pages 12-15 of your outline).
  
  - Based on the group’s consensus, develop a tentative, one-sentence mission statement for the family ministry team.
  
  - As a family core team, do the exercise in the Foundations 2: Motives Matter worksheet: Think About It Together (found on page 15 of your outline).
Six questions to work through.

- Foundation 3: How do your parish ministerial practices prepare parents to see their children in light of God’s story line, as potential or actual brothers or sisters in Christ?vi
  - Using worksheet C: Living God’s Story Line, consider with the family ministry team whether your ministry practices tend more (1) to prepare parents to see their children in light of God’s whole story line, or (2) to separate parents from engagement with their children in the movements of redemption and consummation. Carefully consider how you might change any ministry practices that separate parents from involvement in the movements of redemption and consummation (Found on pages 21-25).
  - As a family core team, do the exercise in the Foundations 3: Framing Your Ministry worksheet: Think About It Together (found on page 24-25 of your outline).

- Bases on these foundations (2-3) from FMFG, how can the parish rethink its goals with family ministry or faith formation? How can the parish help parents understand themselves in light of this bible story line found in Deuteronomy 6:4-9? And how can this be communicated in the parish community on a regular basis?

Fifth Phase: Family-Equipping Church

- Foundation 4: In what ways are we presently guiding parents to become primary disciple-makers in their children’s lives?viii
  - Gather your family-ministry team. Using Worksheet D (Found on pages 33-34 of your outline), look at the events, activities and teaching that parents and participants in your ministry might have experienced in the past month. Honestly assess where your ministry is acknowledging or guiding participants to be primary disciple-makers in their children’s lives. Based on what you know now, revisit and revise the tentative mission statement you developed earlier.
  - As a family core team, do the exercise in the Foundation 4: Give Parents the Guidance They Need worksheet: Think About It Together (found on page 35 of your outline).

- Foundation 5: How can ministry move toward synchronizing every event and activity with what parents and families in faith are doing to disciple their children?viii
- Gather your ministry team. Finalize a mission statement for your ministry with families. Decide on a unifying strategic question that you will begin to ask about every event or activity for children or youth - a question such as, “How will this event equip parents to view themselves as primary disciple-makers in their children’s lives?”
- As a family core team, do the exercise in the Foundation 5: Transition Into Family-Equipping worksheet: Think About It Together (found on page 53 of your outline).
- Finally, complete Worksheet E: TIE Your Ministry Together (page 54 of binder)

## Community Impact

### Phase 6: Community Impact
- This is a collaborative effort requiring the family core team, the REI diocesan team and potentially the Parish Life Mission Team to develop specific objectives that are adapted to each of the Faith Formation Pilot Parishes and the larger community.
- This outreach may include but is not limited to the following:
  - Equipping parish leaders and parishioner to be an invitational parish
    - A good resource is the *Just Walk Across the Room Outline* that the Office of Parish Evangelization has developed. This is based on Bill Hybels book, *Just Walk Across the Room*.
  - Developing pre-evangelization opportunities that fulfill the following basic needs:
    - Social
    - Parenting
    - Marriage
    - Crisis, etc.
  - Creating onramps to parish life:
    - Taking advantage of Christmas, Easter, Wedding, and Funeral Masses to engage the pre-evangelized visitors
    - Being positioned to accommodate pastoral needs on the weekends. Is there a visible, user-friendly way to get basic pastoral needs met on a Saturday evening or Sunday morning?
    - Developing a clearly defined process to bring people from attending church for the first time to becoming missionary disciples.
NOTES

i “You may want to start thinking about recruiting special prayer support for what you about to get into. Spiritual warfare is real. The evil one does not desire to see the Church come to life.” -Divine Renovation Guidebook, page 12.

ii “Many factors go into building a successful leadership team. At St. Benedict Parish, we stress four non-negotiables: unanimity of vision, balance of strengths, healthy conflict and trust, and vulnerability. The pastor has a balanced team of capable people, but he will silence any disagreement with a glance or his body language, even without realizing he is doing this...Gather team members who are free to challenge the pastor and speak their minds. Work constantly at establishing a culture of trust and love within your leadership team.” -Divine Renovation Guidebook, pages 18, 28.

iii “What people typically want is a detailed organizational action plan. 'Do we add a family pastor first? Or do we shuffle the responsibilities among the staff we already have? Do we rename our gymnasium a ‘family life center?’ Do you know of a good family camp? Should we switch our Sunday school curriculum? If so, when?' None of these considerations are wrong, but none of them are where family-equipping ministry begins. Family-equipping ministry isn’t primarily an organizational activity. It flows out of who you are, beginning with the ministry leaders. Which is why I answer their query with a question: “What have you done in the past seven days to disciple your family?” –Family Ministry Field Guide Outline, page 38.

iv Surveying where families are at with their domestic discipleship practices and how they see themselves as the primary educators and evangelists of their children requires cooperation of parish leadership with the blessing of the pastor. Knowing current trends and practices of the average churchgoing family is essential for serving their pastoral needs. Buttressing this foundation can then lead to an outreach to non-churchgoing families.

v “When that becomes the strategic foundation for a church’s ministry, the standard for success becomes attendance and retention, and the central focus becomes finding the right ministers and methods to attract the highest numbers. The result of such a focus tends to be a frantic and unsustainable search for the latest hints and methods from the fastest growing ministries.” – Family Ministry Field Guide Outline, page 10.

vi “God’s creation and humanity’s fall have positioned parents as providers and disciplinarians. Through redemption and consummation, parents are called to become disciple-makers as well. Because God has chosen to place particular children in close proximity to us, these disciple-making processes should begin with our own children.” – Family Ministry Field Guide Outline, page 19. There are Catholic leaders who have strong theological and spiritual foundations but are weak with strategy and methodology. Conversely, there are Catholic leaders who focus exclusively on action items (i.e. strategy and methodology) but lack strong theological and spiritual foundations. Since family-equipping ministry flows from our identity in Jesus Christ (in our personal as well as our professional lives), these two areas (the personal and the professional) have to coalesce!

vii “Merely getting families to engage in devotions or discipleship practices isn’t even the right goal in the first place. The goal for family ministry is for parents to see themselves and their families in light of the gospel. Family ministry in terms of external practices will never develop well-discipled families.” – Family Ministry Field Guide Outline, page 27.

viii “Connect the church and the home by coordinating the faith talk guides with other teachings that are happening in the church [e.g. for Catholics, it may be a guide for the Sunday readings]. Please do not launch any new programs for this. Look for opportunities for you and another ministry leader to train participants in these activities on how to lead a family faith talk. For many parents, the idea of family faith talk is so foreign that you will need to engage in the very basic dialogue for them even to understand what this might look like. What I am proposing here is radically countercultural- not only to the world’s culture but also to the culture of many churches.” Family Ministry Field Guide Outline, page 44.