

Parish of St. Mary's, St. Joseph's & Immaculate Conception  
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Hello!

As many of you know, Deacon Pfaffly resigned from his role as Director of Faith Formation this spring and I have been named his successor. I have some big shoes to fill after Becky and Jim but I am stoked to be able to start rebuilding our Faith Formation program.

If we've never met or even if we have, let me take a little bit to introduce myself. I'm a Guttenberg transplant who grew up on an acreage outside of Fredericksburg. I am a cradle Catholic and started teaching religion classes in high school subbing for my mom's third grade class. For the last 11.5 years my dad has been a deacon at the Good Shepherd Cluster in New Hampton. I moved here 8 years ago and joined St Mary's a couple years later when my oldest started preschool. Time flew by and this fall, my son, will be in sixth grade and my daughter, will be in fifth grade. I am a eucharistic minister, member of the Parish Task Force - a sub committee to the Parish Life Committee, Faith Formation sub and then teacher and now director.

Over the last six months I have been contacting and visiting with Youth Ministry leaders, Faith Formation directors and priests in four different churches with strong Faith Formation programs. I found out what made them successful and then truly realized the areas that our own program needed to work on. I gathered the best of each program and then surveyed parents and students this spring to get your own thoughts and opinions on them, never realizing that I'd be the one to start implementing the changes.

So here I am. Ready to rebuild our program. Each year as cultures change so do our kids and because of that our program needs to continuously change, too. We read your responses to those surveys and we heard your voice. There will be a lot of new things happening in this next Faith Formation year. There will be things that take off perfectly but there will also be things that just don't seem to work. We'll then take those things and tweak them until they fit our kids. So, what are some of these things? We are reclaiming church night! We're moving back to Wednesdays. All classes will be held at the same time starting at 6:30 with elementary kids going until 7:45 and jr high and high school kids until 8. This will allow us to do big group activities and build relationships among all of our youth. I'm so excited to be adding kindergarten and first grade! It is never too early to start teaching our kids about God. In addition to this, we're getting a new curriculum! Like I said, we heard you loud and clear. There will also be witness talks, adoration, community service, mission trips and so many more fun and faith filled opportunities.

I am confident that we will once again have a strong program. Yet this won't happen if we don't have any kids. This last year nearly 70% of our eligible youth were not in the classroom, 70%!

Parents, we need you to bring your kids back. Make Faith Formation a rock in your child's schedule. When we baptized our newborns, we made a promise to them that we would lead them through a faith filled life. That starts with the domestic church--that's you and your home. We, as teachers, director and your parish, are merely here to assist you, the parents, in getting the extra tools you may need in building your children's Catholic faith. Let our classes spark those conversations in your family. Let our classes build the extra character and confidence in your youth to live a Catholic life. Continued Catholic education past confirmation has led so many of our kids to be leaders in their class--like honor roll, class officers, student senate and valedictorians--leaders in the church and in their community. There are even some who graduate and come back from college to help chaperone our events. And maybe our classes will even teach you something as your child tells you all that was taught in class that night. Then let the conversation and learning continue for days.

Another thing that is new this year is online registration. We will start this process mid-July. A link to register will be given out soon so keep your eyes peeled for that in the bulletin, St Mary/ Immaculate Conception/ St Joe's website and Facebook page. Classes are going to be free this year, too!

To wrap up--get your kids registered, get them to and from class and even if they moan and groan about it now, they'll appreciate it one day. Trust me, I know this! I was one of those kids!

If you need anything in the interim, please feel free to reach out. The best ways to contact me via email at [stephanie.k.horns@gmail.com](mailto:stephanie.k.horns@gmail.com) or text at 563.568.1772.

Thank you and have a blessed day!

Stephanie Horns  
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St Mary's - Guttenberg  
Immaculate Conception - North Buena Vista  
St Joe's - Garnavillo

Start children off on the way they should go, and even when they are old they will not turn from it.  
Proverbs 22:6