



Fire of Faith

A Publication of the Diocese of Pittsburgh Young Adult Ministry Leadership Team

Volume 2, Issue 1

Fall 2009

Lord, Send Forth Your Spirit!

Young adult ministry in Pittsburgh is alive and growing. Please let us know what young adult ministry topics you would like to see addressed in the newsletter or send in your own submission. The next newsletter will be sent out in Spring 2010. For more information or to send in a submission, you can contact Christina at namyounadults@yahoo.com or Gary at yampgh@diopitt.org.

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In the Beginning

"All things came to be through him, and without him, nothing came to be. What came to be through him was life, and this life was the light of the human race; the light that shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it."

~John 1:3-5



Young Adult Ministry Alive!

YOUNG ADULT SUNDAY KICKOFF

Around 120 Pittsburgh young adults came to praise God at Mass, enjoy a tailgate party and watch the Pirates beat the Kansas City Royals on June 27, 2009. A spectacular fireworks display ended a wonderful evening for young adult ministry!



CATHOLIC UNDERGROUND

More than 300 young adults attended the first Pittsburgh Catholic Underground on September 26, 2009, at Sacred Heart Church in Shadyside. Catholic Underground, founded by the Franciscan Friars of the Renewal in New York City, is a recurring event that has been sweeping the country, dedicating to reconnecting young adults with their Savior. Each event includes Eucharistic adoration with Vespers and praise music, followed by a time for socializing, fellowship, and entertainment by a featured Catholic artist. Kelly Pease and Chris Padgett were the featured artists this fall. For information on Catholic Underground, please visit catholicundergroundpittsburgh.org.



(Top photo provided by Gary Slifkey. Bottom photo from St. Vincent Archabbey Facebook site.)

Our Story

Karen and Jamie Guentner share their story about how young adult ministry brought them together

Karen's Story

I graduated from Saint Vincent College in 2000. Although I attended a Catholic college, I did not attend many campus ministry activities. I grew up attending Mass every Sunday and on Holy Days of Obligation. I always knew that what I was learning each week at Mass and the grace I received was a gift from the Holy Spirit; however, I did not yet connect it as such.

I landed my first full-time job shortly after graduation and began working in Downtown Pittsburgh; I would have this job for six years. Only a block away, I first attended noon Mass at Saint Mary's on a Holy Day of Obligation when I was unable to attend Mass at my home parish. Eventually, I attended Mass at Saint Mary's on a regular basis. Mass calmed me; I discovered a sense of family and unity in joining with the congregation. This experience became a comforting break in my day. I know now that the Holy Spirit continued to guide me back.

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Theology on Tap guidelines released

Theology on Tap has been one of the most popular and successful programs offered to the young adults of the Diocese of Pittsburgh. This speaker series offers young adults the opportunity to socialize, pray, and discuss their personal, professional, and faith experiences with fellow Catholics in a welcoming and convivial atmosphere.



In dioceses across the country, Theology on Tap programs have enjoyed similar success. As a result, RENEW International copyrighted the name. The Department for Youth and Young Adult Ministry in the Secretariat for Education has obtained a license for our diocese. To ensure those who sponsor a Theology on Tap program remain mindful of the purpose of this ministry, building on the guidelines suggested by RENEW International, the Secretariat for Education asks that the following set of guidelines be observed:

- † All Theology on Tap programs and speakers must be approved at the diocesan level.
- † RENEW Theology on Tap is to be geared exclusively toward “young adults”—people in their 20s and 30s, married and single, with and without children.
- † Primarily, efforts should be made to create inviting and hospitable environment.
- † Coordinators should use personal invitation as the method of publicity, and a key objective for any Theology on Tap event is a comfortable and socially agreeable setting.
- † RENEW Theology on Tap is a process of evangelization, a strategy to meet young adults where they are and invite them into the life of the Church. Topics therefore must address the needs of a “seeker” audience, those Catholics who are interested in and curious about the Catholic faith.
- † The speakers must be well informed in their field and personally respectful of Catholic teaching, but also possess a keen sense of the issues of ministering to young adults. They should address relevant concerns in practical ways.
- † Speakers should be compensated for their time and expertise.
- † All publicity must use the official RENEW Theology on Tap logo, which is a registered trademark and may only be used to publicize official RENEW Theology on Tap events. This logo may not be changed.
- † All publicity must contain the following, in some appropriate way, so that others can contact RENEW International for further information:
RENEW Theology on Tap, a pastoral outreach for RENEW International,
1232 George Street, Plainfield, NJ 07062-171
Tel: 908-769-5400 x159 Web: www.theologyontap.com
A copy of all publicity must be sent electronically to the Young Adult Ministry Leadership Team by emailing yam@diopitt.org. If you wish, this information will then be shared with young adults and young adult leaders across the diocese.
- † Any non-compliance with these guidelines may result in the revocation of permission to use the Theology on Tap name and any of its derivatives (e.g., Spirituality on Tap, or something similar).

(Photo from St. Bernard Theology on Tap 2009).



NEW YAM LOGO FOR PITTSBURGH

Steve Baksis, a young adult active in his home parish, designed a logo for the Diocese of Pittsburgh Young Adult Ministry. This logo, which is designed to represent how the Holy Spirit guides young adults to use their talents in the local Church, will be used in all communications involving young adult ministry.

Inspiration

“Behold, I am coming soon. I bring with me the recompense I will give to each according to his deeds. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end. Blessed are they who wash their robes so as to have the right to the tree of life and enter the city through its gates... The Spirit and the bride say, “Come.” Let the hearer say, “Come.” Let the one who thirsts come forward, and the one who wants to receive the gift of life-giving water.”

Revelation 22:12-14, 17

“Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ is begotten by God, and everyone who loves the Father loves also the one begotten by him ... For the love of God is this, that we keep his commandments. And his commandments are not burdensome, for whoever is begotten by God conquers the world. And the victory that conquers the world is our faith. Who indeed is the victor over the world but the one who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?”

1 John 5:1,3-5



Karen and Jamie Share Their Story

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I frequently attended a monthly holy hour at my home parish, too, and I immersed myself in personal interests. Remaining open to the Holy Spirit, I eagerly read about a Theology on Tap starting up locally in the South Hills in my home parish's bulletin. Attending an event like this would give me a chance to meet others like myself: young adult Catholics looking to learn more about their faith and live it out together according to His plan.

I wasn't looking for a singles group, nor was I in search of my future spouse. I was looking to connect as a twenty-something, a recent college grad in love with and longing for more of her faith and to better understand her purpose. I regularly attended the monthly Theology on Tap meetings and began to explore many of the ideas presented to us in my prayer life.

By this point, I had purchased a home, but I was hardly ever there. Almost any event I read about on the Diocese Happenings Listing scheduled on a free evening or weekend sounded good. I willingly traveled around the diocese. If I didn't know how to get somewhere, I'd learn.

In May of 2004, the coordinator for the South Hills Theology on Tap planned a service project at the Greater Pittsburgh Community Food Bank in Duquesne instead of our regular gathering. The coordinator included the North Hills Theology on Tap group on the invitation. About a dozen people attended that evening. Jamie was the only one who traveled to Duquesne from the North Hills.

He and I talked a little that evening and then continued to converse at events as he did not have my phone number for the first six months! We mingled with each other as we mingled with our friends; we formed a good, solid friendship.

As members of the Young Adult Ministry Leadership Team, Jamie and I together helped to complete annual goals that would connect Catholic young adults with the Church. These goals included holding social and spiritual events to help young adults remain true to their spirituality and the doctrine of the Church.

As bonds developed and strengthened, we often carpooled with our friends to retreats, faith sharing/fellowship gatherings, Rosary Group, Festivals of Praise, picnics and

Christmas parties, just to name a few. It was through these events that I realized how important this ministry was to me and to those around me.

2006 would be a soul-searching year for me. I no longer felt that I was fulfilling God's will for me at work and soon found a new job. This change stretched me and helped my overall perspective.

At this point, Jamie and I felt equally connected to our faith; we had the same questions and understood the same truths. We understood each other. We had a uniform interest to partake in this ministry. By 2006 and into 2007, we were best friends and knew we'd be getting married before long. We started to talk about our wedding, and more importantly, what would be important to us in our marriage. Soon after Jamie graduated with his M.B.A., he proposed. We were married six months later, in April of last year.

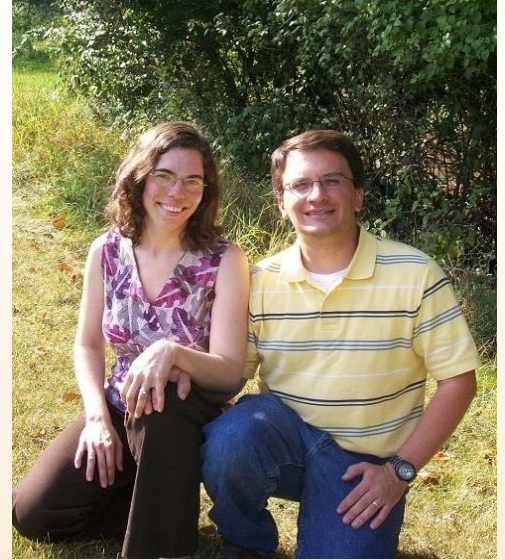
Jamie's Story:

I continued working at the job I had throughout high school after I graduated in 1995; with promotions, I became a manager. As loved ones encouraged me to further my education, I took a few college courses and ultimately enrolled in an eighteen month program at a local university, graduating in December 2003. I held on to my management position during this time, and it might have been providence that a co-worker had a heads-up on a job opportunity. They knew it was in the field I was studying. I got the position.

To be sociable, my brother and I would typically watch TV and shared some beers with friends. Spending hours like this did not fulfill me. I knew something deep within me needed to be fed; it was a longing to grow spiritually.

Like Karen, I also grew up attending Mass each weekend and on Holy Days of Obligation. As a young adult, practicing my faith each week at Mass meant a lot to me, and I continued making every effort to attend despite shift work and classes. After graduating, I made it a point to get out and find events – something, anything, where I could connect with others in the same way.

I began attending a local Theology on Tap group in early 2004. When another Theology on Tap group invited us to attend a service project in May, I decided to go. I wanted to get out and meet new people;



this experience would be an answer to a prayer.

I met Karen at the food bank as about a dozen young adults gathered to repack non-perishables. Over the next few months, we would have the opportunity to chat with each other and share our faith at a number of different activities happening around the diocese. In the next few years, we became good friends. Once 2006 began, I decided to go back to college for my M.B.A. I began the year long program in the fall of 2006. Karen began a new job which stretched her in a whole new way. As a result, our relationship did, too, and as 2007 continued on, we knew the Holy Spirit had called us to the Sacrament of Marriage.

Karen invited me to an event at her alma mater shortly after finishing my M.B.A. I prepared to propose to her on campus that night. The campus had become a spiritual oasis in our ministerial relationship, especially since we attended the Festivals of Praise the college hosted. When on the campus, an obvious tranquility came over Karen, establishing an ideal setting for a proposal.

A proposal before the Blessed Sacrament would not be possible; however fireworks would conclude the evening. Shortly after they began, I told her how I prayed for her and for us when we had attended Festivals of Praise at the College and growing with her in young adult ministry during the past several years. I got down on my knee, and our six month engagement began. At the same time, my sister and one of our bridesmaids planned

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Karen and Jamie's Story

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their weddings for the month and two months following our wedding day. Therefore, as we finalized our arrangements, two weddings occupied my family's time, and the friends we had met through young adult ministry were all a buzz with our friend's plans as well.

Our Story:

Early on, we planned to get married in the springtime at the beginning of April and the Easter season. Even though we lived twenty-six miles apart and our faith challenged us as more commitments filled our calendars, we persevered. We focused on preparing for our marriage and making the life-long decisions, rather than concentrating on the petty details of the wedding day. Having our faith, morals and

values in common has always meant the most to us. At the end of the day, we know the Vocation of Marriage calls us to be Christ for one another so that we may both ultimately spend our eternity in Heaven with our Lord.

Throughout our journey in young adult ministry we have learned that prayer, spirituality, faith formation, growing in God's Word and learning what our faith stands for and represents are important to the both of us; much of this deep desire is what has unified us. How meaningful that this is what also brought us together in the first place?!

Life hasn't slowed down or become easier; we didn't expect it to. Each day, we go to work and come home or go to meetings and events just as we did before our wedding day. Now there is another someone in tandem with us to help us with our days' tasks and to hold us up. We help each other prepare a meal, and sometimes we wait for the other just to eat together. We help each other prepare for a trip, and wait for the other to leave and begin it. On occasion, simply making a decision takes longer as we check with our "better half." For everything we ask of the other, we are asked in return. Sometimes we are not as eager, but our compassion wins over; it becomes both a burden and a blessing, which, in turn, allows us to love and appreciate our spouse's talent even more. We do things as a family even if that family is simply two people in step with each other as husband and wife.

Single family members and friends remind us directly or not, that they consider us fortunate. Being single or being married is not better, it is simply different. What matters most is to live out your vocation as God intends for you. There are instances when it is important for each of us to explain ourselves more than we would have when we were single. Searching for and relating those responses takes time, effort and energy. They are conversations and growth experiences that allow us to appreciate and love each other more; in exhausting us, they stretch us. Each day, each moment is both a task and a treasure, an opportunity where we learn and grow and become wiser.

Our families and friends expect much of our time and energy as well. We are thankful that we share many of the same friends. However, combining our families has meant two families desiring to spend time with us and love us. As our families' dynamics are similar, their personalities are different. As Jamie continued living with his parents after high school and then commuted to college they are accustomed to being close to him. Karen lived on campus all four years and lived on her own for seven years developing more independence and appreciating solitude; she is there for her parents as they are there for her.

Somewhere, in the busyness of our schedules, we chisel time for those things that we enjoy most – together and apart from one another. We know that in doing this, we are taking care of our whole-selves.

We attended seven weddings in 2008 and are very glad one of them was our own. We have been blessed in many ways, especially with our current economy. Each day, we shoulder many burdens and frustrations, but we also thank our Lord for all that He continues to provide.



*A Publication of the Diocese of Pittsburgh
Young Adult Ministry Leadership Team*

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Check us out on the Web! www.yampgh.org

Mission of Young Adult Ministry:

The Diocesan Young Adult Ministry works with parish pastoral ministers, young adult organizations, volunteers and young adults. Our ministry is directed toward single & married Catholics in their 20s and 30s.

Goals of Young Adult Ministry:

- † *To connect young adults with Jesus Christ.*
- † *To connect young adults with the Church.*
- † *To connect young adults with the mission of the Church in the world.*
- † *To connect young adults with a peer community.*