
Investing in Our Youth

**An article from the *Cathedral Times*
by Canon Cathy Zappa**

As both a priest and a mother, I care about youth. A lot. So I'm excited to announce that we have added youth ministry to my responsibilities as a Cathedral canon.

I suppose you could say that it began for me with a vision I had on our mission-pilgrimage in Haiti—sort of like Jacob's ladder, except that it wasn't a dream. It was a real-life picture of a very special community being formed from among teens, young adults, Cathedral staff, parents, and other adults who had come for their own reasons—getting to know each other, eating and playing together, calling each other by first name, caring for and learning from and teaching one another. This is who we are, and this is what we can be, I thought.

Yes, I believe in our youth, and I believe in their families, in our volunteers and staff, and in this church community. We all care about our youth—our youth—and want them to grow spiritually, to trust that they belong, to know that there's a whole community caring for them, and to know that we need them to help us grow, too.

With other Cathedral youth leaders, I'm reading Mark DeVries' book, *Sustainable Youth Ministry*, which was helpful in my role as youth minister at my last church. Most American churches, he says, have embraced a “gambling” approach to ministry, staking everything on the next greatest thing (the superstar youth director, curriculum, program idea, or convention), in the hopes that it will solve all of their problems... immediately. But sustainable youth ministry doesn't come from gambling. It comes from investing—from making “a strategic, sacrificial, and annoyingly inconvenient investment of time and resources.”

We are invested, and we are investing, in our youth and their ministries and families. This investment shows in our pastoral connections, ministry of presence, and meaningful relationships with youth. It shows in the commitment of our youth leaders, faithful adult volunteers, and parents and grandparents.

This investment shows in our youth staff. In addition to my joining the youth team as clergy, we have three full-time lay staff: Maggie Paul, director of youth and young adult ministries; Meg Jones, youth ministry intern; and a new member, Clayton Harrington, program coordinator for youth ministry. Clayton served with us for the last two years as a seminarian, and we are excited to welcome him onto the staff. He has great things planned already for middle school Sunday school.

We also have a new seminarian joining our youth team this year, Nicole Lambelet. She comes to us from the Diocese of Indiana and will be teaching high school Sunday school, with Meg and parent volunteers.

Our investment shows in the way we continue to discern what it means to do youth ministry, here, today, and in our commitment to growth. We are committed to growing the reach, impact, and spiritual depth of our programs; growing strong relationships with youth and their parents; and, most importantly, growing youth and families in Christian faith and discipleship.

Yes, we have a vision, and we hope you will join us in investing in it, for the long run. Because youth ministry is our ministry. We are the secret ingredient to sustainable youth ministry, all of us, adults and youth alike.

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