

Dreams to Reality

Diane Kledzik



Have you ever attended a conference and brainstormed how you would put some of what you learned into practice only to quickly dismiss your dreams as thoughts of inadequacy or lack of resources crept in? Here's how Jim Kemna (Jefferson City), Wendy Scherbart (San José), and I (St.

Petersburg) came together with the help of John Roberto, to plan a course of action to put our dreams into reality.

PLANNING FOR ENGAGEMENT

The three of us attended the Diocesan Leaders tract at the 2012 NCCL Conference in San Diego presented by Leisa Anslinger and John Roberto. In the final session, the presenters fielded questions and assisted us in planning for engagement and in creating a faith formation system. Just as I was pondering how I might curate resources in the varied ministries I serve, Jim questioned out loud how he might create a website to better serve parents in the *Strong Catholic Families: Strong Catholic Youth* (nfcym.org) initiative in his diocese. As the discussion ensued between Jim and John, my heart was burning within me and I shared that I would be very interested in the same type of curating. Wendy agreed.

As the session progressed and connections were made, the attendees gathered in groups or individually, to work on next steps. Naturally, Jim, Wendy, and I came together, reacquainted ourselves with each other and began suggesting the possibility of creating one shared, curated website. We brainstormed what we would offer, who our audience would be, and how we would choose resources to post. We drew diagrams, took notes, and tried to envision this site. "Do we have enough time, talent, and treasure to take on this kind of project?" we questioned.

CREATING A WEBSITE

John offered to assist us with the architecture of our proposed site and suggested that we look to weebly.com for free website hosting. I volunteered to set up the website and we brainstormed what we would name our site. We decided on *Strong Catholic Family Faith* after researching available suggestions. We exchanged business cards, took our expanded dreams home to our respective dioceses, and planned to further discern our audience, our topics, and our desire to continue with the project.

When I got the website set up and sent the link (www.CatholicFamilyFaith.org) to Wendy and Jim, we first met by conference call. We discussed how to edit the website, who would contribute, and what topics we would address. We continued to discern our intended audience and we knew we had to pin down criteria for appropriate selection of resources before going further. We connected with John again to move us to our next steps.

John invited us to "hangout" on Google+ and with each meeting, technology issues were overcome and the website was populated. We defined our target audience as parish leaders — those engaged in the *Strong Catholic Families: Strong Catholic Youth* initiative and those not yet on board. We refined our postings to fit our purpose, "To provide parish leaders with high quality resources to build strong Catholic families." We created the criteria for resource selection which included, "The content and activities reflect and support Catholic values," and "The content and activities are inclusive of a variety of family structures."

A PILOT

Several parish leaders have been piloting our website over the past few months, suggesting particular links or resources from the site to parents to supplement their ongoing faith formation and ministry. We have received feedback concerning ease of use and strength of resources on the site. We have been inspired and affirmed as we hear, "The right website at the right time."

Our team continues to meet on Google+ monthly to assess resources and to address user feedback. We e-mail in-between meetings and look forward to gathering with one another annually at NCCL conferences. The parable of the loaves and fishes (Mk 6:34-44) reminds me that God's generosity is never outdone and thousands can be fed through curated websites when gifts are shared. ■

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