



# GREAT ENDEAVORS MINED & SHARED

*from an International Adult Faith Formation Best Practices Study*

#133 - January 1, 2021

## A Best Practice: Faith Rituals in the Neighborhood

During the Lent-Easter season of 2020, many things were different! Parishioners could not gather in person to celebrate the mysteries of this sacred time of the liturgical year.

Parishes scrambled – and did a praise-worthy job – of working within the parameters of the time to provide opportunities for prayer, worship, community, learning and service ... at a distance, usually via technology.

As we look at these two creative experiences, think about:

- These two occurred during the Lent-Easter season. What other feasts, rituals, and celebrations might lend themselves to something similar?
- We have relied on technology during the stay-at-home time (and will need to look at the continued reality of using technology in the future blended with face-to-face gatherings). These two offerings used minimal technology (and even that use could have been done other ways, if people did not have access to email and the internet). What can you do that is not technology-driven?
- What was fascinating – and heartening – in these experiences was that the people themselves searched for and created opportunities; they didn't always wait for their parishes to come up with the answers and possibilities. How – as parish leadership – are you/can you encourage and support your parishioners to do things for themselves?

## Neighborhood Stations of the Cross

During the Lenten season, especially during Holy Week, several areas throughout the country did Neighborhood Stations of the Cross. This recounts an endeavor in Baton Rouge, LA.

Since people could not go to their parish churches to pray the stations, one woman organized seventeen neighborhoods to host the Stations of the Cross throughout the city and suburbs of Baton Rouge. She invited a lead person for each of the neighborhoods.

The lead then recruited sixteen homes in their neighborhood to host the fourteen stations and a starting and ending place.



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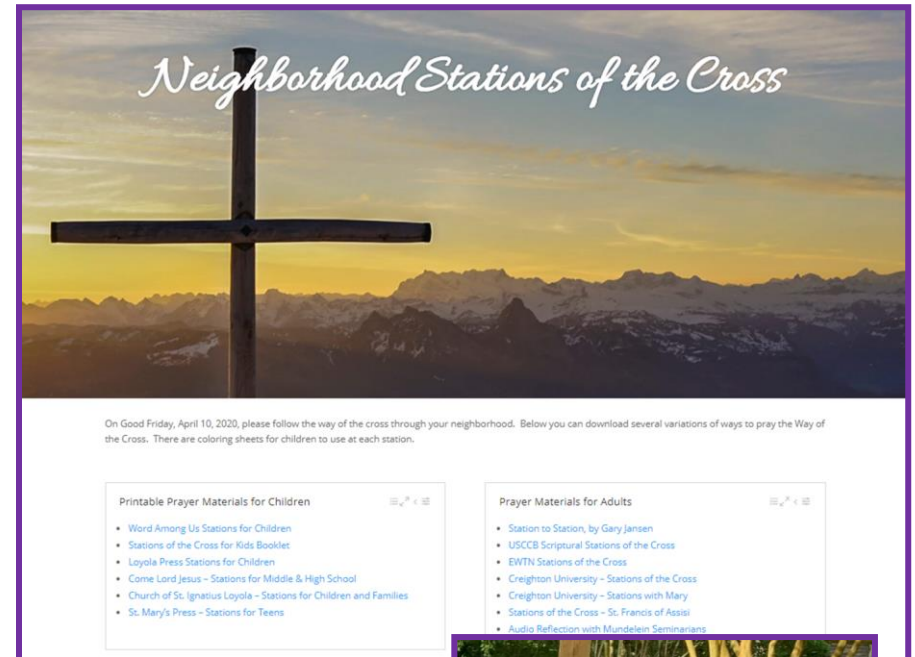


Each home created their own depiction of the station. Often it was a family project.



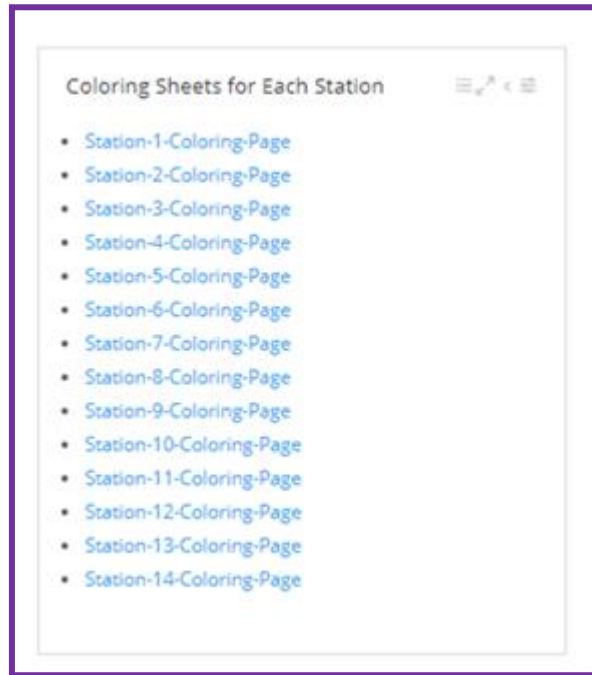
Becky Eldredge put together a website with resources if families/couples needed help and ideas for their stations.

(<http://beckyeldredge.com/stations/?fbclid=IwAR0DYtZKTbKHkKCLK3ZXXCX5aP27FpOjtB3h5vzBqTThDervHuNqAdmZQN4>)



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The website also included links to coloring sheets for children that could be used at each station or taken home by the families for continued use at home.



The lead person for each neighborhood put together a map with the addresses of where each station was hosted for distribution to the people who wished to pray the Stations in their neighborhood.

People (individuals, couples, families) then went at their own pace and at whatever time of the day/evening they desired. Throughout the day people walked the Stations, rode their bikes, and some elderly couples drove the route.

## Celebration of Easter Sunday

Emily Huff, Director of Field Placements & Clinical Faculty, School of Education at Seattle Pacific University, and her family decided they wanted to do something to help their neighborhood celebrate Easter together in a special way during the stay-at-home times.

Their endeavor – with pictures – is fully explained at <https://godspacelight.com/2020/04/15/easter-cross-2020/>. (Emily graciously gave me permission to quote from this article and use some of her pictures.)

Emily and her family “sent out email invitations to neighbors to let them know we would be flowering a cross outside our home on Easter Sunday, and we invited them to pick up some flowers from a store when they were out grabbing groceries or to pick some from their gardens to bring to add to the cross to celebrate that He is risen indeed!

My parents had done this for years at their church in Nashville, and we felt that this was the year to make one for Seattle.”

At 7:00 am



At 7:30 am

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At 11:30 am



At 3:00 pm

Emily comments: “It was indeed a spectacular and life-giving day getting to see this cross that we put in our yard for Easter 2020 be filled with glory through the day.

Though we are grateful for online communication, there is nothing like seeing real people rather than the one-inch picture of someone on your screen during a Zoom call. We were so blessed to get to see friends come by (6 feet away, of course) to flower our Easter cross. We hope to make this a new tradition, and we look forward to being able to actually hug friends who come by next year.”

The Huff family placed a basket of bubbles and chocolate eggs near the cross for the many visitors to take home.



## Prayer at Home

You might also remember that **GEMS #50** explored another idea for prayer/formation in neighborhood homes. For many years, St. George Parish in Worcester, MA has encouraged and enabled “St. George Unplugged: A Community Prayer Hour at Home” on the Wednesday of Holy Week. All parishioners are invited to set aside the hour of 7:00 – 8:00 PM for prayer at home on that evening and were provided with ideas for their prayer and faith-sharing.

Families – all households – were encouraged and supported, knowing that many other homes throughout the parish were also praying at the same time.

What other events/times might you invite parishioners to pray together? One parish planned a prayer event for their homes on the evening before the 2016 election.

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## GEMS Wonderings

- These events occurred during the Lent-Easter season. What other feasts, rituals, and celebrations might lend themselves to something similar?
- We have relied on technology during the stay-at-home time (and will need to look at the continued reality of using technology in the future blended with face-to-face gatherings). These offerings used minimal technology (and even that use could have been done other ways, if people did not have access to email and the internet). What might you do that is not technology-driven?
- What was fascinating – and heartening – in these experiences of the Neighborhood Stations of the Cross and the Easter Cross was that the people themselves searched for and created opportunities; they didn't always wait for their parishes to come up with the answers and possibilities. How – as parish leadership – are you/can you encourage and support your parishioners to do things for themselves?

- Many past issues of GEMS have looked at the role of and various practices for using technology in adult faith formation. Today, more than ever, that has become a realistic, practical and necessary delivery system. Try this idea: [Make a Social Media Prayer of the Week](#).



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## Adding New Luster to Some Older GEMS

- In **GEMS #78** we looked at the Parish Bulletin as Adult Faith Formation. In this January 17, 2020 issue of *America* magazine, this article, [“Ten Ways to Up your Parish Bulletin Design \(so people will actually read it\),”](#) explores some more practical ideas.

You might also want to re-check some of the recent issues of **GEMS** which shared ideas of communication during these times, especially e-newsletters.

Past issues of **GEMS** are archived at [www.janetschaeffler.com](http://www.janetschaeffler.com)

Additional ideas for Adult Faith Formation Planning and Best Practices can be found in:

- *Deepening Faith: Adult Faith Formation in the Parish*  
<https://www.litpress.org/Products/4652/Deepening-Faith>
- *The Seasons of Adult Faith Formation*  
[http://www.lifelongfaith.com/store/p25/The\\_Seasons\\_of\\_Adult\\_Faith\\_Formation.html](http://www.lifelongfaith.com/store/p25/The_Seasons_of_Adult_Faith_Formation.html) and <http://www.lifelongfaith.com/2015-adult-faith-formation-symposium.html>