

## Increase and Multiply: Nurturing FORMED's Use Among Your Parishioners

***“A lot of our members of staff are really enjoying having FORMED. Because we love it, we want to share it with everyone.”***

**Joanne Chiasson**

Financial Officer, St. Joseph Catholic Church, Grande Prairie, Alberta, Canada

In what proved to be a timely decision, St. Joseph Catholic Church launched its new subscription to FORMED on Ash Wednesday in 2020. Coming just a few weeks before the COVID-19 pandemic forced the closing of churches, FORMED provided Catholic content to the Grande Prairie church's parishioners and enabled the continuation of ministry via video conferencing.

Joanne Chiasson, St. Joseph's financial officer, said that a couple of parish staff members were familiar with FORMED before the parish had a subscription. In previous Advents and Lents, the parish had ordered books from the Augustine Institute and made them available to parishioners for a small donation.

“We thought a lot of people could benefit from it,” Chiasson said.

The timing of FORMED's introduction was intended so that parishioners could use the resources on the platform as part of their Lenten journeys.

During the pandemic, the parish took advantage of FORMED's online resources to offer Chris Stefanick's *THE SEARCH*. Between 50 and 60 participants met on a videoconferencing site each week to watch one of the episodes. Following the viewing, they divided into breakout rooms where a leader in each room facilitated discussion.

Beyond those that participated in *THE SEARCH*, St. Joseph's has seen steady growth in the number of FORMED users. The century-old parish has 4,000 registered families; between two and three thousand people attend Mass each



***“Everything that I've watched has been amazing.”***



**Joanne  
Chiasson**

weekend. Approximately 18 months after adopting FORMED, 616 parishioners had signed on to the Catholic content platform.

St. Joseph's success in getting parishioners to sign up for FORMED stems from two sources. First, the parish staff made it a priority to instruct the people in the pews about how to go on the FORMED site. Second, the parish has incorporated many FORMED programs into its ministries.

Early on, parish staff members spoke at Mass and instructed the congregation on how to access the videos and programs on FORMED. Printed material available in the church repeats those instructions and each week's bulletin includes FORMED's 'pick of the week.' The technologically savvy can use a QR code that's posted in the back of church to download FORMED to their phones, while the parish website includes a link to FORMED. The parish's Facebook page highlights various programs and encourages parishioners to use FORMED in much the same way that they use Netflix, Chiasson said.

St. Joseph has incorporated FORMED into its sacramental preparation programs and ministries. BELOVED is used as a supplement in marriage preparation. When readying for the Baptism of a child, parents watch REBORN. Older siblings watch the Brother Francis video on the sacrament, *Born into the Kingdom: The Miracle of Baptism*. Brother Francis videos get tapped again for the children preparing for First Reconciliation and First Holy Communion, as they watch *Forgiven: The Blessings of Confession* and *The Bread of Life: Celebrating the Eucharist*.

One of the Our Sunday Visitor talks on FORMED provided an apt topic for adult online discussion during the pandemic. In *Healing Culture by Communicating Presence*, Sarah Yaklic, the chief digital officer for the Archdiocese of Los Angeles, Yaklic explores the possibility and necessity of mercy in the digital landscape.

The members of St. Joseph's staff have been using Revive courses available on FORMED "to align where we're going with the staff, get the staff on the same page, move forward together, and think about things we might not have thought about," Chiasson said.

The Revive courses *Evangelization*, *Missionary Discipleship*, and *Loving and Serving the Poor* provide 10 hours of training for parish staffs, catechists, and parish leader volunteers and are free on FORMED.

"It's much cheaper than finding and getting those speakers," Chiasson said.

She praised the diversity of content on FORMED that parishes can use "to enhance ministry or for personal faith formation."

"A lot of our members of staff are really enjoying having FORMED," Chiasson said. "Because we love it, we want to share it with everyone." And, she added, "the people who use FORMED, love it."



To learn more, contact **Brian Truckenbrod**  
Senior Director, Parish Channel

[brian.truckenbrod@augustineinstitute.org](mailto:brian.truckenbrod@augustineinstitute.org)

Follow the Augustine Institute  
for more great content:



**FORMED**<sup>®</sup>



AUGUSTINE INSTITUTE<sup>®</sup>