



Answering the Call to Lead in Ministry

With work, family, and other responsibilities and commitments, how is it possible to answer the call to lead in ministry?

Joselyn Baker, leader of the CTK Women's Club, Mike Penney, leader of the CTK Men's Club, and Gene Rice, leader of CTK Adopt-a-Family shared insights on this and more on Tuesday, February 10, 2015 at BELIEVES.



"I have been a part of Christ the King Men's Club since 1987," Mike Penney shared. "For many years the Pancake Breakfast, and annual Golf Tournament were the staples of the Men's Club events, but in the last four years we've introduced a speaker series, which has really been an entry point for men to engage with one another and have a nice evening together."

Though the CTK Women's Club has not been in existence anywhere near as long as the Men's Club, in what is now its 3rd year, the Women's club has had over 400 women attend any of the eight events they host each year.

"The Women's Club really began because there was a group of women in the parish who said 'we need a space for women to connect,'" Baker said. "I found myself at the dinner in the rectory where this was discussed, and before I knew it I was in charge of the ministry."

Baker had told several women that she wanted to get more involved in her parish at CTK – more than just coming to Mass and seeing people but not really knowing them – but prior to this dinner, the time just hadn't been right yet to get more engaged in a leadership role. Finally her desire to connect and the conversations came together, and when she saw the opportunity to get the Women's Club started she was honored to be in the right place at the right time.

Tapping into the common thread of a desire to connect, Gene Rice, whose family had started Adopt-A-Family at St. Andrew's Catholic Church 25 years ago, said they found that bringing Adopt-A-Family to Christ the King turned out to be a way to connect more with others at the parish.

"My wife and I have been a part of CTK for 9 years. But several years ago, we were driving in the car to participate in Adopt-A-Family at another church, and we thought, 'why are we driving all this way to another parish to do Adopt-A-Family rather than do it in Buckhead at our own parish?'" Rice recalled.

Shortly thereafter Rice and his wife spoke with Msgr. Frank McNamee about the possibility of starting Adopt-A-Family at CTK, and before long the ministry was serving 75 families in its first year. It now serves 450 families.

“We just saw a void, recognized our passion and skill sets to be able to do something, and ran with it,” Rice said.

He added, “Adopt-A-Family wouldn’t happen without my wife, Isabel. We just know that come November we will be having dinner with computers present knocking stuff out in the holiday spirit for Adopt-A-Family.”

Rice, who recently also served for a year as the leader of Christ Renews His Parish (CHRP) for the men at CTK, said the discernment process, and the ask, related to CHRP is very different.

“It’s a harder ask with CHRP,” Rice said. “You’re inviting people to go deeper. Once you go to CHRP for a weekend, you know a person in the pews more. I’ve gotten to know some amazing men that I would never meet otherwise.”

The shift in conversation about CHRP surfaced comments from those in attendance, including Maggie Piekarski, a Director at Given Imaging.



“I participated in the first CHRP for women at CTK and just wanted to meet people,” Piekarski commented. “It establishes a bridge of spiritual intimacy trust and community.”

Dick White, CTK parishioner added that at another church that he and his wife have attended in prior years he was always impressed that they would have close to 95% engagement from among the members. The common theme for higher engagement, according to White – someone asked them.

“As a consequence, I think if we’re an asking culture it’d be better,” White said. “For some reason, the Catholic experience tends to be more ‘I go to Mass and I am done.’ There also seems to be a correlation between people being involved and financial support being offered.”

Joselyn Baker agreed with White, and said, “The need for community is something I believe Msgr. Frank realizes.”

Community certainly can grow within a parish, but Gene Rice shared that ministry can also become an invitation for community to grow beyond the existing parish.

“In my workplace, Adopt-A-Family has become an invitation to those at work to engage in faith and other conversations,” Rice commented.

Baker took it a step further when she shared, “Perhaps I am bit the opposite from what Gene’s shared because I brought more work to ministry than the other way around. However, what’s interesting for me is that in all the travel that I do outside of Atlanta, I’ve found that being a part of a ministry becomes a starting point for conversation about faith and Catholicism.”

Beyond playing a part in the growth of community, each panelist shared they also get the chance to see how leading in ministry has aided in their professional careers.

“Management at work is different than in ministry,” commented Penney. “At church, there are no direct reports. It’s a continual ask – everyone’s a volunteer.”

Rice added, “It’s made me a better leader in the workplace from a point of perspective. You realize purpose more, so now when a deal falls apart at work it really doesn’t matter as much. The reason we are here is to build relationship with Christ.”

The dialogue about growing as leaders professionally prompted Natalie Grasso, Board Relations & Development Manager at the Woodruff Arts Center, to ask the panelists if any of them had utilized tools such as Strengths Finder or had taken the "Live Your Strengths" workshop (offered at CTK) to see were their strengths are as leaders?

“My wife just tells me what I am good at and what I am not good at,” Rice said quickly with a smile and bringing about a round of laughter from everyone.

Marie Corrigan, Founding Director and Head of School at Sophia Academy then asked, “As much as we do at Christ the King, what do any of you think are the gaps here?”

Rice responded to the question sharing that for those at CTK who range in age from their upper 20s to lower 40s with kids, there could be more relationship and community formed with the formation of small groups.

“The non-denominational churches have truly engaged communities,” he said. “I think there is a real opportunity to grow in this area.”

The dialogue continued but ultimately had to come to a close, so the panelists were asked one final question – what is the one moment or experience that stands out as the most memorable you have had leading in ministry?

Penney commented that for him the big moment was last year when for the first time, the CTK Men’s Club golf tournament sold out the entire North Fulton Golf Course at Chastain Park.

“That was just incredible,” Penney said.

Baker answered, “I’m going to talk about Gene’s ministry actually. The first time I drove up to CTK and saw all the trucks, bikes, and boxes for Adopt-A-Family on the drop-off day – it just brought me to tears. I just felt, ‘Oh my gosh, people are good.’ Now I always look forward to drop-off day.”

“I agree with Joselyn,” Rice said, “Adopt-A-Family drop-off day is like Christmas come early.”

Interested in learning more about getting more involved, and perhaps leading in the CTK Men’s Club, the CTK Women’s Club, CTK Adopt-A-Family, or any of the other numerous ministries at Christ the King? If so, more information can be found at <http://www.cathedralofchristtheking.org/eng/ministries/>