

I am Cathy Villani, from St. Thomas in San Antonio. And I'm Ann Allen from St. Luke's, also in San Antonio. Though our appearance might indicate that we are in the building profession, I think we can safely confess that the biggest construction project either of us has ever undertaken is to hammer picture hooks onto a wall....and even that often entails some bruised thumbs! That being said, we have in fact, undertaken a building project of sorts, and that has to do with the Christian Education Department of this diocese.

My husband and I purchased a home 13 years ago in order to accommodate our growing household.....growing in terms of meeting the needs of two soon-to-be teenagers. We wanted to have the home "where they would bring all their friends." (For those of you who have or who have had teenagers, you know what a brave wish that was!) We fell in love with a 60 year old house which had actually been home to several families before us. The roof and foundation were in fine shape (the "biggies" in terms of home appraisals) but there were (at least to my immediate eyes) some cosmetic things that needed tending to. I quickly began to envision the addition of a large family room off the back....with room for a fireplace, ping pong or pool table, etc. We even went so far as to enlist the help of an architect. After living in the house for a matter of only a couple of weeks, however, we noticed that often when we turned on an appliance, either the lights would dim, or another appliance would go out. We were ultimately informed that the electrical system in our house, while perfectly able to meet the needs of the house up in the past, was insufficient to carry the load of an increasingly appliance-dependent family both now and for the years ahead. So, although my dreams of a beautiful family room did not come to fruition, I came to the realization that, if that home was to suit us then, and grow with us in the years to come, we needed to pay attention to what it really needed. When I bemoaned to my husband that I had had dreams of having a Christmas Open House and showing all of our friends the new family room, he suggested that we could still have the party...we'd just tie a big red bow around the new meter loop and invite them outside!

In many ways, the Christian Education Department of this diocese is now at the same point as we found our house 13 years ago. The Department exists to serve the needs of the family of congregations of this diocese in the area of Christian Education. A good, solid foundation has been laid by many who have been involved for so many years...and who continue to be involved. What is needed now is some "remodeling" and "renovation" in order to meet the needs of this diocesan family both today and in the years to come. That "remodeling project" is the task of the Department right now. But what we don't want to do is to build a wonderful family room....complete with warm, inviting fireplace, gas logs and all...when what you really need is a media room, library or even an updated electrical system! And, by the way, I have since discovered that a "meter loop" (a fancy name for what appears to be a plain looking box on the side of our house ~ no red bow) basically contains the networking

system for nearly everything that runs in our home! We are ready to begin this remodeling project, but we cannot do it without your help!

SO, we're asking 2 things of you:

First,

We need to know what you need! What would you say are the top 3 needs of your congregation in the area of Christian Education?

Children's Sunday School? Perhaps you have a Sunday School of combined ages and need curriculum ideas?

Or maybe you need baptism or confirmation resources?

Or resources to equip families? Marriage enrichment? Biblical parenting?

Or is your biggest need the recruitment and nurture of volunteers?

These are only a few possibilities.

And second,

If the Department is to be a resource to you we need an effective way of communicating with you! Who in your congregation is the person to contact in the area of Christian Formation? (that may be a clergy member, paid staff member or often a volunteer) And then, who knows? We may find that we can be a resource to each other, perhaps by creating a list serve so that we may share what our congregations do well.

We have put together a brief survey to help us get started. Some of you may have already received and even responded to it. There are also copies available at the Christian Education booth. Please come and see us there (we're at booth # 17). Your Christian Education Department is ready to get begin construction!

Again, we cannot begin this wonderful and exciting project without you! And who knows, we may be able to create that beautiful family room any way!