

Dear Holy Cross Family,

It is wonderful to be back in Lynchburg and at Holy Cross Parish. My name is Kaky Bowden and I'm thrilled to be a part of the ministry team here at Holy Cross. Having spent a year in Raleigh teaching theology at a dynamic Catholic high school, I felt called to return "home" and be closer to my family and community. Holy Cross parish is assuredly a part of this community I missed so much while away.

Holy Cross has always been a special place to my family and me. My three children, all in their twenties, grew up in this parish and were confirmed here. I am excited to bring my varied experiences as a campus minister, teacher and catechist to Holy Cross. I feel truly honored and humbled that Monsignor Rush has placed his trust and confidence in me to build the faith formation program of this unique community.

Along with my dynamic partner, Ginna Haske, Monsignor Rush, Father Jim, our Deacons and you, I hope to bring energy and inspiration to an already thriving parish by placing Christ at its core with an emphasis on personal encounters with our Lord in all we do.

As the Director of Life-Long Formation, I have the ongoing task to create opportunities for forming disciples of faith and holy encounters with Christ in community.

So why do I have a new name? I am the Director of Life-Long Formation versus the previously title called Director of Religious Education. Life-Long Formation reflects that we are life-long learners. We spend our lives hopefully growing closer to Christ in our individual spiritual journeys. The phrase "religious education" suggests an idea of "teaching religion or theology" rather than providing opportunities that form our faith through encounters with Christ.

Do we want to limit our faith experience to only knowledge of Catholicism with its doctrine and history or do we want to also include ways to connect our faith to our lives? I say both. Knowledge of our faith is important, and we don't want a watered down "catholic experience" but we do need to look at how we live and share our beliefs.

Life-long formation asks the question “How does our faith inform our heads and motivate our hearts?” This is the key question. I believe it begins with a shift in our thinking. We need to be evangelized before we can be catechized or “taught”. What do I mean by evangelized? To be formed as a disciple of Christ...to have a relationship with him...to want to live our lives for him and witness to him and share our stories of conversion.

This journey of discipleship is not uniform or a one size fits all and will be different for each one of us. We must remember that we are not in control of the process. Conversion and true faith are the works of the Holy Spirit. We can't pressure, guilt or “make” someone embrace Jesus and the faith. Only through our presence to them, our shared experiences and our love of Jesus can we point the way. This is what I would like my role to be...providing meaningful experiences to grow in our love of Christ and his Church. My hope is that these experiences will inform us in our faith, form us in our relationship with Jesus and community and transform our lived faith each and every day.

I certainly do not have all the answers or know the path that lies ahead. I do know that as a community, we can do anything. As the new Director of Life Long Formation I hope to help create opportunities to build relationships and ministries that feed our entire community.

Each one of us has been gifted by God at Baptism to be empowered to build up the Kingdom of God. We are all to bear witness to Jesus and build the Church through this witness. Our gifts are not for us but to glorify God. I ask that with your help, we can move Holy Cross to a new and exciting time.

Please know that my door is always open, and I welcome any suggestions, input and conversations with you. Ginna and I will be sharing a survey with you in the near future about life-long faith formation and we would appreciate your honest feedback and ideas.

Again, thank you for welcoming me back to my parish family. I look forward to many fruitful conversations with new and revived relationships!

In his name,

Kaky