

# BOSTON CATHOLIC CONFERENCES

Organizers of the 2008 Boston Catholic Men's & Women's Conferences



## Women's Groups

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### 1. Overview

We encourage all Catholic Women to consider joining or starting a local women's group. There are 2 main networks of Women's Groups in the Archdiocese of Boston:

- WINGS – Women in God's Spirit; and
- M.O.M.S. – Ministry of Mothers Sharing.

### 2. Why Have a Women's Faith Enrichment Group in your Parish?

- **Need to Grow in Faith.** Today's Catholic woman who is committed to her faith, has a deep need to grow in and share that faith with others. This is clearly evidenced by the large number of Catholic women presently attending non-Catholic church groups for spiritual study and fellowship.
- **Need for Community.** Women of all ages, including, women who choose to stay home and be a full-time wife and mother, women who are retired, women whose children have left the home, women working part-time, widowed women, divorced women and single women, require more nurturing from their church than they receive from Sunday mass attendance and involvement in parish organizations.
- **Need for Friendship Rooted in Christ.** It is important that a group be available on a weekly basis where women can receive additional spiritual and emotional encouragement; a place where women are invited to bond together with other women in friendship, be supported in her vocation as woman, wife and mother and allow her to support her interest in Christ as well.
- **Need for Catholic Education.** A weekly prayer and study group can encourage a woman to see the value of her life as Christ intended and to know that His support is available to her in the form of her Christian sisters. In this setting, she can be encouraged to grow in her relationship with God through the group, the study of God's Word, her prayer life and her sharing with others. In attending such a group, she will hopefully come to understand the power of God's love within this small Christian community and will be strengthened to share that love with her family, her church, her neighbor and the world in which she lives. This group should not just be another activity to be involved in, but a special time spent in growing and learning those things which will make her life more meaningful.

*Courtesy:* The original authors of this material, who are also the founding members of WINGS, are the women of St. Martins Catholic Church in Yorba Linda, CA. They intended for this program to be shared with anyone interested in starting a faith enrichment group. We wish to thank them for their vision of such a faith enriching group, their hard work in putting the WINGS program together and most of all, for their faith in God and the guiding hand of His Holy Spirit.

### 3. WINGS

WINGS is a faith enrichment group for women of all ages who want to deepen their Catholic faith and grow in their relationship with God and one another.

#### Contact Information

- Jennifer Schiller, Archdiocesan WINGS Coordinator, Jennifer\_Schiller@msn.com
- Archdiocese of Boston Family Office of Family Life, 617-746-5800

#### What is WINGS?

WINGS is a faith enrichment group for women of all ages who seek to grow in their relationship with God and deepen their faith. WINGS encourages its members to learn and grow in their catholic faith and be aware of their own unique spiritual gifts so as to benefit the wider Christian community and build up the kingdom here on earth.

#### Why have a WINGS Group?

- **A Need for Lifelong Faith Formation:** Many Catholic women have a deep need to grow and deepen their faith. A weekly prayer and study group, like WINGS, can encourage a woman to see the value of her life as Christ intended, and to know that His support is available to her in the form of her Christian sisters.
- **A Need for Community Rooted in Christ:** In this setting, women are encouraged to grow in their relationship with God through the group, the study of God's Word, prayer and her sharing with others.

#### Who attends WINGS?

WINGS welcomes women of all ages; single, married, separated, divorced, widowed, or in religious life. WINGS welcomes women in all life situations: women who are working, at-home, or retired.

#### When does WINGS meet?

WINGS usually meets weekly, during the school year. The day, time and location of each parish WINGS group is determined by the WINGS team volunteers.

WINGS has three different seasons, focusing on three areas of spiritual growth:

- The Fall Season explores Catholic tradition and teaching.
- The Winter Season involves study and sharing on Scripture.
- The Spring Season. Also known as the "faith focus season", enables the women to discern ways of putting into practice their faith in their personal life, family life, community, and the world.

#### A Typical Meeting\*

- Arrival, Childcare Sign-In, Coffee, Social
- Welcome, Song, Prayer, and Announcements
- Large Group Presentation by a Speaker
- Small Group Sharing
- Large Group Closing Prayer and Petitions
- Childcare Sign-Out and Clean Up

Realizing that God also speaks in the ongoing stories of peoples' lives, there are Small Sharing Groups that come together regularly at WINGS. The women discern the movement of God in their individual and communal lives, form bonds of friendship, pray, share life and share around the topic of the morning. Realizing that childcare is an essential component to the ministry, a warm and secure environment for young children is provided. .

#### How did WINGS begin in the Archdiocese of Boston?

The WINGS ministry began five years ago at St. Mary's in Holliston and has grown to include many other archdiocesan parishes.

Fr. Brian Bachand, who currently serves as Secretary to the Cardinal, was the Spiritual Director of WINGS in Holliston, comments: "the fruits of the WINGS program are that it builds parish community and strengthens family life." Current

members comment: “..wonderful and refreshing, many thanks”, “participating has been a wonderful experience for me”, “just a big thank you for my Wednesday mornings”, “it was great knowing that I would be able to hear from other women in small group”, “WINGS provides so much spiritual nourishment, every week....”.

### How to Begin a Wings Group

- Begin with prayer for the Lord's guidance in discerning the needs of the women in your parish community.
- Go to the Family Life Office website, [www.familylifeboston.com](http://www.familylifeboston.com), and read about the WINGS ministry, under “Women’s Ministries”.
- Attend a Family Life Office WINGS informational meeting. (Call the office at (617) 746-5800 to inquire about upcoming dates.)
- Attend a WINGS morning or evening at an already established group, in the following communities: Amesbury, Haverhill, Holliston, Hopkinton, Lexington, Natick, Needham, North Andover and Quincy. (Please contact the Archdiocesan WINGS Coordinator, Jennifer Schiller, at [Jennifer\\_Schiller@msn.com](mailto:Jennifer_Schiller@msn.com), for a list of the parishes in these communities, and the day and time of the WINGS meetings.
- Get together a core group of about six to seven women who see a real need for such a group and who will commit at least one to two years in getting it started.
- Schedule a WINGS Training Meeting, by emailing the WINGS Coordinator, listed above.
- After the Training Meeting:
  - Write up a proposal and submit it to the pastor for approval. Include in the proposal an outline of your purpose, core team member names and their responsibilities, format, day and time to meet, proposed expenses and means of meeting those expenses, and request for a spiritual advisor. Your spiritual advisor should be a member of the parish staff; priest, deacon, sister, DRE or pastoral associate. • When approval has been granted from the pastor, decide on a program schedule and get that approved by your spiritual advisor. (Note: Archdiocese WINGS Coordinator will work with you to help with the program planning.)
  - Decide on Registration fee. This usually covers the cost of speakers, study materials and expenses in setting up and conducting the group. A typical fee is about \$40 annually per member.
  - If a morning or evening has not already been chosen, decide on a day that best fits into the parish schedule and that of those attending. The middle of the week usually works well for morning groups, and Sunday evening usually works well for evening groups. You will need to make sure enough parish facilities are available for child care, meeting room and sharing groups.
  - Designate a starting date and plan bulletin and pulpit announcements and posters to advertise. Request that women who are interested in joining call ahead of time (to get some idea of how many to expect) and especially those who will require child care to make a reservation (so you will know how many workers to secure.)
  - The Child Care Facilitator(s) will advertise in the church bulletin for child care helpers. She will hire 2-3 to start or more depending on the need.
  - Plan Registration Day and the initial meeting which will explain the purpose of the group and the program schedule. Registration might be officially open for the first month. After that, the Secretary/Treasurer may be in charge of new registration as women join the group later.

### Aims/Considerations when Starting a WINGS Group

- **Educational:** Will this group give its members an opportunity to learn more about their faith? Will resources be sufficient to invite inspiring and well informed speakers? Will there be an opportunity for questions and discussion from time to time?
- **Formational:** Will this group give the members the opportunity to become better informed and to grow as Catholic Christians?
- **Social:** Will fellowship, friendship, and a sense of unity be given the opportunity to grow? Some Practical Considerations:
- **Space:** Is room available on the same morning each week for the group to meet so there is not confusion as to time, day and place?
- **Time:**
  - Have you taken into account pre-school and kindergarten schedules?
  - How long will your morning last? It is difficult to get much accomplished in less than 1 1/2 to 2 1/2 hours.
  - How often will you meet? Meeting once a week establishes a routine and gives a sense of continuity.
- **Course of Study:** Typical sessions can run between 4 and 6 weeks. These are ideal for three seasons of the year and if especially if members are not prepared to make a longer commitment. Encouraging members to participate in all three seasons will allow them to develop closer relationships with each other and allows the group to achieve its fullest potential. This also establishes the group in the parish and may draw new members after the opening sessions.

## What is the Recommended Organization within WINGS

Emphasis is placed on the WINGS ministry experience as being a process and a journey. WINGS recognizes that the energy force present in the process is the Holy Spirit; it is grace.

With membership ranging between 25 to 100 women weekly, there is a strong need for organization. WINGS remains conscious of the tendency to become institutionalized, thus its focus is always open to prayer, to the workings of the Spirit, and to a community which remains supportive of the ministry.

WINGS has developed an effective way of ministering to the needs of its members due, in part, to the following organizational structure:

- **The Pastor** - Provides approval for WINGS ministry.
- **Spiritual Advisor** – Member of parish staff, like the priest, deacon, sister, DRE or pastoral associate.
- **The Core Team**
  - Moderator – Serves as the leader of the core team, keeps team on task.
  - WINGS Advisor – Immediate past Moderator (not applicable for new WINGS groups.)
  - Program Facilitator(s) – Coordinates seasonal schedules, calls speakers.
  - Hospitality Facilitator – Coordinates weekly set-up, coffee, welcome table, nametags.
  - Secretary – Coordinates membership, correspondence, etc.
  - Treasurer – Coordinates WINGS budget, writes checks.
  - Child Care Facilitator(s) – Hires babysitters, oversees nursery.
  - Small Group Facilitator – Coordinates small group leaders, small group sharing.
  - Small Group Leaders – Core team can serve in this role, or bring in other members to serve, once the ministry is established.

Ideally, the core team should be comprised of 7 women. If this is not possible, then the Secretary and Treasurer could be combined, and the Moderator could assume the duties of the Small Group Facilitator. If more than 7 women are available to serve, then having 2 to 3 Program Facilitators, and 2 Child Care Facilitators would work well for the WINGS ministry.

## List of Parishes with WINGS Groups in the Archdiocese of Boston

- **Amesbury – Holy Family Parish** (6 Allen's Court, Amesbury, MA 01913, 978-388-0330). Contact: Mary Saulier, Co-Moderator, [maryl40@verizon.net](mailto:maryl40@verizon.net). WINGS meets Sunday evenings from 7:15 PM to 9 PM in the Sacred Heart School Building (The Ark)
- **Haverhill – All Saints Parish** (120 Bellevue Ave, Haverhill, MA 01832, 978-372-7721). Contact: Becky Giambarresi, [wingshaverhill@verizon.net](mailto:wingshaverhill@verizon.net). WINGS Meets: Sunday evenings from 6:15 pm to 8:00 pm, in the Church hall
- **Holliston – St. Mary Parish** (8 Church Street, Holliston, MA 01746, 508-429-4427). Contact: Linda Calabrese, Moderator, [lcbrese@msn.com](mailto:lcbrese@msn.com). WINGS Meets: Wednesdays from 9:30 am – 11:15 am, Saint Mary's Parish Hall
- **Hopkinton – St. John the Evangelist Parish** (20 Church Street, Hopkinton, MA 01748, 508-435-3313). Contact: Alicia Simmons, Moderator. WINGS Meets: Tuesday mornings in the Parish Hall
- **Lexington – St. Brigid, Parish** (2001 Massachusetts Avenue, Lexington, MA 02421, 781-862-0335). Contact: Mary Harvell, Secretary, [wings@lexingtoncatholic.org](mailto:wings@lexingtoncatholic.org). WINGS Meets: Thursday mornings from 9:30 to 11:15 am, in the parish hall at Sacred Heart Parish, 21 Follen Road, Lexington
- **Middleborough – Sacred Heart Parish** (340 Centre Street, Middleborough, MA 02346, 508-947-0444). Contact: Patricia Mikus, [lacemikus@hotmail.com](mailto:lacemikus@hotmail.com). WINGS meets: Tuesday mornings from 9:15 to 11:15 am in the parish center.
- **Milton - St. Agatha Parish** (Adams Street at Brook Road, Milton, MA 02186, 617-698-2439). Contact: Debbie Riley, [Rectory@StAgathaParish.org](mailto:Rectory@StAgathaParish.org).
- **Natick – St. Patrick Parish** (44 East Central Street, Natick, MA 01760, 508-653-1093). Contact: Cari Tatian, Co-Moderator, [ctatian@comcast.net](mailto:ctatian@comcast.net). WINGS Meets: Wednesday mornings from 9:30 am to 11:30 am, Lower Church Hall
- **Needham – St. Joseph Parish** (1382 Highland Avenue, Needham, MA 02492, 781-444-0245). Contact: Sarah McElroy, Program Coordinator, [Smc1021@aol.com](mailto:Smc1021@aol.com). WINGS Meets: Wednesdays from 9:45 am – 11:30 am, Linse Room, adjacent to the Lower Church.
- **North Andover – St. Michael Parish** (196 Main Street, N. Andover, MA, 978-687-6235). Contact: Earline Tweedie, Co-Moderator. WINGS Meets: Sunday Evenings at 7:00 pm.
- **Quincy – St. John the Baptist Parish** (44 School Street, Quincy, MA 02169, 617-479-0125). Contact: Michelle Theberge, Moderator, [michelle@flaxin.com](mailto:michelle@flaxin.com). WINGS Meets: Monday mornings from 8:30 to 10:30 in the Lower Church Hall.
- **Scituate - St. Mary of the Nativity Parish** (1 Kent Street, Scituate, MA 02066). Contact: Karen McSweeney, [Karenmcs@aol.com](mailto:Karenmcs@aol.com)

\*Several other parishes are currently seeking to begin a WINGS group at their parish, and are working towards this goal.

## 4. M.O.M.S.

The Ministry of Mothers Sharing (M.O.M.S.) is a ministry of the Benedictine Sisters of St. Paul's Monastery in St. Paul, Minnesota.

### Contact Information

- Colette Crowley, M.O.M.S. coordinator for the Boston area, 978-474-0985
- Archdiocese of Boston Family Office of Family Life, 617-746-5800

### Objectives

- To gather mothers together to form a network of mutual spiritual support.
- To provide a group experience of learning, praying and ministering to each other.
- To introduce mothers to opportunities for personal and spiritual growth in a faith sharing group.
- To increase communication skills and the use of prayer rituals in the home.

### History

This Peer Ministry was co-created by Paula Hagen, O.S.B., Vickie LoPiccolo and Patricia Hoyt based on the theology of "Called and Gifted". Since 1992, M.O.M.S. has reached over 500,000 women and their families in over 100 dioceses. More than 3000 parishes have purchased the initial Beginner's Kit.

### Structure

M.O.M.S. is an 8 week parish-based peer ministry using the book MOMS: A Personal Journal. Each session begins and ends with a prayer ritual designed to enhance the Christian perspective on each of these topics.

- Session I – Self-Esteem and Self-Acceptance
- Session II – Stress, Worry and Anxiety
- Session III – Everyday Spirituality
- Session IV – Feelings
- Session V – Personal Goal Setting
- Session VI – Values in Friendships
- Session VII – Celebration
- Session VIII – Discernment: Spiritual Gifts Inventory

### Contact/More Information

To request more information, training for your parish or to review free for 30 days a Beginner's Kit (includes all the information and sample of books, video and tape needed to initiate the Ministry) contact:

- Colette Crowley, M.O.M.S. coordinator for the Boston area, 978-474-0985
- Archdiocese of Boston Family Office of Family Life, 617-746-5800