



# 2023 Family and Intergenerational Faith Formation Survey

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In the Spring of 2023, Lifelong Faith conducted a national survey to identify how well churches are implementing practices of family faith formation and intergenerational (all ages together) faith formation. A total of **408 churches** from completed the survey.

This is the first report of the survey findings. The second phase of the research will include reports on the churches that are offering family and/or intergenerational faith formation programming. These reports will be available beginning in September 2023 on the Lifelong Faith website: [www.lifelongfaith.com](http://www.lifelongfaith.com).

## Part 1. Who Participated in the Survey

This section tells you about the churches who completed the survey. The churches represent a good mix of urban, suburban, and small town or rural. The churches reflect a wide diversity of size as identified by average weekly worship attendance. There are 114 churches with 250 or fewer people weekly at worship; and there are 75 churches with 2000 or more people weekly at Mass. The 408 churches are ethnically diverse with a membership that has at least 10% or more members from Hispanic or Latino, African American and African National or Caribbean, Filipino or Pacific Islander, and/or Asian-American communities.

### 1. Who completed the survey?

1. Faith Formation Coordinator (Full Time)	181	(44.36%)
2. Faith Formation Coordinator (Part Time)	79	(19.36%)
3. Faith Formation Coordinator (Volunteer)	35	(8.5%)
4. Pastor	26	(6.73%)
5. Children's Ministry Leader	12	(2.94%)
6. Associate Pastor	11	(2.70%)
7. Youth Minister	8	(1.96%)
8. Other Church Leadership Position	56	(13.73%)

## 2. Where are the churches located?

- Urban 100 (24.51%)
- Suburban 183 (44.85%)
- Small Town or Rural 125 (30.64%)

## 3. What denominations were represented?

- Catholic 303 churches
- ELCA Lutheran 28
- Presbyterian (PCUSA) 14
- United Methodist 13
- Episcopal 11
- United Church of Christ 6
- Christian Reformed 3
- Disciples of Christ 3

## 4. What is your average weekly worship attendance?

- 50 or less 16 churches
- 50-100 33
- 101-250 65
- 251-500 62
- 501-1000 73
- 1001-1500 55
- 1501-2000 30
- 2001-2500 19
- 2501-3000 17
- 3001+ 38

## 4. Which ethnic groups form at least 10% of your church community?

*(Number of church responses for each ethnic group.)*

- White/European 393 churches
- Hispanic or Latino 264
- African-American 218
- Asian-American 170
- Filipino/Pacific Islander 167
- African National/African-Caribbean 76
- Arab/Middle Eastern 50
- American Indian/Alaska Native 32
- Other Ethnic Groups 35

## Part 2. Family Faith Formation

The survey asked churches to rate eight practices in family faith formation. The top three responses include providing families with resources, whole family experiences at church, and teaching and supporting parents. Of special note is the low rating that equipping parents with knowledge and skills for parenting, and the two items about engaging with grandparents.

The second question asked about the type of family programming their church offers. The top three responses were family programs at church, family sacramental preparation programs, and at-home family activities.

## 5. Family Faith Formation Practices

*Please rate how effectively your church implements the following practices in family faith formation.*

*(Ranked in order from strongly disagree to strongly agree. 5 = highest score)*

1. Our church provides experiences for the whole family that promote growth in faith and discipleship.	3.06
2. Our church provides families with resources to nurture growth in Christian faith and practice at home.	3.03
3. Our church helps parents (or caregivers) grow in faith and discipleship, and practice a vital and informed Christian faith.	2.81
4. Our church teaches parents the practices for forming faith at home (celebrating rituals and milestones, praying, serving, learning the Christian faith, reading the Bible)	2.78
5. Our church connects with families at home through social media and a website with content for family faith practices and parent formation.	2.76
6. Our church helps grandparents grow in faith and discipleship, and practice a vital and informed Christian faith.	2.34
7. Our church equips parents with the knowledge and skills for parenting today.	2.20
8. Our church teaches grandparents the practices for forming faith at home.	2.15

## 6. Types of Family Faith Formation Programming Offered

*(Ranked in order. Churches can respond multiple times.)*

1. Family large group programs at church (monthly or seasonal)	240
2. Family-centered sacramental preparation programs	229
3. At-home family activities (Bible reading, prayers, devotions, rituals, service, etc.)	223
4. Family service projects and/or mission trips	135
5. Online resources and courses for parents	120
6. Parent workshops	107
7. Family cluster or small group programs	82
8. Family-centered lectionary-based Scripture reflection	61
9. Family-centered vacation Bible school	56
10. Family retreats and camps	39
11. Mentoring for parents	26
12. Family Bible study	18
13. Grandparent workshops or webinars	14
14. Parent webinars (online)	13
Do Not Offer Family Programming	75

## 7. Frequency and Topics of Family Faith Formation Programming

(Responses from 226 churches engaged in family faith formation programming.)

### Frequency (top responses)

#1. Monthly	124 churches
#2. Weekly	36
#3. Twice a month	23
#3. Several times a year	20

### Topics (top responses)

#1. Sacraments
#2. Church year seasons
#3. Prayer
#4. Beliefs
#5. Scripture
#6. Church
#7. Saints

## Part 3. Intergenerational Faith Formation

The survey asked churches to rate nine practices in intergenerational faith formation. The top two responses (Sunday worship) describe settings that are more **multi-generational** (multiple generations gathered together) than **intergenerational**. When we speak of intergenerational we mean an **intentional** approach or strategy to engage people with other generations: building relationships, learning together, sharing stories, praying with each other, serving together, and more. Sunday worship has the potential for becoming much more intentionally intergenerational when the generations have the opportunity to interact in meaningful ways. The responses to the next top responses – items #3, 4, 5 – point to activities that are more intentionally intergenerational.

The second question asked about the type of intergenerational programming churches offer. The top responses were seasonal or occasional intergenerational programs, followed by intergenerational service projects, and monthly intergenerational learning.

## 8. Intergenerational (All Ages Together) Faith Formation in Churches

*Please rate how effectively your church implements the following practices in intergenerational ministry and faith formation. Ranked in order from strongly disagree to strongly agree. 5 = highest score)*

1. Our church brings all generations together in Sunday/weekend worship, including children and youth.	3.29
2. Our church engages all generations in leadership roles in Sunday worship (music, reading, praying, etc.)	2.79
3. Our church builds caring relationships among the generations through existing church ministries and events (e.g., through worship, learning, service, and community events and activities).	2.65
4. Our church creates intentional opportunities for bringing the generations together to build relationships and engage in shared activities.	2.53
5. Our church regularly brings all generations together in actions that serve the poor and vulnerable, locally, and globally.	2.52
6. Our church regularly brings all generations together for learning programs and activities that teach the Bible and the Christian tradition.	2.16
7. Our church regularly brings together all generations to nurture their spiritual life through prayer and spiritual practices and disciplines.	2.14

8. Our church regularly brings all generations together in actions that promote justice and advocacy, locally and globally. 2.10
9. Our church regularly brings together the generations to learn from each other, share their faith stories, and find support for practicing their faith in daily life. 1.95

### 9. Types of Intergenerational Faith Formation Programming Offered

*(Ranked in order. Churches can respond multiple times.)*

1. Seasonal/occasional intergenerational program	188
2. Intergenerational service projects or mission trips	93
3. Monthly intergenerational learning program	53
4. Small group intergenerational learning program	33
5. Weekly or bi-weekly intergenerational learning program	31
6. Intergenerational mentoring	31
7. Intergenerational lectionary-based Scripture reflection	30
8. Intergenerational retreats or camps	26
9. Intergenerational Bible study	21
Do not offer intergenerational programming	154

### 10. Most Popular Frequency and Topics of Intergenerational Faith Formation Programming

*(Responses from the 117 churches engaged in intergenerational faith formation programming.)*

#### Frequency (top responses)

#1. Seasonal/Quarterly	40 churches
#2. Monthly	33
#3. Several times a year	30
#4. Weekly	13

#### Topics (top responses)

#1. Sacraments and Mass
#2. Church year seasons
#3. Service
#4. Scripture
#5. Prayer
#6. Church and community

## Part 4. Challenges in Offering Family & Intergenerational Faith Formation

The final question asked about the challenges leaders faced in offering family or intergenerational faith formation. Twenty-one responses surfaced repeatedly in the 486 individual responses to the question. They provide a good summary of what respondents identified as the challenges they are facing today.

### 11. What are two of the most significant challenges you and your church face in offering family or intergenerational faith formation? (Not in priority ranking)

1. Family participation at Sunday worship and church life
2. Family participation in family or intergenerational programming
3. Family schedules, busy lives, lots of activities
4. Getting families to make this a priority, to commit the time, to see the benefits
5. Availability of volunteers

6. Dedicated leaders committed to family and intergenerational faith formation
7. Support of the pastor
8. Educating the pastor and church leadership about the importance and benefits of family and intergenerational faith formation
9. Changing the paradigm from child-centered to family-centered faith formation
10. Finding the right length – long enough to be a well-rounded program and but not too long so that we keep people engaged and interested
11. Lack of adequate facilities for a large group of families or several generations
12. Parents lack of interest in their own faith growth and learning
13. Adult community lack of interest in continuing their growth in faith
14. Creating a program that adapts to the particular needs of each family and is not one-size-fits-all that may discourage some families from participating
15. Changes in church structures and leadership with merging, consolidating, regionalizing
16. People's lack of prior experience with family or intergenerational faith formation. People are not aware of the benefits
17. The pull to go back to the weekly classroom model; drop-off and pick-up model
18. Getting people to participate in intergenerational faith formation in the first years of implementation
19. Reaching out to families who are not participating in the family program
20. Being a small membership church; lack of families; not enough people to lead the program; etc.
21. Finding the right time/schedule to offer family or intergenerational programs