

Faith Formation With Adolescents in a post pandemic world

*Diocese of Davenport –
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Gathering Prayer

**Compassionate and Gracious God,
as a minister to young people, I journey with
many young people in their relationship with
You.**

**The problems and challenges they face are
very different than mine - They are young and
going through many changes. They have
pressure and stress that I never had as a
young person.**

**Please help me empathize with these young
people. Help me walk in their shoes, just as
Jesus did for each of us.**

**Help me be the listener and supporter they
need right now.**

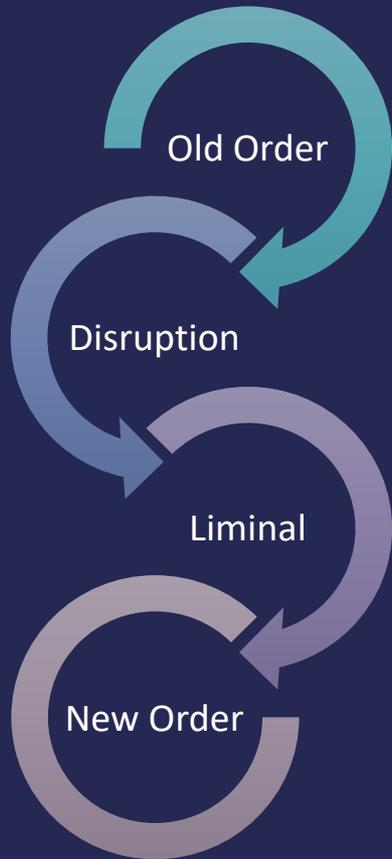
Help me love as you do.

We ask this In Your name, Amen.

SOME QUESTIONS

- **What is your primary Ministry role?**
- **In terms of Adolescent Faith Formation, what is your primary ministry methodology?**
- **In your parish, who are the primary “ministers” to youth?**
- **What would parents say is your primary purpose of your youth ministry? The pastor? The teens? You?**
- **Would you describe your ministry to youth as in a season of growth? Decline? Or stable or stagnant? Why?**

Where Are We Today?



Liminal space - comes from the Latin root, *limen*, which means “threshold.”

The liminal space is the “crossing over” space – a space where you have left something behind, and you are not yet fully in something else. ... It shakes us out of habit and invites us to change...it is an Invitation to surrender and to be transformed...

This is a GOOD THING!!

CHRISTUS VIVIT #67 – Pope Francis

Post Synodal Exhortation to Young People

The Synod on Young People, the Faith, and Vocational Discernment

That is how God the Father sees things; he knows how to cherish and nurture seeds of goodness sown in the hearts of the young. Each young person's heart should thus be considered "holy ground," a bearer of seeds of divine life, before which we must "take off our shoes" in order to draw near and enter more deeply into the Mystery."

Youth Ministry begins with a presence to the young which engenders the confidence and hope to ask questions. Attentive listening to the concerns of young people enable the youth ministers to understand more deeply the youth's needs and stage of growth. (A Vision of YM)



Relational Youth Ministry

If we follow the Emmaus Model, youth ministry “is the Church’s mission or reaching into the daily lives of modern young people and showing them the presence of God... it is a return to the way Jesus taught, putting ministry before teaching and people over institutions.”
(VYM)



Adolescents and Emerging Adults

Read the Research

Know who they are, what they need

How can the church respond?

Know the obstacles – many are not permanent

How are we equipping them?

A vibrant and effective youth ministry is one invites the young into the mission of God and considers their gift and voice as vital to that mission.

AGE RANGE 10-17 (US)

- Early Adolescents: 10 -13
 - Middle Adolescents: 13-17
 - Older Adolescents (a.k.a. Younger Adults): 18-24
-

GROWTH PHASES

- Early: abstract thought intellectual interests
 - Middle: meaning making moral reasoning
 - Older: gain firm sense of identity strategy for the future (delayed gratification)
-

AGE RANGE • USCCB: 18-39

- Collegiate age Young Adult: 18-24
- Young Adult: 25 – 39

COMMONALITIES • Transitions • First time experiences • Making their life their own • Making their faith their own A ministry of ministries

RENEWING THE VISION OF YOUTH MINISTRY •
Advocacy • Catechesis
• Community Life •
Evangelization • Justice and Service •
Leadership Development •
Pastoral Care • Prayer and Worship

EMPOWERED BY THE SPIRIT •
Appropriating the Faith • Forming the Christian Conscience •
Educating for Justice • Facilitating Personal Development •
Developing Leaders for the Future

SONS AND DAUGHTERS OF THE LIGHT •
Developing Personal Identity
• Developing Relationships •
Developing a Meaning of Work
• Developing a Spiritual Life

Who are we ministering to?

Who are our teens and emerging young adults right now?

What are they looking for and what do they need?

LONGINGS: Safety, hope, future, friends, family, connections

LOSSES: Connection, consistency, hope, socialization as we knew it, friends, and freedoms

MAKING MEANING: Bridge-building, making meaning from nothing to something quickly, casual connecting that can lead to more

BONDING: What brings people together – ritual, music, sharing stories, prayer, conversation, consistency, feeling welcome and seen

BELONGING: Being an insider, being wanted, noticed, listened to, included, needed and celebrated

They are growing!

THE ADOLESCENT BRAIN

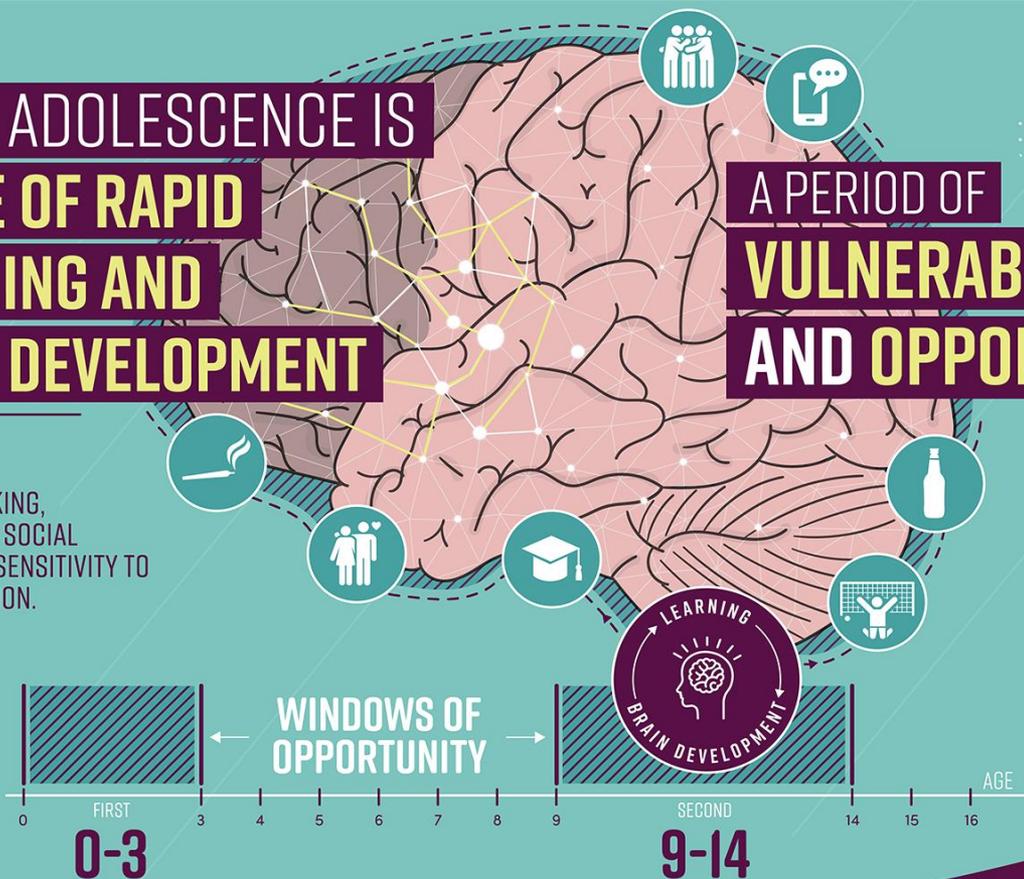
A SECOND WINDOW OF OPPORTUNITY

EARLY ADOLESCENCE IS
A TIME OF RAPID
LEARNING AND
BRAIN DEVELOPMENT

THESE INCLUDE
INCREASES IN
SENSATION-SEEKING,
MOTIVATION FOR SOCIAL
RELATIONS AND SENSITIVITY TO
SOCIAL EVALUATION.

A PERIOD OF
VULNERABILITY
AND OPPORTUNITY

PUBERTY INITIATES INTENSE
LEARNING & BRAIN
DEVELOPMENT, WHICH LEAD TO
STRUCTURAL REMODELING AND
NEURAL RE-CONFIGURATION OF
KEY BRAIN SYSTEMS. IT'S A
CRUCIAL TIME TO INVEST IN
ADOLESCENTS.



DOWNLOAD

"THE ADOLESCENT BRAIN:
A SECOND WINDOW OF OPPORTUNITY"

WWW.UNICEF-IRC.ORG/ADOLESCENT-BRAIN

Much of adolescence dependent on:

- **Economics; Social Location; Uniqueness**

Some commonalities

- **Differentiation and Tension with Parents/Adults**
 - **Who am I?**
 - **Helicopters, Lawnmowers, etc.**
- **Reconsideration of Faith**
 - **Who are you?**
 - **Where do I fit?**
 - **Incongruent with growing values.**
- **Digital Community**
 - **Not a distraction, an engagement.**
 - **No longer depend on gathering teens to fuel programming.**
- **Most Diverse Generation in History**
 - **By the middle of the decade, white will not be majority**
 - **Digital connections expose to the world.**



What are they trying to figure out?

Key tasks of adolescence

**Who Am I?
(Identity)**

**Who are you?
(Belonging)**

**Where do I fit?
(Purpose)**

Adolescents and Emerging Adults also seek points of connection

Listening, loving, and deep and meaningful experiences and relationships

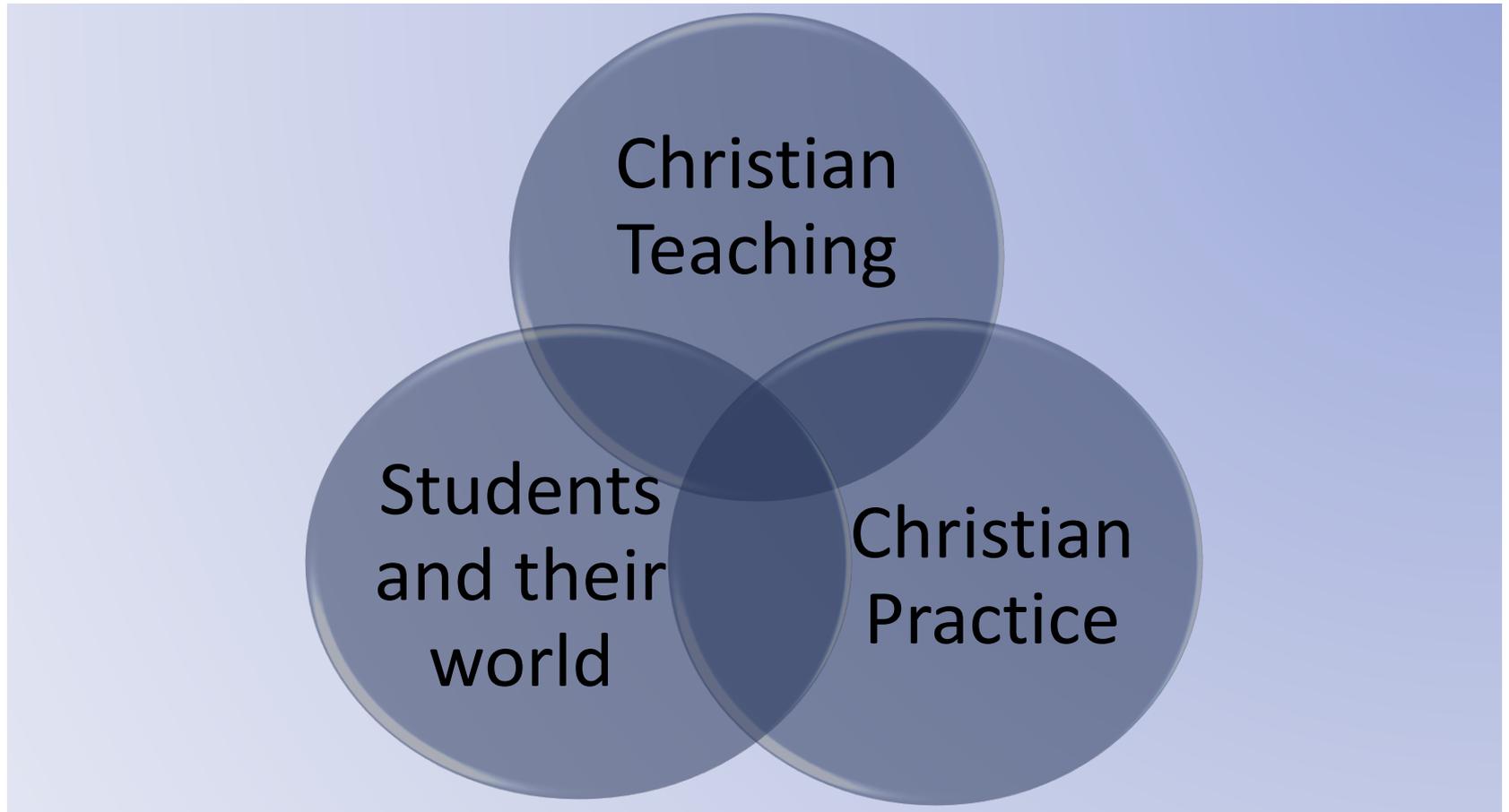
85% of people who are following Jesus made their faith decision BEFORE the age of 14

Conversely: The majority of those who lived as part of a faith community and LEFT...did so by the age of 18

What does this tell us?



A Vibrant and wholistic Youth Ministry combines all of these...



Consider... How does your ministry help answer these questions?

Who Am I? (Identity)

Create a safe space

- **Have you created an environment of curiosity?**
- **Do teens feel invested in the conversation?**
- **Will they be judged for the wrong opinion?**

Create a space in which they can worship Christ

- **Service**
- **Spiritual Practices**

Peer Relationships

- **Establish a time where teens gather together regularly with purpose.**
- **Hear teen voice clearly**
- **Be looking to move beyond...**

Who are You? (Belonging)

Questions to ask Ourselves

Do we allow for intergenerational relationships?

- Where do teens experience identifying forming experiences with all ages?
- Identify collaborative projects between youth and adults
- Create a culture of intergenerational reciprocity.
 - Where do teens learn from adults?
 - Where can teens lead?
- How does your ministry with teens serve the family?
- How are you equipping the family for relationships?
 - Ministry to the whole family
 - Faith forming tools
- Create a culture of inclusion
 - Is there room for the whole family in youth ministry?
 - When can families lead?

Where do I fit in? (Purpose)

Do we offer opportunities to serve? To lead? To experience vocation?

- Include opportunities for youth to give back to the congregation and the community
- Invite teens into the regular service life of the church
- Connect service with understanding of living out our faith
- Recognize calling.
- Provide training for student leaders with people in leadership.
- Give youth opportunities to lead.
- Offer a vocational framework for how God can use our gifts.
- Connect youth to people and opportunities that will deepen their understanding of vocation.

SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION



Quickly list all of the faith formation experiences available to your youth

Identify their characteristics.

Are they:

Peer, intergenerational, family

Experiential, digital, cognitive

What role do they play in forming a faith identity?

Who am I?

Who are you?

Where do I belong?

Are they ends in themselves or do they lead to a deepening of relationships and faith experiences?

When you plan ALWAYS BEGIN with WHY –
Begin with the end goal in mind
Goals for Maturing in Faith

Jesus

- Developing and sustaining a personal relationship and commitment to Jesus Christ

Discipleship

- Living as a disciple of Jesus Christ and making the Christian faith a way of life

Bible

- Reading and studying the Bible—its message, meaning, and application to life today

Teachings

- Learning the Christian story and foundational teachings of the Catholic faith and integrating its meaning into one's life

Praying

- Praying—together and by ourselves—and seeking spiritual growth through spiritual disciplines

More Goals for Maturing in Faith

Morality

- Living with moral integrity guided by Christian ethics and values

Serving Justice

- Living the Christian mission in the world—serving those in need, caring for God’s creation, and acting and advocating for justice and peace.

Worship

- Worshipping God with the community at Sunday worship, ritual celebrations, and the seasons of the church year

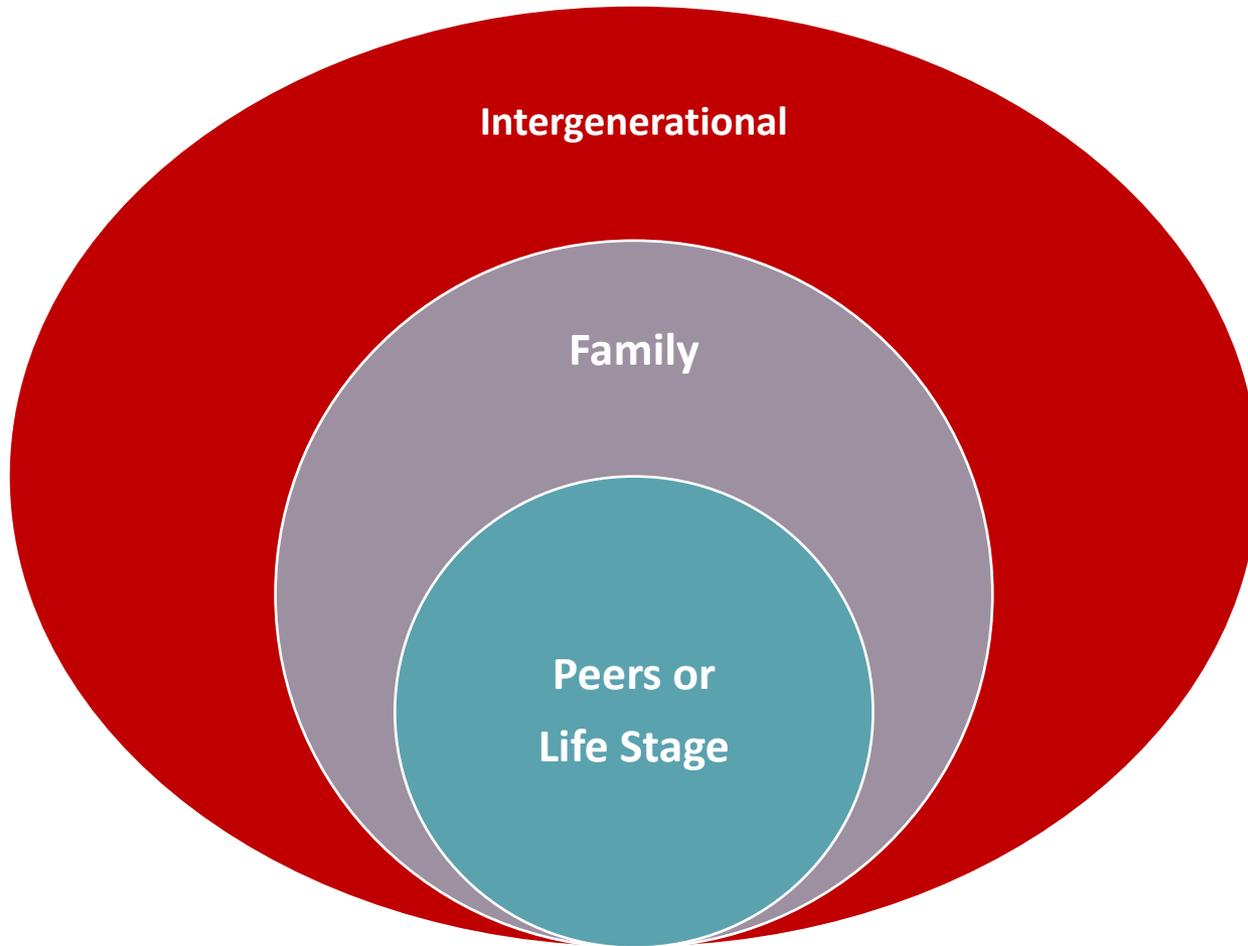
Engagement

- Being actively engaged in the life, ministries, and activities of the faith community

Gifts

- Practicing faith in Jesus Christ by using one’s gifts and talents within the Christian community and in the world

Embracing and creating an Ecosystem of Holistic Formation



Holistic Faith Formation – Example for A Teen

Intergenerational

- Participate in several celebrations of Church year feasts & seasons – ie Living Stations on Good Friday/ Bike Stations
- Join the community in a service service project
- Participate in a leadership role or church ministry -

Family

- Develop a faith practice each season: prayer, Bible reading, etc.
- Give them tools to Celebrate church year seasons at home
- Participate in two whole family programs at church
- Participate in two service projects as a family

Life Stage / Peer Specific

- Select one's participation in retreats, Youth Ministry Gatherings, Discipleship classes, service projects and mission trips, etc.

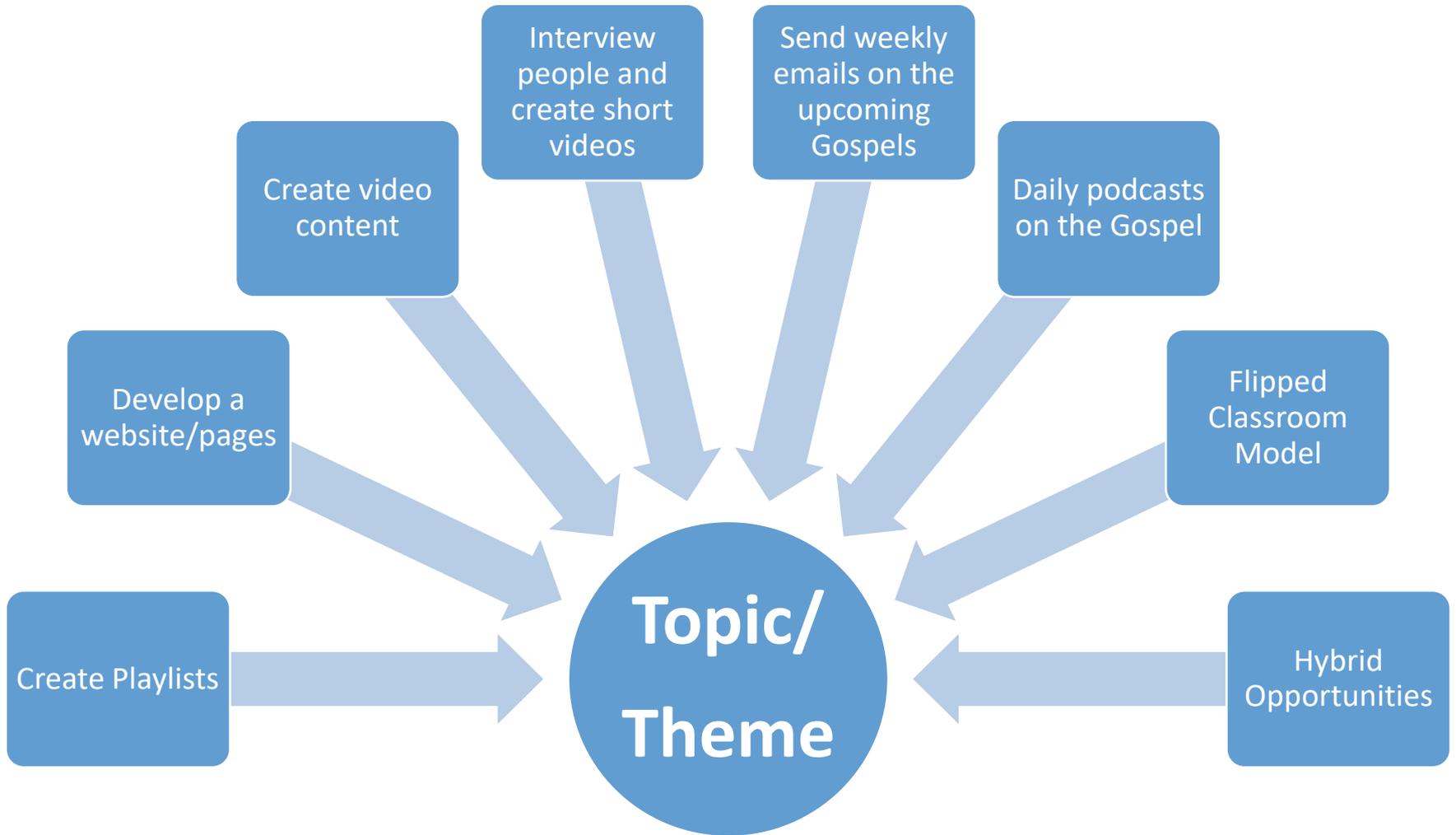
A 21st Century Approach

- **Network:** Creating an ecosystem of faith formation that address the life tasks, spiritual and religious needs, and interests of adolescents and their families by offering a variety of content, programs, activities, and resources in multiple settings, aided by the use of digital platforms, media, and methods.
- **Personalized:** Guiding adolescents in discerning their spiritual and religious journeys and life stage needs and giving them an active role in shaping their own personal trajectories of faith growth.
- **Digital:** Incorporating digital methods and media to enhance and expand the ways adolescents grow in faith.

Digital Programming

- ***Extend programming.*** Which current programs can you extend using online programming? Identify the kinds of content you would provide online to extend each program.
- ***Flip the program using online content.*** Is there high-quality digital content (audio, video, visual, print) available in an online format? Identify the programs you could flip. What will be available online? What will the gathered session look like when the content is online?
- ***Online programming.*** What types of programs can you create online? How can you deliver programming online (webinar, streaming presentation)? How can you develop an online resource center as a portal to curated content?
- ***Multiformat programming.*** Which programs are good candidates for multiformat programming? What would a design look like for one multiformat program?
- ***Prepare and follow-up programming.*** Which programs can you use a digital strategy to prepare people online for an event or program and then follow up with online content and activities? What would a design for one program look like?

Use Technology





New Approaches

Do not be afraid to try new things

Choosing Good resources

But remember – people over programs and books

They are a means to an end

FOCUS: should be on relational ministry – relationships that offer the opportunity for deeper connections, an openness to God and a place to encounter God through others.

We need to create a culture of welcome and belonging; we need to know the specific needs of young people and emerging adults

ASK – continuously and often

ASSESS – places, programs, communication, spaces and share with staff, volunteers and pastors

What we can do

Choose a great curriculum and resources

Create a great space for them

Surround that all with welcoming and loving adults

Offer consistency, constancy

Train and uplift the accompanying adults

The Accompanying community - The Art of Accompaniment

Help build solid relationships that are welcoming, deep, meaningful and that lead to fruitful discipleship

Focus on Faith Practices that lead to an encounter with Christ and a life of discipleship

Presence and Proximity

Let's Plan Something New!

Step 1. Select a Target Audience

Step 2. Add Current Faith Formation Activities

Develop a first draft of your one-year plan for your target audience - name current intergenerational, family, and age group activities

Review your first draft: What are the strengths in your approach to promoting your core values? What are the areas that need improvement?

Generate ideas for innovative faith formation programs, activities, and/or strategies to build upon strengths and address areas in need of improvement? Add these new ideas to your first draft.

Step 3: Incorporate Digital Media and Methods

Step 4: Create an Annual Plan with Seasonal Offerings

Time is greater than space... This principle enables us to work slowly but surely, without being obsessed with immediate results.

It helps us patiently to endure difficult and adverse situations, or inevitable changes in our plans. It invites us to accept the tension between fullness and limitation, and to give a priority to time...

*EVANGELII
GAUDIUM #223*

Blessing

Go knowing that God has called you into ministry for a time such as this.

Lean on all that God has gifted you with as you do this important work.

Remember, you are not alone. God is with you, Christ is beside you, and the Holy Spirit is alive in you.

Go in peace to continue God's work.

Amen.

Thank you!!

Resources

www.LifelongFaith.com

Go to “Adolescent Faith Formation” under
Webinar

Catzel@churchofpresentation.org

