Developing a Faith Formation Pathways & Playlists

John Roberto (Vibrant Faith)

Part 1. Developing a Pathways Model for Discipleship and Faith Growth

*Personalized learning is tailoring learning (faith formation) around each adult’s strengths, needs and interests— including enabling choice in what, how, when and where people learn (grow in faith and discipleship).*

**A Pathway is a process** for helping people discern where they are in their faith journey and to chart a path for faith growth—to get from where they are to a closer relationship with Jesus and a deeper practice of the Christian faith.. People should be able to clearly understand where they are in their faith journey and their next steps in faith growth. They don’t have to do everything, they just need to do the one next thing..

**A Pathway is life-centered**, reaching into every area of a person’s life: relationships, family life, life transitions, marriage, parenting, financial stewardship, spiritual formation, professional and work life, service to others, and more.

A **Pathway is holistic** incorporating the whole person: head, heart, and hands.

* *A way of the head* (inform) demands a discipleship of faith seeking understanding and belief with personal conviction, sustained by study, reflecting, discerning and deciding, all toward spiritual wisdom for life. This requires that we educate people to know, understand, and embrace with personal conviction Christianity’s core belief and values.
* *A way of the heart* (form) demands a discipleship of right relationships and right desires, community building, hospitality and inclusion, trust in God’s love, and prayer and worship. This requires that we foster growth in people’s identity through formation and the intentional socialization of Christian family and community.
* *A way of the hands* (transform) demands a discipleship of love, justice, peace-making, simplicity, integrity, healing, and repentance. This requires that we foster in people an openness to a lifelong journey of conversion toward holiness and fullness of life for themselves and for the life of the world.

(See *Will There Be Faith: A New Vision for Educating and Growing Disciples.* Thomas Groome, HarperOne, 2011, pages 111-119).

**A Pathway focuses on faith maturing**. The goal of a Pathway is to develop disciples and promote faith growth. A Pathway is created around the church’s vision of discipleship and mature faith—identifying characteristics of faith maturing that can be used for people to discern their faith journey and chart a path for growth.

Designing a Pathways Model for Discipleship & Faith Growth

1. Identify a target audience(s): young adults, midlife adults, mature adults, older adults.
2. Describe the life stage and religious-spiritual characteristics of your target audience.
3. Identify how you will use the Pathways model, for example:

* Sacraments/milestones: Marriage, Baptism, First Eucharist, Confirmation
* RCIA, evangelization, and new member processes
* Gathered adult faith formation programming
* Affinity groups
* On-ramps where people in your church might start the discipleship journey

1. Develop the content for the Pathways

* Life and faith characteristics of the target audience
* Characteristics of mature faith

1. Develop a ‘discernment continuum” that gives people a way to reflect on their current growth, e.g.,

* Inquiring---Getting Started---Making Progress---Going Deeper
* How true is each statement for you: 1= not true from me , 3=somewhat true for me, 5=very true for me

Characteristics of Faith Maturing

(Developed from research studies on faith maturing and the National Initiative on Adult Catechesis)

1. Sustaining a personal relationship with Jesus Christ supported through regular prayer, faith sharing and Bible reading.
2. Making the Christian faith a way of life by integrating their beliefs into the conversation, decisions, and actions of daily life.
3. Possessing a vital faith and being aware of God present and active in their own life, the lives of others, and the life of the world.
4. Seeking spiritual growth by actively pursuing questions of faith, learning what it means to believe in God, and what it’s like to be a disciple of Jesus Christ.
5. Living a life of service by caring for others, reaching out those in need, and addressing injustice in the world.
6. Sharing the Good News through words and actions, through Christian stewardship and working for peace, justice and human dignity.
7. Participating fully, consciously, actively and regularly in the ritual and worship life of the faith community.
8. Articulating the fundamental teachings of the Christian faith and demonstrating a commitment to learning and growing in this faith.
9. Exercising moral responsibility by applying Christian ethics, virtues, principles, values, and social teaching to moral decision-making, life situations, and in interactions with the larger culture.
10. Practicing faith in Jesus Christ, privately and publicly, through participation in the congregation’s worship, ministries, and leadership.
11. Discerning and using their gifts to actively belong to and participate in the life and mission of the Christian community.
12. Exploring God’s call to vocation through prayer, reflection, and discernment.
13. Possessing a positive spirit with loving and hopeful attitudes toward others and life, convinced that they can make the world a better place.

Background: Eight Marks of Mature Faith (Search Institute)

* Mark of Faith #1: Trusting and Believing
* Mark of Faith #2: Seeking Spiritual Growth
* Mark of Faith #3: Integrating Faith and Life
* Mark of Faith #4: Holding Life-Affirming Values
* Mark of Faith #5: Experiencing the Fruits of Faith
* Mark of Faith #6: Nurturing Faith in Community
* Mark of Faith #7: Advocating Social Change
* Mark of Faith #8: Acting and Serving

Part 2. Developing Playlists of Content & Experiences

*A learning playlist is a curated group of digital and local learning experiences and resources (e.g. videos, websites, books, games, articles, etc.). A playlist weaves together these learning experiences into a sequenced pathway centered on a common theme. Playlists create a rich network of experiences for learners.*

##### Pathway-Specific

* Content and experiences are selected to address each pathway, for example resources for Inquiring, Getting Started, Making Progress, Going Deeper

##### Settings

* Independent/Individualized
* Mentored
* Family / At Home
* Small Group
* Large Group
* Intergenerational /Whole Church Community
* Community and World

##### Multiple Intelligences

* Verbal-linguistic (word / book smart)
* Logical-mathematical (number / logic smart)
* Visual-spatial (art / picture smart),
* Bodily-kinesthetic (body / movement smart)
* Musical-rhythmic (music / sound smart)
* Naturalist (nature / environment smart)
* Interpersonal (people / group smart),
* Intrapersonal (self / introspection smart)

##### Methods

* Learn alone or with a group
* Read
* Write
* Engage in storytelling and create stories
* TV shows
* Feature films
* Watch or create a video
* Converse with others
* Create a media project or video
* View or create art
* View or take photographs
* Watch or engage in drama
* Listen to or create a podcast
* Listen to or create music
* Conduct a demonstration
* Experience games, simulations, video games
* Analyze or create a case study
* Develop an apprenticeship or internship
* Create an exhibit
* Experience prayer and rituals
* Take a field trip (e.g., churches, museums)
* Participate in a mission trip
* Engage in or create a service / action project
* Keep a journal
* Develop a mentor relationship
* Experience events in the congregation

##### Opportunities in the Church

* Sunday worship
* Sacramental celebrations
* Adult programming
* Intergenerational programming
* Service and justice ministries
* Pastoral care
* Church events

Part 3. Publishing Playlists

Publish the Playlists on a digital platform and use social media for connection, interaction, and sharing learning reflections. You can add the playlists to your existing church website or create a website just for adult faith formation and link it to your church website. Example of an adult faith formation website: [www.SeasonsofAdultFaith.com](http://www.SeasonsofAdultFaith.com)

Building a website is made much easier today by the availability of online website builders that provide predesigned website templates, drag-and-drop features to create webpages, and hosting for the website. Three popular website builders to explore are Weebly [(www.weebly.com](http://www.weebly.com/)), Wix ([www.wix.com](http://www.wix.com/)), and Squarespace ([www.squarespace.com](http://www.squarespace.com/)). All three have easy to use features and very reasonable subscription fees. For advanced users WordPress([http://wordpress.org](http://wordpress.org/)) provides thousands of predesigned templates, lots of customization features, and ready-to-use apps. WordPressdoes require an understanding of web design and some programming ability.

Here are several suggestions for web usability to keep in mind as you design (from Steve Krug’s excellent and easy-to-use book Don’t Make Me Think: A Common Sense Approach to Web Usability, Third Edition, Berkeley: New Riders, 2014).

1. Don’t make the user think—make web pages self-explanatory so the user hardly has any perceived effort to understand them, or example, clear choice of labels, clearly “clickable” items, simple search.
2. People generally don’t read web pages closely; they scan, so design for scanning rather than reading.
3. Create a clear visual hierarchy and menu system (main menu, submenus).
4. Make it very clear how to navigate the site, with clear “signposts” on all pages.
5. Omit needless words.
6. The home page needs the greatest design care to convey site identity and mission.
7. Promote user goodwill by making the typical tasks easy to do, make it easy to recover from errors, and avoid anything likely to irritate users.

Worksheet: Designing a Pathways Model for Adults

**1. Identify a target audience(s): young adults, midlife adults, mature adults, older adults.**

**2. Describe the life stage & religious-spiritual characteristics of your target audience.**



**3. Identify how you will use the Pathways model.** For example:

* sacraments/milestones: Marriage, Baptism, First Eucharist, Confirmation
* RCIA, evangelization, and new member processes
* gathered adult faith formation programming
* affinity groups
* on-ramps where people in your church might start the discipleship journey

**4. Develop the content of the Pathways model.** For example:

* Life and faith characteristics of the target audience,
* Characteristics of mature faith, etc.

**5. Develop a ‘discernment continuum” that gives people a way to reflect on their current growth**. For example:

* Inquiring---Getting Started---Making Progress---Going Deeper
* How true is each statement for you: 1= not true from me , 3=somewhat true for me, 5=very true for me

Example: Adult Faith Growth Pathway Model

We believe that growth in our relationship with God and in following Jesus (discipleship) is a lifelong process. We are constantly trying to grow deeper in our relationship with God and in living the Christian way of life each day. Our church is committed to helping you grow wherever you may be in your faith journey. We are committed to helping you live the Christian way of life everyday.

To help you discover areas for growth and to help us serve you better, please take a few minutes to complete the Adult Faith Growth Pathway. It will help you identify strengths and areas of growth in your own life. Use these statements to assess where you are honestly and prayerfully. Rate “How true each statement is for you” using the rating scale: 1 = not true from me , 3 = somewhat true for me, and 5 = very true for me.

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| --- | --- |
| 1. I am growing in a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 1. My faith shapes how I think and act each and every day. | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 1. I make the Christian faith a way of life by integrating my beliefs into the conversation, decisions, and actions of daily life. | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 1. I am aware of God present and active in my own life, the lives of others, and the life of the world. | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 1. I have a real sense that God is guiding me. | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 1. I seek spiritual growth by actively pursuing questions of faith, learning what it means to believe in God, and what it’s like to be a disciple of Jesus Christ. | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 1. I devote time to reading and studying the Bible. | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 1. I use the Bible to discover how I should think and act. | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 1. I pray to God and take quiet time to reflect and listen to God. | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 1. I am growing spiritually through spiritual practices such as contemplation, *lectio divina,* praying Scripture, daily Examen (reflection), and meditation. | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 1. I can articulate the fundamental teachings of the Christian faith. | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 1. I am growing in my understanding of the Christian faith—beliefs, traditions, and practices. |  |
| 1. I exercise moral responsibility by applying Christian ethics, virtues, and values to making moral decisions. | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 1. My faith helps me know right from wrong. |  |
| 1. I live a life of service by caring for others and reaching out those in need. | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 1. I am involved in ways to promote social justice and address injustice in the world. | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 1. I am involved in actions to care for creation. | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 1. I share the Good News of Jesus through my words and actions. | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 1. I participate actively and regularly in the worship life of the church community. | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 1. I participate in the life, ministries, and leadership of the church community. | 1 2 3 4 5 |

##### Ways I Can Grow

* Areas Where I Need to “Get Started” (look at the numbers 1 and 2)
* Areas Where I Need to “Grow” (look at the numbers 2 and 3)
* Areas Where I Want to “Going Deeper” (look at the numbers 4 and 5)

Additional Adult Faith Formation Topics

**Bible**

* Study and read the Old Testament: The Pentateuch –to discovers it’s message and meaning for life today
* Study and read the Old Testament: The Prophets – to discover the message and meaning of the prophets for our world today
* Study and pray the Psalms as a spiritual practice
* Study and read the four Gospels to discover the life, ministry, and message of Jesus and how it applies to our lives today
* Study and read the Letters of Paul to discover how his message to the first Christians applies to us today

**Relationship with Jesus**

* Discover how to begin (or begin again) my faith journey by exploring the heart of Christianity: Jesus, the Gospels, the church, and spiritual life
* Learn how to develop a relationship with Jesus Christ and explore what it means to be a disciple today in daily life – at home, at work, in the world

**Christian Faith and Tradition**

* Learn more about what we believe as \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ (religious tradition) today and why
* Explore how contemporary theologians present what it means to be a Christian in today’s world, and how that can inform our experience of the God in our daily lives
* Become familiar with the great teachings of Christianity (its creeds and doctrines)
* Learn the richness of the Church's tradition, explore the theological and cultural heritage in which faith is expressed, and gain perspective on contemporary events and trends through an understanding of church history
* Learn the Church's teaching on the nature and mission of the Church,.

**Worship**

* Understand, live, and bear witness to the paschal mystery, celebrated and communicated through the sacramental life of the Church.
* Acquire the spirituality, skills, and habits of full, conscious, and active participation in the liturgy, especially the eucharistic liturgy.
* Appreciate and appropriately participate in the Church's daily prayer, the Liturgy of the Hours, and learn to pray the psalms, "an essential and permanent element of the prayer of the Church."

**Prayer & Spirituality**

* Develop spiritual practices to sustain my life as a Christian
* Learn the stages of spiritual growth and experience spiritual practices to deepen my spiritual life
* Explore a spirituality for the second half of life and how to sustain and deepen the spiritual life after 50
* Learn and practice ways to pray and meditate as part of daily life
* Get away for a retreat experience to reflect and deepen my spiritual life
* Receive spiritual guidance from trained spiritual directors who will help me on my faith journey
* Explore the history and meaning of Christian worship and how to get the most out of Sunday morning worship.
* Become familiar with the diverse forms and expressions of Christian prayer.
* Experience and appreciate the richness of the Catholic ascetical-mystical tradition as it has taken form across the centuries in diverse historical and cultural settings.
* Develop a regular pattern of personal prayer and spiritual reflection, recognizing vocal prayer, meditation, and contemplative prayer as basic and fruitful practices in the life of a disciple of Jesus.

**Moral Living**

* Study the Ten Commandments, the Beatitudes, and the moral catechesis of the apostolic teachings, and live in accord with them.
* Study the Church's teaching on the dignity of the human person in its social doctrine, including its respect-life teaching
* Appreciate the dignity, destiny, freedom, and responsibility of the human person, together with the reality of sin and the power of God's grace to overcome it.
* Learn how to acquire and follow a well-formed conscience in personal and social life, clarifying current religious and moral questions in the light of faith, and cultivating a Christian discernment of the ethical implications of developments in the socio-cultural order.
* Live a lifestyle reflecting scriptural values of holiness, simplicity, and compassion.

**Service & Justice**

* Explore major social issues and the responsibility of Christians to transform the world
* Engage in projects and actions of service to those in need in our community and region
* Engage in projects and actions of service to those in need in our world
* Participate in mission trips to serve those in need in our country and around the world

**Life Issues**

* Discover my strengths as a person (gifts and talents) and how to utilize them to develop my “calling” in life
* Figure out how to balance the many commitments in my life: relationships, family, work, and more
* Develop life skills such as coping with stress, communicating effectively, managing my time, dealing with anger and sadness,
* handling conflict, and more
* Develop a financial “plan” by learning the skills and tools for creating savings, develop a personal/family budget, planning for the
* future (college, retirement), investing wisely, reducing debt, and more
* Discern my purpose in life as an adult: what am I committed to, where I am spending my time, what are my goals for the future,
* and more.
* Learn how to develop healthy relationships and let go of unhealthy ones
* Learn how to plan for life after retirement—relationships, finances, spiritual life, contributing to the church and the community, and
* more
* Join with a group of single adults for support, storytelling, and faith sharing
* Participate in a support group with those recovering from an addiction