

# Diocese of Albany “Reimagining Faith Formation Project”

## Faith Formation Profile: Intergenerational, Family, Age Groups, and Missional

**Instructions:** Please use the following information to create four profiles of your current faith formation program: intergenerational, family, age groups across the life cycle, and missional. Please create a written report of your profile using the sample templates included with each section of this Profile.

### Background: Faith Forming Processes

We can discern at least *eight essential processes of forming faith*, informed by Scripture, theology, research, and contemporary reflection, that promote faith growth and discipleship with age groups, families, and the whole faith community. The eight essential faith forming processes – involving knowledge and practices of the Christian faith – facilitate faith growth *and* make a significant difference in the lives of children, youth, adults, and families. These eight faith forming processes are central to Christian lifelong faith formation. They provide a foundation to address the challenge of religious transmission from generation to generation, and promote lifelong growth in faith and discipleship. The eight processes include:

1. **Caring Relationships.** Growing in faith and discipleship through caring relationships across generations and in a life-giving spiritual community of faith, hope, and love – in the parish and family.
2. **Celebrating the Liturgical Seasons.** Growing in faith and discipleship by experiencing the feasts and seasons of the church year as they tell the story of faith through the year in an organic and natural sequence of faith learning.
3. **Celebrating Rituals and Milestones.** Growing in faith and discipleship by celebrating rituals, sacraments, and milestones that provide a way to experience God’s love through significant moments in one’s life journey and faith journey .
4. **Reading the Bible.** Growing in faith and discipleship by encountering God in the Bible, and by studying and interpreting the Bible – its message, its meaning, and its application to life today.
5. **Learning the Christian Tradition and Applying It to Life.** Growing in faith and discipleship by learning the content of the tradition, reflecting upon that content, integrating it into one’s faith life, applying it to life today, and living its meaning in the world.
6. **Praying, Devotions, and Spiritual Formation.** Growing in faith and discipleship through personal and communal prayer, and being formed by the spiritual disciplines.
7. **Serving and Justice.** Growing in faith and discipleship by living the Christian mission in the world – engaging in service to those in need, care for God’s creation, and action and advocacy for justice.
8. **Worshipping God.** Growing in faith and discipleship by worshipping God with the community of faith – praising God; giving thanks for God’s creative and redemptive work in the world; bringing our human joys and dilemmas to God; experiencing God’s living presence through Scripture, preaching, and Eucharist; and being sent forth on mission.

## Part 1. Intergenerational Church Life and Events Profile

Central to 21<sup>st</sup> century faith formation is guided participation in a community of practice. Joyce Mercer makes the key point that this is not just “doing.” It includes fully and actively practicing our faith in everyday life and making theological meaning out of the stuff of everyday life. Theological themes and faith practices are embedded in the experience of church life throughout the year and are an integral element of the curriculum. For example:

- *The feasts and seasons of the church year* provide a natural rhythm and calendar to the curriculum: Advent and Christmas Seasons, Epiphany, Baptism of the Lord, Call of the Disciples, Ash Wednesday, Lenten Season, Holy Week, Easter, Easter Season, Pentecost, All Saints and All Souls, and remembrances of saints and holy people throughout the year.
- The *Catholic Lectionary* provides a rich curriculum for the whole community with its three-year cycle of weekly readings from the Old Testament, Psalms, Epistles, and Gospels built around the seasons of the church year.
- *Ritual, milestone, and sacramental celebrations* provide events rich in theological meaning and faith practice that celebrate the faith journey throughout life: baptism, confirmation, first Bible, first communion, graduation, marriage, funerals, and much more.
- *Acts of service and justice* – locally and globally – provide a focus on mission to the world and put in action biblical and church teachings on service, justice, care for the earth.

When the experiences of church life are the focus of intergenerational and age group learning, we have the opportunity to *prepare* people – with the appropriate knowledge and practices – for participation in the central events of church life and the Christian faith, and to *guide* their *participation* and *reflection* upon those events.

Use the following template to develop a profile of the events and activities of the parish.

Faith Forming Processes	Church Life and Events
Caring Relationships	
Celebrating the Liturgical Seasons	
Celebrating Rituals and Milestones	
Learning the Christian Tradition	
Praying and Spiritual Formation	
Reading the Bible	
Serving People in Need, Working for Justice, Caring for Creation	
Worshipping God	

## Part 2. Family Faith Formation Profile

Parishes equip families to become centers of learning and faith growth at home by nurturing family faith and developing the faith life of parents and grandparents, strengthening family life by focusing on family asset-building, and developing the knowledge, skills, and confidence of parents (and grandparents) for parenting. There are five elements in a curriculum for the home:

1. *Nurturing family faith at home* by utilizing the eight faith forming processes as the primary content – knowledge, experiences, practices, and resources – developed from events of church life, as well as specially designed family resources.
2. *Building strong families* by developing family assets: 1) *nurturing relationships* (positive communication, affection, emotional openness, encouragement for pursuing talents and interests), 2) *establishing routines* (family meals, shared activities, meaningful traditions – holidays, rituals, celebrations, dependability), 3) *maintaining expectations* (openness about tough topics, fair rules, defined boundaries, clear expectations, contributions to family), 4) *adapting to challenges* (management of daily commitments, adaptability problem-solving, democratic decision-making), and 5) *connecting to the community* (neighborhood cohesion, relationship with others in the community, participating in enriching activities, supportive resources in the community). (*The American Family Asset Study*, Search Institute)
3. *Parent faith formation* through participation in intergenerational faith formation at church and church life, and through targeted programs of theological and biblical formation for parents and grandparents.
4. *Parenting for faith growth training* to equip parents with knowledge, skills, and resources to develop the faith life of their children and practice faith at home as a family.
5. *Parenting education* that develops the knowledge, skills, and confidence of parents (and grandparents) for parenting children and teens, with a special focus on parent practices such as love and affection, stress management, relationship skills, respect, promoting and modeling learning, life skills, behavior management, healthy lifestyle, supporting spiritual and religious development and practice, and protection and safety.

Use the following template to develop a profile of current family programming.

Content Areas	Programs, Activities, & Resources for Home
Faith Practices <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Celebrating the liturgical seasons</li> <li>• Celebrating rituals and milestones</li> <li>• Learning the Christian tradition</li> <li>• Praying</li> <li>• Reading the Bible</li> <li>• Serving, working for justice, caring for creation</li> </ul>	
Family Assets <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Nurturing relationships</li> <li>• Establishing routines</li> <li>• Maintaining expectations</li> <li>• Adapting to challenges</li> <li>• Connecting to the community</li> </ul>	
Parent Faith Formation	
Parenting for Faith Growth Training	
Parenting Education	

### Part 3. Age Group & Generational Faith Formation Profile

Use the following template to develop a profile of age group/generational programming and the connection of age group programming to the life and events of the church.

Faith Forming Processes	Age Group/ Generational Programming	Connection to Church Life and Events
<b>Caring Relationships:</b> intergenerational and peer relationships, supportive communities		
<b>Celebrating the Liturgical Seasons:</b> feasts and seasons of the church year		
<b>Celebrating Rituals and Milestones:</b> celebrating rituals, sacraments, and milestones at significant moments in one’s life journey and faith journey		
<b>Reading the Bible:</b> studying and interpreting the Bible – its message, its meaning, and its application to life today		
<b>Learning the Christian Tradition:</b> learning the content of the tradition (Trinity, Jesus, church, beliefs, morality and ethics), reflecting upon that content, integrating it into one’s faith life, applying it to life today, and living its meaning in the world		
<b>Praying, Devotions, and Spiritual Formation:</b> personal and communal prayer; being formed by the spiritual disciplines		
<b>Serving and Justice:</b> living the Christian mission in the world – engaging in service to those in need, care for God’s creation, and action and advocacy for justice		
<b>Worshipping God with the Faith Community:</b> experiencing God’s living presence through Scripture, preaching, and Eucharist; and being sent forth on mission		

## Part 4. Missional Faith Formation Profile

The mission curriculum includes two types of “content.” The first involves expanding and extending the church’s presence through outreach, connection, relationship building, and engagement with people where they live – engaging with people around their life situation (needs, interests, concerns), their quest for meaning and purpose in life, their drive to make a difference in world and in lives of others, and more. This first type of missional curriculum provides a safe environment for people to explore life-centered and spiritual-centered activities. (See the missional section in Chapter Two for more ideas.)

The second type of curriculum content provides pathways for people to consider or reconsider the Christian faith, to encounter Jesus and the Good News, and to live as disciples in a supportive faith community. Missional faith formation guides people as they move from discovery to exploration to commitment. The catechumenal process with its ritual stages and formational content – participation in the life of the faith community, education in Scripture and the Christian tradition, apprenticeship in the Christian life, intimate connection with the liturgy and rituals of the church, moral formation, development of a life of prayer, and engagement in actions of justice and service. Programs like *The Alpha Course* covers the basics of Christianity in a multi-session course in a supportive small group environment.

Use the following template to develop a profile of current missional activities in two categories: outreach and pathways

<b>Target Audience</b>	<b>Expanding and Extending the Church’s Presence through Outreach in the Community</b>	<b>Pathways to Jesus, Discipleship, and the Christian Faith</b>