

Families Are the Future of the Church

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Faith Forming Processes in the Congregation

1. Caring relationships
2. Celebrating the liturgical seasons
3. Celebrating rituals and milestones
4. Learning the Christian tradition and applying it to life today
5. Praying, devotions, and spiritual formation
6. Reading the Bible
7. Serving people in need, working for justice, and caring for creation
8. Worshipping with the faith community

Faith Forming Processes in the Family

1. *Faith Life*: Parents and grandparents (and family members) are growing in Christian faith and practicing a vital and informed Christian faith.
2. *Socialization*: Parents and grandparents are modeling the Christian faith and practice, and providing religious socialization for children and teens.
3. *Participation*: Families are participating in congregational worship and community life together.
4. *Faith Practices*: Families are engaging in faith practices that nurture faith and develops active discipleship, including family devotions, family conversations, prayer, Bible reading, shared meals (especially Sunday meals and holidays), holiday and holyday celebration, moral instruction and guidance, reliance on God for support and guidance, forgiveness and healing, and service to those in need.
5. *Family Life Assets*: Families are developing a healthy and strong family life built on a) nurturing relationships and family harmony—positive communication, affection, respect and love, emotional openness; b) establishing routines—family meals, shared activities, meaningful traditions, dependability; c) maintaining expectations—openness about tough topics, fair rules, defined boundaries, clear expectations; d) adapting to challenges—management of daily commitments, problem-solving, democratic decision-making; and e) connecting to the community. (Family Assets, Search Institute)

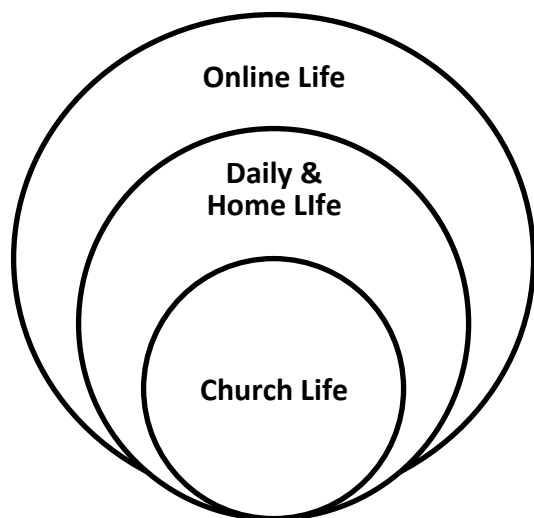
6. *Parenting Style*: Parents are practicing a warm, supportive, affirming, and authoritative parenting style.

Faith Forming Processes Online

We live in a world with an abundance of high quality religious and spiritual digital content available in a variety of forms: online, apps, e-books, video, and much more. In the digital age, congregations can develop online digital platforms (websites) to extend and deepen intergenerational experiences by utilizing these digital faith formation resources and by fostering social connections among people through social media. Congregations now have a way to connect with people and resource them in the daily lives, 24x7x365. For example, a congregation can extend Sunday worship through the week using a variety of digital content that deepens the understanding and practice of the Sunday readings, sermon, and church year season; and provides prayer, devotions, rituals. a video of the sermon with a study guide, service/action ideas, conversation activities, and more.

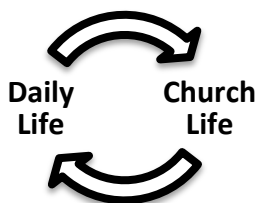
Imagine an online faith formation center where people of all ages and generations can find (and link to) high quality religious content and experiences—worship, prayer, spiritual practices, Bible study, Christian beliefs and traditions, rituals and milestones, music, and so much more and that connects to the experiences they are having in the congregation. Imagine a parent resource center with the best knowledge, practices, and tools for parenting in print, audio, and video; links to quality parent websites, and a parent blog and/or Facebook page to share their experiences and insights. Imagine an online justice and service center that connects with congregational justice and service projects where people of all ages can learn about social issues, explore biblical and Christian teaching on justice, find ways to continue acting together through local and global projects and organizations; and then share their experiences using a blog or social media. Imagine an online prayer and spirituality center where people can access daily prayer experiences, offer prayer intentions, pray for others, learn about spiritual practices, download prayer activities for the home, and so much more.

Connecting Church Life, Daily Life, and Online Life



Online Life

Insights, Experiences, and Activities



Weave Faith into Daily Life

- Through the day: meal times, car times, morning and bedtime, exits and entries, family sharing times
- Through the year: church year seasons, rituals and celebrations
- Through the lifecycle: milestones and rites of passage
- Through key family moments – good times and hard times, times of joy and sorrow
- Through life issues and life skills: parenting, decision-making, financial planning, communication, and more

Strategies

1. Extend church events into daily life

- Sunday worship
- Church year feasts and seasons
- Sacrament and ritual celebrations
- Children, teen, or family programming
- VBS and summer camp
- Mission trips and service projects
- Retreat experiences



2. Create new formats and delivery methods for existing programs

- Online faith formation resource center with content and experiences
- Small Groups – in a variety of locations
- Blended Programs – part online, part physical location (e.g., Flipped Classroom)
- Online Courses: independent or small group
- Webinars: live or available in the resource center
- Video-based Programs

3. Design new programming online

Curating Faith Formation

- Trusted Sources
- Appropriate to the life stage
- Solid biblical and theological content
- Solid liturgical season content
- Enriching, do-able, short, repeatable activities that weave into daily life
- Enjoyable!

Personalizing Faith Formation

Create expectations for family participation in learning and church life by providing a yearly growth plan with a variety of options for learning, living, and experiencing the Christian faith as a family. For example:

- Sunday worship
- Church year feasts and seasons
- Learning programs
- Service/mission projects
- Retreat experience
- Family faith practices at home, e.g. reading the Bible, praying, rituals, and more