e-Formation 2016
FAMILIES AT THE CENTER OF
FAITH FORMATION
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ReimagineFaithFormation.com (Family)
LifelongFaith.com (Family Symposium, Presentations)
CONTEXTUALIZING OUR STRATEGIES

- Diversity of Family Forms: no dominant family form in U.S.
- Variety of Spiritual-Religious Identities:
  
  Engaged--------Occasionals--------Spirituals--------Unaffiliated

- Generational Parenting Approaches
  
  - Gen X parents—tangible practices that will keep their children safe, reasonably happy, well-behaved, and ready to take on life’s challenges. *Protective Parenting*
  
  - Millennial parents—a more democratic approach to family management, encouraging their children to be open-minded, empathetic, and questioning—and teaching them to be themselves and try new things. *Responsive Parenting*

- Diversity of Ethnicities: distinctive ethnic identities, histories, and religious traditions and practices
FAMILIES AT THE CENTER

- Seeing the home as the essential & foundational environment for faith nurture, faith practice, and the healthy development of young people.
- Building faith formation around the lives of the today’s families and parents, rather than having the congregation prescribe the programs and activities that families will participate in.

RESEARCH STUDIES
NAT’L STUDY ON YOUTH & RELIGION

85% chance of being Highly Religious as an emerging adult if you were in the top 25% on the scales of:
1. parental religion
2. prayer
3. importance of faith
4. Scripture reading

FAMILIES & FAITH STUDY
TRANSFORMING OUR NARRATIVE

**From an emphasis on . . .**
1. Programs
2. Parenting as a strategy
3. Pathologizing or idealizing families
4. “Passing on” the faith
5. Serving families
6. Congregation-centered ministries

**Toward an emphasis on . . .**
1. Relationships
2. Parenting as a relationship
3. Tapping their strengths and resilience
4. “Living into” the faith
5. Empowering families
6. Community-centered ministries

EIGHT STRATEGIES – FAMILIES @ THE CENTER OF FAITH FORMATION

1. Discovering God in Everyday Life
2. Forming Faith at Home through the Life Cycle
3. Forming Faith through Milestones
4. Celebrating Seasonal Events through the Year
5. Encountering God in the Bible through the Year
6. Connecting Families Intergenerationally
7. Developing a Strong Family Life
8. Empowering Parents and Grandparents
Families at the Center of Faith Formation

A Network of Family Faith Formation Experiences, Programs, Activities & Resources
FAMILY FAITH FORMATION NETWORK

A network of relationships, content, experiences, & resources. . . .

1. **Variety** of content, methods, formats, and delivery systems to address the diverse life tasks and situations, needs and interests, and spiritual and faith journeys of people.
2. **Responsive** to the diverse religious and spiritual needs of people today—from the spiritually committed to the spiritual but not religious and the unaffiliated.
3. **Multiple Environments**: self-directed, mentored, at home, in small groups, in large groups, church-wide, in the community, and in the world.

4. **Digitally-Enabled & Digitally-Connected**

- Fully Online Faith Formation
- Mostly Online with Regular Interaction in Gathered Sessions
- Online Faith Formation & Gathered Sessions (Flipped Classroom)
- Gathered Program with Online Components beyond the Program
- Gathered Program with Supportive Online Content
THREE SEASONS OF PROGRAMMING

Fall Season:
Sept 1 – Jan 1

Winter/Spring Season:
Jan 1 – May 1

Summer Season:
May 1 – Sept 1

CURATING & CREATING CONTENT

**Current Roles**
- **Developing** religious content
- **Designing** programming
- **Managing** programming
- **Teaching/Facilitating** programming

**Emerging Roles**
- **Designing** faith forming environments—**architecture**
- **Designing Digital Platforms** for faith forming content
- **Curating** faith forming content & experiences
Everyday experiences are the core resources of spiritual narratives, even for those affiliated with traditional religious institutions.


“People feel most connected to whatever they understand as God, the divine, a Higher Power when they’re deeply engaged in the fabric of everyday life, spending time with family, with friends, preparing and sharing food, enjoying their pets.”

#1. DISCOVERING GOD IN EVERYDAY LIFE

Spiritually meaningfully practices
1. enjoying time with family
2. enjoying time with friends
3. enjoying time with pets or other animals
4. preparing and/or sharing food/meals
5. praying
6. enjoying nature
7. listing to/playing music
8. enjoying/creating art
9. physical activity/sports
10. yoga and meditation

On the list of 25 items, the last three items were reading/studying scripture, attending worship, and attending a non-worship activity, event or meeting at church.
# 1. DISCOVERING GOD IN EVERYDAY LIFE

Spirituality “may be the name for a longing for more meaning, more feeling, more connection, more life. When I hear people talk about spirituality, that seems to be what they are describing. They know there is more to life than what meets the eye. They have drawn close to this ‘More’ in nature, in love, in art, in grief. They would be happy for someone to teach them how to spend more time in the presence of this deeper reality. . . .”

“. . . . the last place most people look is right under their feet, in the everyday activities accidents, and encounters in their lives. . . . the reason so many of us cannot see the red X that marks the spot is because we are standing on it”.

. . . . To make bread or love, to dig in the earth, to feed an animal or cook for a stranger—these activities require no extensive commentary, no lucid theology. All they require is someone willing to bend, reach, chop, stir. Most of these tasks are so full of pleasure that there is no need to complicate things by calling them holy. And yet these are the same activities that change lives, sometimes all at once and sometimes more slowly, the way dripping water changes stone. In a world where faith is often construed as a way of thinking, bodily practices remind the willing that faith is a way of life.”
DISCOVERING GOD IN EVERYDAY LIFE

1. **Embed and Equip**
   - Worship, learning, sacraments, retreats, and more

2. **Create and Sponsor**
   - Family/intergenerational programs
   - Small group experiences

3. **Equip and Resource**
   - Print, audio, and video resources for discovering God and for living practices in everyday life

4. **Connect and Engage**
   - New settings for spiritual conversations

#2. FORMING FAITH AT HOME

**A Household Curriculum**

1. **Content:** Eight Faith Forming Processes

2. **Settings:** Home, Intergenerational, Church Life, Parents
   - Home: What are families doing to grow in faith and discipleship in each of the eight faith forming processes?
   - Intergenerational: How are families connected to the other generations at church?
   - Church: How are congregations empowering, resourcing, and supporting families to grow as disciples & practice their faith?
   - Parents: How are congregations empowering, resourcing, and supporting parents as faith formers?
2. FAITH FORMING AT HOME

3. Developmentally-Appropriate: Content accommodated to the needs and interests of each stage and to the way young people think and assimilate information and values at each life stage.
   - young children (0-5)
   - older children (6-10)
   - young adults (11-14)
   - older adolescents (15-18)
   - emerging adults (19-29)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stage:</th>
<th>Home</th>
<th>Intergenerational</th>
<th>Church</th>
<th>Parents</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Caring Relationships</td>
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<td>Celebrating Seasons</td>
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<td>Celebrating Rituals &amp; Milestones</td>
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<td>Learning the Christian Tradition</td>
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<td>Praying &amp; Spiritual Formation</td>
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<td>Reading the Bible</td>
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<td>Serving/Working for Justice</td>
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<td>Worshipping God Together</td>
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#3. FORMING FAITH THRU MILESTONES

1. a ritual celebration or a blessing marking the milestone with the whole church community
2. a home ritual celebration or blessing marking the milestone
3. a learning program, often for the whole family or intergenerational, that prepares the individual and the whole family for the milestone and for faith practice at home
4. a tangible, visible reminder or symbol of the occasion being marked
5. resources to support continuing faith growth and practice after the milestone
#3. FAMILY MILESTONES: BAPTISM

**Church**
- Mentors/Coaches
- Parent preparation
- Family gathering
- Ritual
- Intergenerational connection
- Celebration of Baptism
- Reunion
- Baptismal anniversaries

**Home**
- Caring conversations and storytelling
- Celebrating rituals
- Learning
- Praying
- Reading the Bible
- Serving
- Worshipping together

#4. CELEBRATING SEASONS

**Church Year**
- Advent
- Christmas
- Epiphany
- Ash Wednesday
- Lent
- Holy Week
- Easter
- Pentecost
- St. Francis Day—Blessing the Animals (October 4)
- All Saints and Souls (Nov 1-2)

**Calendar Year**
- New Year’s Eve and Day
- Martin Luther King Jr. Day
- Valentine’s Day
- St. Patrick’s Day
- Earth Day
- Mother’s Day
- Memorial Day
- Father’s Day
- July 4 – Independence Day
- Labor Day
- Start of School
- Halloween
- Thanksgiving
### EXAMPLE: 40-DAY LENT CURRICULUM

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Church Life</th>
<th>Daily &amp; Home Life</th>
<th>Online Life</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| • Ash Wednesday  
  • Lenten Sunday liturgies  
  • Stations of the Cross  
  • Lenten prayer  
  • Lenten retreat  
  • Lenten service  
  • Lenten soup suppers | • Fasting  
  • Praying  
  • Service/Almsgiving  
  • Lectionary reflection  
  • Family activities | • Lenten learning resources  
  • Lenten calendar  
  • Daily Lenten prayer  
  • Weekly table prayer  
  • Video resources  
  • Online retreat experience |

### EXAMPLE: EARTH DAY

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Community</th>
<th>Church</th>
<th>Home</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| • Community cleanup  
  • Planting a community garden  
  • All ages workshop on caring for creation  
  • Story time at the library on environmental awareness | • Ecumenical prayer service  
  • Intergenerational program on theology of caring for creation  
  • Church audit  
  • Global project for whole community | • Recycling activities  
  • Planting a family garden  
  • Meal time creation prayer  
  • Daily Bible verses for April  
  • Children’s activities  
  • Storybooks and videos  
  • Home audit |
#5. ENCOUNTERING GOD IN THE BIBLE THROUGH THE YEAR

1. Scripture in Sunday Worship
   - Lectionary
   - Sermon Series

2. Exploring the Bible—Family or Intergenerational Programs
   - A Tour of the Old Testament
   - A Tour of the Gospels
   - Walking with Jesus
   - Journeys of Paul

#5. ENCOUNTERING GOD IN THE BIBLE

Scripture in Sunday Worship
Intergenerational & Home Faith Formation

September: 24th Sunday in Ordinary Time
October: 28th Sunday in Ordinary Time
November: 32nd Sunday in Ordinary Time
December: 2nd Sunday of Advent
January: Baptism of the Lord Sunday
February: 1st Sunday of Lent
March: Palm Sunday
April: 4th Sunday of Easter
May: Holy Trinity Sunday
#5. ENCOUNTERING GOD IN THE BIBLE

- Going Deeper
- Family Conversation
- Children's Bible Activities
- Table Ritual
- Prayer/Devotion
- Daily Bible Verses
- Serving/Action Ideas

#6. CONNECTING FAMILIES INTERGENERATIONALLY

1. Becoming Intentionally Intergenerational
   - Identify ways families are current connected and engaged intergenerationally in the faith community
   - Develop ways to strengthen IG connection and engagement
   - Create new ways to connect and engage families

2. Intergenerational and Family Learning

3. Intergenerational Family Service
#6. CONNECTING FAMILIES INTERGENERATIONALLY: LEARNING

1. Bible Study
2. Family Time
3. Worship Skills
4. Recreation

GenOn Ministries
www.genonministries.org
#6. CONNECTING FAMILIES INTERGENERATIONALLY: LEARNING

- A flexible, relaxed arrival time with drinks and snacks
- Creative exploration of a Bible story/theme through creative experiences for people of different learning styles and of all ages. Children and adults are not separated and are encouraged to explore the story/theme together
- A short but explicit time of worship with story, music and prayers that builds on the creative exploration.
- A generous welcome and hospitality is expressed through a delicious home-cooked, sit-down meal with others

#6. CONNECTING FAMILIES INTERGENERATIONALLY: @ HOME
#7. DEVELOPING A STRONG FAMILY LIFE

Family faith formation strengthens *family life* by developing the assets/strengths and skills for healthy family life and providing a supportive context for forming faith, living the Christian faith, and promoting positive development in children and youth.

- Developing family assets or strengths
- Promoting character strengths in young people through developmental relationships.

## Family Assets – Search Institute

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nurturing RELATIONSHIPS</th>
<th>Establishing ROUTINES</th>
<th>Maintaining EXPECTATIONS</th>
<th>Adapting to CHALLENGES</th>
<th>Connecting to COMMUNITY</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Positive communication</td>
<td>• Family meals</td>
<td>• Openness about tough topics</td>
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<td>• Affection</td>
<td>• Shared activities</td>
<td>• Fair rules</td>
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<td>• Emotional openness</td>
<td>• Meaningful traditions</td>
<td>• Defined boundaries</td>
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<td>• Support for sparks</td>
<td>• Dependability</td>
<td>• Clear expectations</td>
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<td>• Contributions to family</td>
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<td>• Management of daily commitments</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Adaptability</td>
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<td>• Problem solving</td>
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<td>• Democratic decision making</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Relationships with others</td>
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<td>• Enriching activities</td>
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<td>• Supportive resources</td>
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#7. DEVELOPING A STRONG FAMILY LIFE

Create a Family Life Plan for Each Life Cycle Stage

Using the Family Assets and Developmental Relationships, curate and create developmentally-appropriate programs, activities, and resources for families at each stage.

1. Family website
2. Parent programs
3. Family programs
4. Family mentors
5. Life cycle support groups for parents
#7. DEVELOPING A STRONG FAMILY LIFE

Parent Program (Keep Connected)

Family Programming
- Communicating effectively
- Establishing family routines: family meals, shared activities, daily commitments
- Celebrating meaningful traditions and rituals
- Discussing tough topics
- Making decisions and solving problems as a family
- Learning how to build strong relationships and express care for each other
- Developing the strengths & potential of children & youth
- Supporting each other: encouraging and praising, giving feedback, standing up for each other
- Treating each with respect and dignity
#8. EMPOWERING PARENTS & GRANDPARENTS

**Twin Tasks**
1. Promoting the faith growth of parents
2. Developing the faith forming skills of parents

**Content**
- Theological and spiritual formation of parents
- Skills for parenting for faith growth
- Knowledge and skills for parenting

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#8. EMPOWERING PARENTS & GRANDPARENTS

**Guides for Developing Parent Programming**
1. Address diverse spiritual-religious identities of parents.
2. Have parents practice new skills with their own children during program sessions.
3. Give parents a plan for parenting.
   - Give them a plan for parenting proactively.
   - Show them how it works.
   - Tell them what to do today.
#8. EMPOWERING PARENTS & GRANDPARENTS

Guides for Developing Parent Programming

4. Address the levels of partnership with parents.
   - Aware
   - Involved
   - Engaged
   - Invested

5. Design programs that engage parents in the learning experience.

6. Use a variety of environments & methods to engage all parents.

7. Use online platforms and digitally enabled strategies.

#8. EMPOWERING PARENTS & GRANDPARENTS

Ideas for Parent Programming

1. Parent website
2. Parent programs—a progression of workshops, webinars, and/or courses for each stage of the lifecycle
3. Laboratory experiences—immersion/hands-on experiences through church events or family/intergenerational programs
4. Parent mentors
5. Lifecycle support groups for parents
6. A parent catechumenate—around key milestone experiences and “moments of return”
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