

# Mapping the Decisions for Faith Formation 2020-21

One of the biggest decisions facing every church is what approach to take to faith formation in 2020-21? Can we meet at church (or in physical locations) as we have done in the past or do we need a new plan? The top priority should be the safety and security of our children, teens, adults, and families. Every decision should flow from putting people (not the program) at the center of our decision-making.

## What is the “situation on the ground” in your community?

Consider the following:

- How many confirmed COVID-19 cases do you currently have in your state or county (the positivity rate)? Is this trending higher, lower or plateauing?
- How many COVID-19 hospitalizations do you currently have in your state or county? Is this trending higher, lower or plateauing?
- What decisions have the local public schools made for opening: On campus? Modified schedule? Start on campus move to online? Start online and then move to on campus? Online learning?

(To stay current The Johns Hopkins University Coronavirus Resource Center aggregates all of COVID-19 data daily: <https://coronavirus.jhu.edu/us-map>.)

## Which faith formation approach is best for your situation in 2020-21?

Once you know the “situation on the ground” then develop your plan. The continuum below offers three approaches for faith formation. You might develop another option along the continuum that is right for your community. Don’t plan for the whole year. Plan for one 4-month season at a time (Sept-Dec, Jan-April, May-Aug) so that you can monitor the situation and adapt. You may start with one approach in the Sept-Dec, and move to a different approach in Jan-April, in response to conditions in your community. Stay flexible.



**Gathered In-Person Faith  
Formation in Physical Spaces**

**Hybrid Faith Formation  
in Physical & Virtual Spaces**

**Online Faith  
Formation**

## Approach: Gathered In-Person Faith Formation in Physical Spaces

In this approach a church would maintain its usual programming schedule. All in-person gatherings will need to abide by CDC guidelines, such as:

- Physical distancing of 6’ between individuals
- Table groups only for people from the same family and tables distanced by 6’ from each other
- Masks for all participants
- Hand sanitizers
- Cleaning and sanitizing spaces before and after use

For more information go to: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/faith-based.html>

## Approach: Hybrid Faith Formation in Physical & Virtual Spaces

In this approach a church blends online faith formation with in-person gatherings in physical spaces (following CDC guidelines). Faith formation is both synchronous (scheduled) and asynchronous (on your own time). You can add an interactive feature to all of these options by using a Facebook Group (or online learning platform) to engage people in discussion, sharing learning, presenting projects, etc. There are many ways to do hybrid faith formation. Here are four examples.

### **In-Person Gathered Faith Formation + At-Home Online Faith Formation**

- Meet once per month (or every other week) for the program or class. Consider using your existing program schedule to meet. Led by the teachers or program leaders.
- Create online learning experiences at home for the other weeks of the month using a playlist for the content/activities on a faith formation website (or printed materials delivered to the home).

### **In-Person Gathered Faith Formation + At-Home Online Faith Formation + Zoom Gatherings**

- Week #1: Meet in-person for the program or class. Consider using your existing schedule to meet. Led by the teachers or program leaders.
- Week #2: Online learning experiences using a playlist for the content/activities on a faith formation website.
- Week #3: Zoom meetings by age groups (or grades) or family clusters. Consider using the existing schedule. Led by the teachers or program leaders.
- Week #4: Online learning experiences using a playlist format for the activities on a faith formation website.

### **In-Person Gathered Faith Formation + Live Streamed or Video Presentations + At-Home Online Faith Formation**

- Week #1: Meet in-person for the program or class. Consider using your existing schedule to meet. Led by the teachers or program leaders.
- Week #2: Online learning experiences using a playlist format for the activities on a faith formation website.
- Week #3: Live Stream (using Zoom, Facebook Live, or YouTube Live) the teaching/presentation into people's homes using the existing schedule of class/programs and your teachers/leaders.
- Week #4: Online learning experiences using a playlist format for the activities on a faith formation website.

### **Online Faith Formation + In-Person Small Group Gatherings**

- Week #1: Online learning session using a playlist on a faith formation website.
- Week #2: Small group gatherings (10 or fewer) to discuss and apply the learning
- Week #3: Online learning session
- Week #4: Small group gatherings to discuss and apply the learning

### **Worship + Online Faith Formation**

- Weekly worship (in-person or live streamed)
- Online playlist of content and activities with a variety of age-appropriate resources: prayers, reflections/readings, video, podcast, art, music, creative activities, conversations, action ideas, and more.

## Approach: Online Faith Formation

In this approach a church uses online faith formation and online gatherings. Faith formation is both synchronous (scheduled) and asynchronous (on your own time). This approach uses an online platform for faith formation (website) and playlists of content and activities. Livestreaming and/or online Zoom group discussions add a synchronous dimensions to online faith formation. Livestreaming should include presentation, demonstration, and interaction among the presenters/teacher. It can include pre-recorded video segments as well. The live stream presentation/demonstration can be modeled on a cooking show with input, examples, and how-to demonstrations. The at-home activities would be on the faith formation website and designed as a playlist.

### Monthly Live Stream Faith Formation + Online Faith Formation

- Schedule a monthly live stream of the class or program presentation to individuals or families. Consider using your existing schedule of classes/programs and leaders.
- Create online learning experiences for the other weeks of the month using a playlist of content/activities on a faith formation website.
- Add an interactive feature by using a Facebook Group (or online learning platform) to engage people in discussion, sharing learning, presenting projects, etc.

### Live Stream + Online Faith Formation + Zoom Gatherings

- Week #1: Live Stream of the class, program, or presentation.
- Week #2: Online learning experiences using a playlist for the content/activities on a website.
- Week #3: Zoom meetings by age group (or grades) or family clusters.
- Week #4: Online learning experiences using a playlist for the activities/content.
- Add an interactive feature by using a Facebook Group (or online learning platform) to engage people in discussion, sharing learning, presenting projects, etc.

### Online Faith Formation + Online Small Group Gatherings

- Week #1: Online learning session using a playlist on a faith formation website.
- Week #2: Small group gatherings on Zoom or in a Facebook Group to discuss and apply the learning.
- Week #3: Online learning session.
- Week #4: Small group gatherings on Zoom or in a Facebook Group to discuss and apply the learning.

### Live Stream Presentation with Online Discussion

- A presentation for adults (or parents) delivered via live stream (or pre-recorded and live streamed) followed by online discussion using Facebook Groups or using Zooms, accompanied by online content.

### Extended Time Program with Live Stream and Online Learning

Here is an example of an extended time program (2-3 hours) such as a family or intergenerational program that is conducted online using live streaming. If you use Zoom, you can live stream the presentation and organize the participants (individuals or whole families) into break-out rooms for discussion. There are many ways to design an extended program using live streaming, Zoom discussions, and other digital learning tools.

Opening	Introduction to the program and opening prayer
Part 1	Presentation/demonstration #1 via live stream (20 minutes) At-home activity and/or discussion in a Zoom break-out room
Break	
Part 2	Presentation/demonstration #1 via live stream (20 minutes) At-home activity and/or discussion in a Zoom break-out room
Closing	Reflections on the program from the participants and closing prayer