

Developing Program Ideas for the Faith Formation Network

Target Audience _____

Faith Formation Content Areas	Important Needs	Current Programming	Intergenerational Events	New Program Ideas
Caring Relationships: intergenerational and peer relationships, supportive communities				
Celebrating the Liturgical Seasons: feasts and seasons of the church year				
Celebrating Rituals and Milestones: celebrating rituals, sacraments, and milestones at significant moments in one’s life journey and faith journey				
Reading the Bible: studying and interpreting the Bible—its message, its meaning, and its application to life today				
Learning the Christian Tradition: 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				
Praying, Devotions, and Spiritual Formation: personal and communal prayer; being formed by the spiritual disciplines				
Serving and Justice: 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				
Worshipping God with the Faith Community: experiencing God’s living presence through Scripture, preaching, and Eucharist; and being sent forth on mission				
Addressing Life Stage Needs & Interests & Transitions				
Missional Activities: Outreach & relationship building in the wider community; building pathways to faith and discipleship and community belonging				
Additional Area				

Generating New Ideas

- ✓ What new programming do we need to offer to address the needs that surfaced in our research?
- ✓ What would our target audience like to see the church offer them through faith formation?
- ✓ How can we address the audience's needs through age-specific programming?
- ✓ How can we address the audience's needs through intergenerational or family programming?
- ✓ How can we develop missional outreach programming and strategies to reach the spiritual but not religious and the unaffiliated in our target audience.

Designing a Season of Programming

1. **First**, identify the season: January 1–May 1 or May 1–September 1 or September 1–January 1.
2. **Second**, add continuing age-group programs to the seasonal plan. Use the seasonal plan template to record the results: list the network content areas and then add the programs to the appropriate month.
3. **Third**, add intergenerational events and programs from the faith community to the seasonal plan. Explore the possibility of redesigning current age-specific programs to become intergenerational experiences. Explore the possibility of designing new programs that are built around intergenerational events and programs. (For more ideas go to www.IntergenerationalFaith.com.) Add redesigned or new programming to the seasonal plan.
4. **Fourth**, explore the possibility of redesigning existing programming by adding a digital blended strategy, such as adding digital content to extend a program, or “flipping” the program, or offering the program in multiple learning environments, such as video recording a presentation to offer it online as a self-study or small group study or offering the same program as in a large group format or small group format. (See the blended faith formation ideas in Chapter Three.) Add redesigned or new programming to the Seasonal Plan.
5. **Fifth**, review all of the new age-specific programs and intergenerational events/programs generated in Design Step 3. Select new program ideas to introduce in this season. Use the Seasonal Plan template to record the results: list the content areas and then add the programs to the appropriate month.
 - Try to provide programs in *different learning environments* and/or one program in multiple learning environments: on your own (self-directed), with a mentor, at home, in small groups, in large groups, in the congregation, in the community, in the world.
 - Try to implement a program idea with a *blended (digital) faith formation* strategy: gathered program with online content, gathered program and online content, online and gathered in one program, mostly online, and fully online.
6. **Sixth**, develop the final version of the seasonal plan. Select the program ideas for each network content area. Some content areas may have too many programs to launch in one season. Select the ones that will be included in this season and save the other program ideas for another season.

Schedule programming in each network content area. Some of the programming flows through multiple months in a season, such as a weekly Bible study group or children's program. Some programs are monthly, such as a monthly webinar for parents. While other programs are seasonal—Advent, Christmas, Lent, and Easter—and therefore anchored in one or more months. Still other programming/resources are always available, such as an online course or a video program or Bible study resources. One way to manage the variety of programming is to focus on one month of major programming in the network content areas. For example the “Learning the Tradition” content area might select one month to schedule its theology enrichment series with four presentations from guest experts and options for small group study and online study using the video recordings. The Bible area might focus its programming in different month, perhaps around a church year season, such as Lent. This approach reduces the overlap among major programming and helps people participate in multiple experiences.

Programming Examples

Adult Learning Page: November Scripture Enrichment <i>Focus: Gospel of the New Lectionary Cycle beginning in Advent</i>	Family Learning Page: For Parents Only <i>Focus: Parenting Education</i>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Three-session speaker series on major themes in the gospel: Thursday from 7:30–9:00 pm at the church center. 2. Video presentations of the three sessions online for self study. 3. Video presentations of the three sessions online for small group study with accompany study guide. 4. Scripture study groups using a four-session introduction to the major themes of the gospel conducted at church, in homes, and in the community. 5. Gospel self-study using links to Scripture websites such as www.enterthebible.org from Luther Seminary. 6. Online course on the gospel with one or more links to existing online courses at a seminary or university or on iTunes U in the Apple iTunes Store 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. “First Wednesdays” parent webinar series: 9:00–10:00 pm online with guest presenter. Each month presents a topic of interest for parents, such as positive parenting, communicating well, raising responsible children and teens, celebrating rituals and milestones, and more. 2. “Learn More About. . . .” resources on parenting topics with links to expert websites and videos, such as www.ParentFurther.com from The Search Institute. 3. “Secrets of Happy Families” five-session book group using Bruce Feiler’s book of the same name with study groups organized at church, in homes, in a Google+ Hangout, and by parents in self-organized groups. Study group and supportive resources available on the For Parents Only page. 4. Parent videos on a variety of topics available for viewing on the For Parents Only page or with descriptions and links to YouTube or other websites. 5. List of valuable websites and online resources for parents such as the Boys Town Parenting Center with a national hotline just for parents available 24 hours a day.

Worksheet: Final Plan for the Season

Content Area	Programming & Dates			
	Month 1	Month 2	Month 3	Month 4

Multiple Environments for Ministry and Faith Formation

1. **Independent (on your own, self-directed)** programming provides maximum flexibility for the person—when to learn, how to learn, where to learn, and what to learn. With the increasing number and variety of books and printed resources, audio podcasts, video presentations, video programs, online courses, and online resource centers, independent learning offers a 24/7 approach to faith growth and learning for busy people. Congregations can serve as guide to helping people find the best learning format and content to address their learning needs, and then deliver that programming online at the church’s faith formation website.
2. **Mentoring** provides a one-to-one relationship for faith formation that can be utilized as an individual program option, such as a spiritual director/guide with an individual, or as a component in a larger program, such as having mentors for each person in the Christian initiation process or for those who want to explore Jesus and Christianity after leaving church earlier in life. Mentoring works older to younger, but also younger to older as in the case of young people mentoring older adults on the use of digital tools and media.

3. **At Home** programming provides individuals and whole families with faith formation programs, activities, and resources designed for use at home or in daily life, and delivered through a faith formation website. This can include a wide variety of digital media and online programs and resources, such as online learning programs, resources for the church year seasons, Sunday worship resources, online communities and support groups, and links to online faith formation resources and resource centers.
4. **Small Group** programming provides an excellent way to address the diversity of needs by organizing a variety of small groups with each one targeted to a particular need or topic. Small groups also provide lots of flexibility in schedule and location. Groups can meet at times and places that best fit their lives, such as group that meets for breakfast weekly at the local restaurant or for coffee at a local coffee shop. Small groups create an accepting environment in which new relationships can be formed. It is not always necessary for the congregation to sponsor small group programs. Congregational leaders can provide resources, support, and training for leaders, thereby enabling people to organize their own small groups. Small group programming learning can take many different forms including:
 - Discipleship or faith sharing groups or study groups such as Bible study groups, theological formation study groups, theme or issue oriented study groups, Sunday lectionary-based faith sharing groups, book study groups
 - Practice-focused groups such as prayer groups and service/faith in action groups
 - Support groups such as parent groups, caregiving groups, life transition groups
 - Ministry groups involved in leadership in the church and world
5. **Large Group** programming provides a way to serve a large number of people on topics that appeal to a wide audience. Here is a sampling of large group programming:
 - Multi-session programs, such as multi-week courses on theological themes, books of the Bible, parenting at particular stages of family life, life issues)
 - One-session program, such as a monthly session on a theological topic
 - Speaker series, such as a multi-evening or multi-week program focused around a particular theological themes, Christian practices, current events, or the season of the church year
 - Roundtable discussions after Sunday worship, such as exploring the Sunday Scripture readings in age groups or intergenerational groups with refreshments
 - Parent parallel learning program at the same time as their children’s program
 - Workshops, such as one day programs targeted to specific life issues—parenting, mid-life issues, aging, and more
 - Film festivals that explore key themes such as relationships, social issues, and meaning in life, and then explore faith themes in the films
 - Field trips, such as visiting an art museum or attending a musical or theatrical performance and then exploring faith themes in art or music or drama
 - Retreat experiences in an evening, one-day, or weekend format at church or at a retreat center
 - Intergenerational programs for all ages in the congregation
6. **Congregational** programming focuses on the events already present in the life of the church: Sunday worship, the feasts and seasons of the church year, sacramental and ritual celebrations, works of justice and acts of service, prayer experiences, spiritual traditions, and events that originate within the life and history of a individual congregation. Faith formation can provide experiences for people to *prepare*—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. Congregational programming includes leadership and ministry in the congregation and to the world—providing the opportunity for faith formation to prepare people for leadership and ministry, and to reflect upon their engagement.
7. **Community and World** programming provides a way for congregations to utilize existing programs and activities outside the church as part of a faith formation plan. This involves researching the resources and programs being offered locally in the community (programs, courses, clinics, workshops, presentations, and more) at community colleges and universities, retreat centers, YMCAs, libraries, bookstores, and more; and nationally/globally through national organizations, religious organizations, online resource centers, and more. This is an important environment for developing initiatives for serving, working for justice, and caring for creation. Many organizations—locally, nationally, and globally—have already created programs that be adopted by the congregation.