Families at the Center of Faith Formation
Presenters: Leif Kehrwald and John Roberto
Email: jroberto@lifelongfaith.com
VibrantFaith.org   LifelongFaith.com   FamiliesattheCenter.com

The **Families at the Center of Faith Formation** conference is guided by the conviction that families are at the center of Christian faith formation; that parents and the family are the most powerful influence for virtually every child and youth outcome—personal, academic, social, and spiritual-religious; and that parents are the most important influence on the social and religious lives of children, youth, and emerging adults.

The Conference will address key questions facing family faith formation:
• What does a vibrant and vital family faith look like in a 21st century world?
• How do we meaningfully engage/connect with today's families?
• How do we empower/equip/resource families to transmit faith at home—to practice a vital and vibrant faith?
• How do we reach families who are not involved in a faith community or feel religion is not important?

The Conference will help the participants to:
• Identify trends in the contemporary family and how these trends impact family life and the way churches and schools engage families.
• Discover a new narrative about families and how schools, parishes, and communities can embrace new approaches to families.
• Learn about approaches and practices that Catholic schools and parishes can use for connecting with families, developing strong parents and family life, and nurturing the faith of parents and the whole family.
• Explore how to use digitally enabled and digitally connected strategies to develop strong families and promote family faith.
• See examples and illustrations of the "families at the center" approach at work.

Friday
    Session 1. Transforming Our Narratives about Families in the 21st Century
    Session 2. Approaches and Practices for Engaging Families
    Session 3. Examples of the "Families at the Center" Approach to Engaging Families
    Session 4. Application to Your School and Classroom

Saturday & Sunday
    Session 1. Transforming Our Narratives about Families and Faith Formation for the 21st Century
    Session 2. Eight Strategies for Family Faith Formation in the 21st Century
    Session 3. Designing Family Formation—Creating a Parish Plan for Family Faith Formation

Part 1. Theological Reflections on Family and Faith

Moments of Meaning

Family living at home is filled with moments of meaning. Most are ordinary and mundane centered around the ordinary things that have to be done at home: sleeping, waking, eating, cleaning, leave-taking, returning, working, relaxing, tending. These moments often provide a rhythm and pattern to daily and weekly family living that lend healthy consistency and predictability amidst the often tumultuous and chaotic lives lived "out there" in the world. It is through mundane patterns and routines that family members can rest, replenish, and truly feel "at home" when at home.

Recognizing God's presence amidst the mundane and routine of family living requires intention and spiritual discipline. The peaceful presence of the Holy Spirit can be revealed when the family member gives full awareness to the basic activities of human living: folding clothes, doing dishes, tending a child's wound, saying goodnight, reciting a meal or bedtime prayer, listening to a teenager's woes, making eye contact with one's beloved, and so forth.

But, of course, too much of the mundane becomes tedious, makes people stir-crazy and difficult to live with. Fortunately, they can almost always count on and anticipate occasional moments that lift them out of the mundane: a birthday, an anniversary, a holiday, a vacation, a time of separation, a time of reunion, etc. They know these events are coming; they anticipate them and plan for them. And hopefully, they live into them well.

Recognizing God's presence in the anticipated moments of celebration also requires intention, and the acknowledgement that God is part of the proceedings. Here, ritual plays a helpful role in the proper celebration of the moment. Happy occasions call for joyful rituals, and sad occasions call for solemn rituals. Either way, God can be acknowledged as an invited guest.

Amidst the mundane peppered with anticipated moments that suspend the ordinary routine, every so often the family is confronted with unanticipated significant moments of meaning that stop them in their tracks, focus their complete attention in a direction unseen and unheard of a minute ago: a death, a birth, a new job, an accident, an unexpected guest, an extraordinary accomplishment, an unexpected failure. For good or ill, these moments shake the family to the core and test their ability to come together as loved ones and fully embrace one another's feelings and emotions.

Recognizing God's presence in the unanticipated moments that interrupt their lives and shake them to the core can at times be so obvious that all involved will readily proclaim "That was a God moment!" At other times, however, the interruption is so devastating that it seems impossible that God was anywhere nearby. Still, it is their lasting faith that helps them through the aftermath.

If families can learn to recognize God's gracious presence in the moments of their lives together, particularly at home, then surely they will grow in faith together.

It's All About Relationships

In family living, throughout the stages of life, we each cry out for our basic, developmental needs: care, growth, support, power, and possibility. These are essential to our development—not just as children and youth, but for the whole of life. And those who meet these needs for us form our network of developmental relationships.

If 'family' was a verb it would be used to describe the relational process that the Spirit uses to create and sustain us in life and faith. It would describe the formative experiences that occur in the family, and therefore help us think of family as a living, relational process, rather than a structure or form.

We can't emphasize enough that faith practices take place in the midst of these key formative relationships, and yet much of this has been lost or forgotten in our culture. We so often focus on the implementation of faith practices and forget that we all need fundamental relationships across the generations with whom to engage these practices. How do we actually create space and opportunity for these relationships to form as a first thing?

Each of us has our **blood family**, yes. Most of us have our **household family**, yes. And ideally, all of us have our **essential network of relationships** that does "family" for us—to one degree or another, and for good for ill. We all know, however, that many people do not have that essential network of relationships. We believe the parish must intentionally help people establish fundamental faith relationships with people outside/alongside their blood family and household family.

We believe this process reflects what it means to live the Gospel. We believe . . .

- It can happen anywhere—in or outside blood family, in or outside household, in or outside of a church building—anywhere!
- It is the result of a vital, lively connection with God.
- It happens organically when people live out their faith with one another.
- It reveals to us the person of Jesus.
- It is the foundation of discipleship.
- It can begin in the context programs, but if it's authentic it will not stay there.

We recognize that these may be extraordinary claims, but we're confident we can make a case to support them today and tomorrow, and therefore we're hopeful and confident that you will join us in our conviction that the **church's (parish and school) highest priority with respect to faith formation—of children, of youth, of adults—must be to become intentional about family.**

Search
INSTITUTE

Discovering what kids need to succeed

615 First Avenue NE
Minneapolis, MN 55413
1.800.888.7828
www.search-institute.org

The Developmental Relationships Framework

Imagine what would happen if we could surround young people – in their families, schools, programs and neighborhoods – with the kinds of relationships through which they develop character strengths such as positive identity, agency, and commitment to community. That is the objective of the Developmental Relationships Project, a multiyear initiative through which Search Institute is conducting research and developing solutions that will help organizations that serve young people start and strengthen close connections in their lives. The Project began in 2013 with the creation of the Developmental Relationships Framework, which has since been the basis of several quantitative and qualitative studies and has been shared with thousands of practitioners and parents across the country. Based on that research and feedback, we have revised the Framework, which is summarized below.

Elements	Actions	Definitions
1. Express Care Show me that I matter to you.	• **Be dependable**.............. • **Listen**........................... • **Believe in me**................ • **Be warm**....................... • **Encourage**....................	Be someone I can trust. Really pay attention when we are together. Make me feel known and valued. Show me you enjoy being with me. Praise me for my efforts and achievements.
2. Challenge Growth Push me to keep getting better.	• **Expect my best**............. • **Stretch**......................... • **Hold me accountable**... • **Reflect on failures**........	Expect me to live up to my potential. Push me to go further. Insist I take responsibility for my actions. Help me learn from mistakes and setbacks.
3. Provide Support Help me complete tasks and achieve goals.	• **Navigate**....................... • **Empower**...................... • **Advocate**...................... • **Set boundaries**.............	Guide me through hard situations and systems. Build my confidence to take charge of my life. Defend me when I need it. Put in place limits that keep me on track.
4. Share Power Treat me with respect and give me a say.	• **Respect me**................... • **Include me**.................... • **Collaborate**................... • **Let me lead**...................	Take me seriously and treat me fairly. Involve me in decisions that affect me. Work with me to solve problems and reach goals. Create opportunities for me to take action and lead.
5. Expand Possibilities Connect me with people and places that broaden my world.	• **Inspire**......................... • **Broaden horizons**......... • **Connect**........................	Inspire me to see possibilities for my future. Expose me to new ideas, experiences, and places. Introduce me to more people who can help me develop and thrive.

Changing the Narrative

From a primary focus on. . . .	Toward an emphasis on. . . .
Viewing the parish or school as the center of faith forming	Recognizing and equipping the family as the center of faith forming
Forming the faith of individuals	Forming the faith of the whole family
Engaging individual in church life	Engaging the whole family in church life
Prescribing programs and activities for the family and its members	Building faith formation around the lives and needs of families and parents
Doing things "to" of "for" families	Sharing power with families and treating them as partners
Starting with messaging to families	Start with listening to families
Buying into negative stereotypes of families	Highlight families' strengths and resilience
Giving families expert advice about what to do	Encouraging families to experiment with new practices
Focusing on parenting as a set of techniques	Emphasizing parenting as a relationship
Intimidating parents with policies and requirements	Informing parents of their role and empowering them to fulfill their role as faith formers of children and teens

What's Your Parish's Approach to Families?

Identify your parish's approach with families using the following questions. (See Chapters 1 and 3 in *Families at the Center of Faith Formation* for background.) For each question, identify your congregation's current practice with parents and/or families using the rating scale:

1 = not at all   3 = often   5 = a lot

1. We *express care* with the families in our parish and community, including listening to them, showing interest in their lives, and investing in them.	1	2	3	4	5
2. We *challenge growth* in families by expecting them to live up to their potential and helping them learn from their mistakes.	1	2	3	4	5
3. We *provide support* and advocacy when families really need it.	1	2	3	4	5
4. We *share power* with families, treating them as true partners by giving them voice in things that matter to them and collaborating with them to solve problems and reach goals.	1	2	3	4	5
5. We encourage families to *expand possibilities* by connecting them with other people, ideas, and opportunities to help them grow.	1	2	3	4	5
6. We offer regular *gatherings of all our families* for learning, worship, service, relationship-building, and more throughout the year.	1	2	3	4	5
7. We engage families *together with the whole community* for learning, worship, service, relationship-building, and more throughout the year.	1	2	3	4	5
8. We find ways *to reach families at home* with support, resources, and activities to develop family life and grow in faith.	1	2	3	4	5
9. We *strengthen families* by helping them develop the practices and skills for healthy family life.	1	2	3	4	5
10. We equip parents with the *knowledge and skills* for effective parenting and forming faith in young people.	1	2	3	4	5
11. We engage parents *as leaders and contributors* in the congregation and in the community.	1	2	3	4	5
12. We design ministries, projects, and activities that *complement and reinforce* the role of families in faith formation.	1	2	3	4	5
13. We recognize the *family as the epicenter* of faith formation across the generations.	1	2	3	4	5
14. We celebrate the evidence of *vibrant faith at work* in the everyday lives of families and their young people.	1	2	3	4	5

Part 2. The View from Research: The Importance of Family Faith

Key Factors in Family Faith Transmission

When Christian Smith and his colleagues in the National Study on Youth and Religion looked for the factors that produced highly religious emerging adults, they focused on parents and the family as the primary (but not only) influence. They reported that through the processes of religious socialization young people with seriously religious parents are more likely that those without such parents to have been trained in their lives to think, feel, believe, and act as serious religious believers, and that that training "sticks" with them even when the leave home and enter emerging adulthood.

Research studies over the past twenty years continue to affirm this truth. We know the factors that make a significant difference in promoting faith in children and adolescents:

- parents' personal faith and practice
- a close and warm parent-child relationship
- parent modeling and teaching a religious faith
- parent involvement in church life and Sunday worship
- grandparent religious influence and relationship
- family conversations about faith
- family faith religious practices including praying, reading the Bible, serving others, and celebrating holidays and rituals.

In a recent study, *Nothing Less: Engaging Kids in a Lifetime of Faith*, Lifeway Research asked 2,000 Protestant and nondenominational churchgoers—of all whom attend services at least once a month and have adult children ages 18 to 30—what parenting practices pay off over the long haul when it comes to spiritual health. They asked parents to think about their children today (18-30 years old) and what proved to be significant in developing their faith and spiritual life. They discovered nine things parents do to influence the long-term spiritual condition of their young people (not ranked in order).

1. Parents participated in mission trips as a family as their kids were growing up.
2. Parents participated in service projects with their kids as they were growing up.
3. Parents frequently shared Christ with unbelievers as their kids were growing up.
4. Parents personally read the Bible several times a week or more as their kids were growing up.
5. Parents encouraged their teen to serve in the church.
6. Parents typically asked for forgiveness when they messed up as their children were growing up.
7. Parents encouraged their children's own unique talents and interests as they grew up.
8. Parents attended churches that emphasized what the Bible says as their kids were growing up.
9. Parents taught their children to tithe as their kids were growing up.

Christian Smith and Justine Bartkus develop ten key conclusions about the importance of Catholic families in a research study on Catholic parents (as reported in *A Report on American Catholic Religious Parenting*, University of Notre Dame, 2017):

1. The crucial location where youth's religious outcomes are largely decided is not the congregation or the parish, but the home.
2. The primary mechanisms by which Catholic identity becomes rooted in children's lives are not Catholic schooling or sacramental preparation, but rather the day-to-day religious practices of the family and the ways parents model their faith and share it in conversation, collaboration, and exposure to outside religious opportunities.
3. This is all to say that the definitive causal agents in the religious and spiritual outcomes of American youth are neither clergy nor youth ministers, neither educators nor the voices of popular culture and media, but parents.
4. The single most powerful force in a child's religious formation is the spiritual personality of the parent.
5. Effective transmission of the Christian faith is completely possible for parents who genuinely intend this goal.
6. Parents by the power of their personality, practices, and way of being, model and generate the culture of the household (both explicitly and implicitly).
7. Parents produce, induce, and interpret the household's experiences of Christian faith.
8. Parents are one influence among others - they are nevertheless the dominant influence which orders and shapes the way children experience other influences, i.e. they constellate children's experiences of various cultural currents, including religion..
9. Both parents and churches need to understand the cultural and psychological centrality of parents' role in religious transmission.
10. The faith of the household is a common fund from which all draw freely. To be effectively handed on to children, such faith cannot be perceived as "belonging" only to parents, even if parents must often coerce children into participating in religious activities.

They also identified three primary roles parents play in transmitting religion:

1. **Sponsor of the Catholic Faith.** Parents are the point of access between the Church and their children. To differing degrees, neighborhoods, ethnicities and mainstream cultural attitudes toward religion have all declined as cultural "carriers" of Catholic belief. If children are not initially exposed to the Catholic faith by their parents, they usually will not be exposed to it at all.

2. **Gatekeeper of the Catholic Faith.** Parents have nearly total control over how much and what sorts of religious content their children encounter—whether children attend Catholic school; whether prayer, reading the Bible, or receiving Communion and going to Reconciliation will occur regularly in their lives; whether they will be exposed to relationships and communities that have a religious dimension, and so forth. Parents are thus the "gatekeeper" of religious content for their children. To use another metaphor, parents are like a faucet, determining whether religious content will arrive in children's lives at an occasional drip or in a regular flow.

3. **Interpreter of the Catholic Faith.** Parents do not act as a neutral medium, a mere channel, between Catholicism and their children. Rather, they are definitive role models, mentors, who embody a specific manner of being Catholic. They teach children how to apprehend the world, how to understand what is good and what is evil, how one ought to affectively, intellectually and practically engage with the world, and so on. They do not just "represent" the faith; in many

cases, they are the only meaningful embodiment of that faith in the lives of children. Parents render faith a matter of flesh and blood rather than a lifeless mishmash of doctrines and teachings. If children do not "see" Catholicism in the "face" of their parents, they will likely never gain sufficient familiarity with it to commit to practicing the faith in the long run.

"Ultimately, the decisive question our interviews suggested to us was this: had children been initiated into a cultural worldview where they perceived that being Catholic *mattered*, where faith had been so thoroughly and convincingly modeled, lived and shared that children either perceived no alternative to embracing Catholicism, or far preferred being Catholic to any other path? Had children been initiated into a lived template for carrying on a Catholic way of life, for navigating the twists and turns of growing up with their faith as a guiding resource?"

One of the most basic suggestions of our findings is that young adults arrive at a sense of their fundamental identity and worldview not by weighing all possible intellectual arguments for and against a proposed way of life, but rather by roughly adopting the worldview of those mentors who left the deepest impression upon them—and who loved them and cared for them the most. It should come as no surprise, then, that the emergence of the new generation of dedicated young Catholics will rise and fall with the choices of their parents.

Changing Profile of Religious Practice

We can discern at least four "religious-spiritual identities" in our young people and their parents around which we can fashion faith formation.

1. *People with a vibrant faith and relationship with God who are engaged in the faith community.* For these people religious faith is central to their lives. These are parents who are transmitting this faith to their children and are actively engaged as a family in a church community. These are children, adolescents, and parents who are spiritually committed and growing in their faith. They have found their spiritual home within an established Christian tradition and a local faith community that provides ways for them to grow in faith, worship God, and live their faith in the world. They are practicing their faith at home as a family.

2. *People who participate occasionally in the faith community and whose faith is not central to their lives.* These are people who participate occasionally in church life—Sunday worship, seasonal celebrations, community events, and age-group programs. For parents transmitting a religious faith often means bringing their children to educational programs at church, and participating because of their children. Their spiritual commitment is not central to the way they live their live and their connection to the church is more social and utilitarian than spiritual. While receptive to an established church, they do not have a faith commitment that would make their relationship with God and participation in a faith community a priority in their lives. Their occasional engagement in church life does not lead them toward spiritual commitment.

3. *People who uninvolved in a church but spiritual.* These are people who are often called "spiritual but not religious." They have left participation in an established church. Many believe in God and have a relationship God, and are growing spiritually. Many practice their Christian faith

unattached to a faith community or tradition. Parents, though not involved in a church, may send their children to church programs; and the parents may participate at times with their children.

4. *People who unaffiliated and have left involvement in organized religion*. These are the "Nones." They no longer believe religion is not important in their lives. Many parents are "first generation Nones" and are raising their children in religiously uninvolved and unaffiliated homes creating a "second generation of Nones." Many parents left organized religion because they stopped believing in the religion's teachings (usually a top reason) or because their family was never that religious when they were growing up or because of their experience of negative religious teaching about or treatment of gay and lesbian people (*Exodus*, 2016).

Part 3. Strategies for Family Faith Formation

The research makes it clear: family-centered faith formation, parent engagement, and parent formation need to be central in faith formation with children and adolescents. To act on these research insights we need to embrace several key pastoral practices:

- Believing that God is actively present in family life, and that the family is the first community and the most basic way in which God gathers us, forms us, and acts in the world.
- Seeing the home as the essential and foundational environment for faith nurture, faith practice, and the healthy development of young people.
- Reinforcing the family's central role in promoting healthy development and faith growth in children and youth, and enhancing the faith-forming capacity of parents and grandparents.
- 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.
- Addressing the diversity of family life today by moving away from "one size fits all" programs and strategies toward a variety of programs and strategies tailored to the unique life tasks and situations, concerns and interest, and religious-spiritual journeys of parents and families.
- Overcoming the age-segregated nature of church and its programming by engaging parents and the whole family in meaningful intergenerational relationships and faith formation that involves all ages and families.
- Building upon the assets, strengths, and capacities present in parents and families, rather than focusing on their deficits and solving problems.
- Partnering with parents in working toward shared goals and aspirations for their young people by supporting, equipping, and resourcing them.

Strategies
   #1. Nurturing Family Faith Practices
   #2. Celebrating Milestones
   #3. Celebrating the Seasons of the Year
   #4. Reading the Bible through the Year
   #5. Family & Intergenerational Programming
   #6. Equipping Parents and Grandparents as Faith Formers

A Framework for Planning

	Young Children	Older Children	Young Adolescents	Older Adolescents
Celebrating Milestones & Sacraments				
Celebrating Rituals				
Celebrating Holidays & Seasons				
Caring Relationships				
Learning the Faith Tradition				
Praying Together				
Reading the Bible				
Serving those in Need				
Parent Faith Growth				
Parent as Faith Formers				
Parenting Knowledge & Skills				

## #1. Nurturing Family Faith Practices

Equipping and resourcing families to practice their faith at home through prayer, devotions, reading the Bible, rituals, milestone celebrations, service, learning, and more.

The family at home is the community where Christian faith practices are nurtured and practiced. We have discovered through research that certain faith practices make a significant difference in nurturing the faith of children and adolescents.

1. Reading the Bible as a family and encouraging young people to read the Bible regularly
2. Praying together as a family and encouraging young people to pray personally
3. Serving people in need as a family and supporting service activities by young people
4. Eating together as a family
5. Having family conversations
6. Talking about faith, religious issues, and questions and doubts
7. Ritualizing important family moments and milestone experiences
8. Celebrating rituals, holidays, and church year seasons at home
9. Providing moral instruction
10. Being involved in a faith community and participating regularly in Sunday worship as a family

Faith practices are learned and practiced as they woven seamlessly into the fabric of daily life. They can become "habits of faith." Consider this when you woke up this morning, what did you do first? Did you hop in the shower, check your messages, put on your sneakers and workout or go for run, or have breakfast? Did you tie the left or right shoe first? What did you eat for lunch? What did you do when you got home in the evening?

Most of the choices we make each day may feel like the products of well-considered decision making, but they're not. They're habits. Charles Duhigg, in *The Power of Habit*, writes that at the core of every habitual pattern is a habit loop. The habit loop can be broken down into three basic steps. First, there is a cue, a trigger that tells your brain to go into automatic mode. The cue can be internal, such as a feeling or thought, or external, such as a time of day or the company of certain people (which is why it's easier to exercise among our running buddies, but harder to study when our friends are in the library).The second part of the habit loop is the routine, the behavior that leads to the reward. The routine can be physical (eating a donut), cognitive ("remember for the test"), or emotional ("I always feel anxious in math class"). The third part is the reward. Not surprisingly, the reward can also be physical (sugar!), cognitive ("that's really interesting"), or emotional ("I always feel relaxed in front of the TV."). The reward determines if a particular habit loop is worth remembering.

Step 1
The Cue

Step 2
The
Reward

Step 3
The
Routine
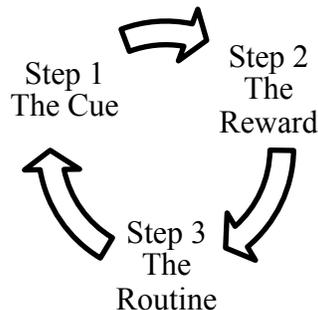
Here is the process of creating a habit, drawn from Charles Duhigg's *The Power of Habit*.

The Cue: Every habit has a trigger.
- What time will this habit occur?
- Where will you be?
- What else will be around?
- What will you have just finished?
- What emotion do you think you will be feeling?

People do not need all these to create a habit. Only one of them is needed to become a cue. But the more people test out, the faster the habit takes hold.

The Reward
- What reward will you give yourself at the end of the behavior?
- Do you actually enjoy this reward? After a few days, ask: Do you crave this reward when you are exposed to the cue? After two weeks ask: Do you crave the intrinsic reward of the habit (how it makes you feel) more than the extrinsic reward (what you give yourself as a treat)?
- If yes, people have created a powerful habit. If not, people need to choose a new reward.

The Routine: This is the behavior you want to become a habit.

Studies show that the easiest way to implement a new habit is to write a plan:

"When ____(cue)_____, I will ____(routine)_____ because it provides me with ____(reward)____.

People should post their plan where they will see it. Try it for a week. Eventually, studies say the new behavior will become automatic)

We can help families integrate the faith practices into their daily routine by designing activities that present the faith practices in a way that will lead toward making the practice a habit. We can design activities for a particular practice (like reading the Bible) that only take 5 or 10 minutes, suggest a variety of ways to integrate the activity into daily life, have people create a plan, and invite people to reflect on the benefits of the practice after their experience.

Application

1. Incorporate formation in faith practices for the family and/or parents into existing programming, such as sacramental and milestones celebrations, age group programming (develop several family programs as part of age group sessions), Sunday worship (after worship programming), vacation Bible school, service projects and mission trips, retreats, and more.

2. Make a faith practice the focus of a each month or the seasons of the year through family or intergenerational learning, worship and preaching, and service/action. For example, during the Lenten season the congregation and family can focus on one or more practices that reflect the theology and liturgies of the season, such as forgiveness, discernment, prayer, and service. Combine the at-church experience with activities for families to do at home.

3. Develop a family faith formation website that features the "practice of the month" with engaging activities—print, audio, video, apps, and more—tailored to families with young children, older children, young adolescents, older adolescents, and the whole family. In "how to" information and videos for parents. The website can serve as a resource center with content and activities and as a portal to curated family activities on other websites.

4. Create family immersion experiences on faith practices. Design extended time programs (half-day, full day) that teach faith practices through immersion experiences—at church or in the community—where families can experience a practice first hand, such as hospitality at a homeless shelter or serving a meal at a soup kitchen or caring for creation by planting a garden. Combine the at-church experience with activities for families to do at home.

One example of helping families form "habits of faith" comes from Traci Smith who proposes a 7-day start up plan for integrating faith practices into daily life using the activities in her book *Faithful Families: Creating Sacred Moments at Home*. This approach provides an immersion experience for families out of which habits can develop. Explore the other programming ideas at the end of this section.

#2. Celebrating Milestones
Celebrating one-time milestones and annual milestones through experiences at home and in the congregation that activities of naming, equipping, blessing, gifting, and reinforcing

A milestone is a an action or event marking a significant change or stage in development. These life and faith markers can provide important times for engaging families when they are most open to change and growth. Milestones are significant moments in life's journey that provide the opportunity for families to experience God's love and grow in faith through events in the life of the church community and family life. Milestones faith formation provides a natural opportunity to create a partnership between the congregation and the home. Here are suggested milestones from 0 to 19 years old (See Milestones Ministry at https://milestonesministry.org)

- Birth and Baptism
- Anniversary of Baptism: Remembering our way of life
- Prayer: Relationships with God and family
- Welcoming young children to worship: An intentional invitation
- Beginning faith formation at church: First steps for a young child
- Kids and money; Good stewards of God's gifts
- Blessing of the backpacks: A Fall milestone for all ages
- Communion: learning more about the Lord's Supper
- Bible: Placing Scripture in hands and homes
- My Body, God's Gift: Sexuality as God's good gift
- Middle school: Created in God's image
- Beginning confirmation: Walking with youth in their faith journeys
- Confirmation: An evening of honor
- Driver's License: Driver's license as rite of passage
- Mission trip: Community blessings at home and away
- High school graduation: Equipping graduates for the journey

Milestone faith formation can be developed around five elements: *naming, equipping, blessing, gifting,* and *reinforcing*.

1. *Naming* the sacred and ordinary events that take place in daily life—beginnings, endings, transitions, achievements, failures, and rites of passage, and creating rituals and traditions that shape our identities and give us a sense of belonging to the family of Jesus Christ.
2. *Equipping* brings people together for learning, builds community, invites conversation, encourages storytelling, and provides information. A family or intergenerational learning program—at church or home or in the community—prepares the individual and the whole family for the milestone and for living faith at home.
3. *Blessing* the individual and marking the occasion in a worship service and in the home says that it is *all* about faith. God is present in all of daily life, making the ordinary sacred. Offer a prayer to bless the lives of those involved in the milestone moment: a prayer during worship for those participating in the milestone moment and a prayer at a small group or with family at home.
4. *Gifting* offers a tangible, visible item that serves as a reminder or symbol of the occasion being marked as well as a resource for the ongoing nurture of faith in daily life.

5. *Reinforcing* the milestone with a follow-up gathering of those involved in the milestone moment to help it gain deeper roots in the life of faith of those who participated.

Application

Here is a simple guide for developing a plan for milestones faith formation.

1. Identify and describe the milestones at each stage of life.
2. Develop an annual calendar that designates specific Sundays or months of the year for each milestone celebration. Preparation programs for a milestone also need to be included in this annual calendar.
3. Use the five elements of milestones faith formation to develop the plan for each individual milestone: naming, equipping, blessing, gifting, and reinforcing
4. Develop the *at church* and *at home* activities.
5. Develop the parent formation/involvement activities for the milestone.
6. Schedule a family gathering (parents, children, grandparents) for milestone as a time to connect, learn, and pray together, as well as learn how to share, practice, and live faith at home. Sometimes this gathering is planned several weeks before the milestone celebration and at other times it happens on the same day as the milestones celebration.

Here is an example of a yearlong plan for milestones.

August: Blessing of the backpacks
September: Beginning faith formation at church
October: Bible: Placing Scripture in hands and homes
November; Kids and money—being good stewards of God's gifts
February: My body, God's gift
March: Drivers license (for those who have and are about to receive a license)
April: Communion
May: High school graduation
June: Mission trip

#3. Celebrating the Seasons of the Year
Celebrating church year seasons and calendar seasons at home, at church, and in the community

Calendar events and the feasts and seasons of the church year provide a natural rhythm for faith formation at home throughout the year. The church year seasonal celebrations can engage families in the intergenerational life of the church, providing a natural way to connect church and home in faith formation. Consider some of the opportunities that occur each year.

Calendar Year Events: 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, Independence Day, Labor Day, Start of School, Halloween, Thanksgiving

Church Year Feasts and Seasons: Advent, Christmas, Epiphany, Ash Wednesday, Lent, Holy Week, Easter, Pentecost, St. Francis Day–Blessing the Animals (October 4), All Saints and Souls (November 1–2)

Every church year feast and season provides an opportunity to connect home and church, and to explore more deeply the theological and spiritual meaning of the feast or season. The content and activities for the home can include rituals, learning activities, prayers, Bible reading, and ideas for action (serving, working for justice). There are an abundance of print, audio, and digital content for most feasts and seasons of the church year.

Let's take the example of the Lent season from Ash Wednesday through Easter Sunday. Imagine providing a forty-day Lenten experience for the home that connects the theology and spirituality of Lent and Lent events at church with home life through a variety of activities for experiencing and practicing Lent at home—delivered online through the congregation's faith formation website. Lent activities and resources for the home can include daily Lenten prayer, serving ideas, reflections on the Sunday readings, daily Bible readings, Lent devotions, Lent study resources and videos, Lent children's activities, and much more.

A calendar year event provides a way to connect the family with the church and/or the wider community. Calendar year events provide a way to engage in missional outreach to parents and families. Imagine hosting a blessing of the animals at church for the whole community on a weekend close to the Feast of St. Francis on October fourth. An event like Martin Luther King Jr. or Earth Day can involve a family activity but also engaged in a community-wide action project and a prayer service at church or in a neighboring congregation. Consider Earth Day:

Earth Day in the community: community-wide cleanup, planting a community garden, planting trees in the community, and more.

Earth Day at church: all-ages workshop on caring for creation, story time at the public library focused on environmental awareness books, an ecumenical prayer service for caring for creation, an intergenerational program on the theological and biblical foundation of caring for creation, a church energy audit, adopting a global project to address the effects of climate change, recycling activities.

Earth Day at home: planting a family garden, mealtime creation prayer, daily Bible verses on caring for creation for April, children's activities to explore and experience caring for creation, storybooks and videos on caring for creation, home energy and recycling audit.

Application

1. Seasonal family festivals and gatherings: Develop family gatherings or festivals around the fours seasons—fall, winter, spring, and summer—or around the church year—Advent-Christmas, Lent, Easter, Pentecost. Select a theme for each gathering such as a faith practice and/or seasonal event and/or Scripture readings. Schedule these as part of the annual calendar. Connect Sunday worship with the family festival.

2. Develop a monthly seasonal event: The seasons of the year offers a variety of opportunities for families to celebrate, learn, and have fun together. Select one family activity for each month of the year, reflecting the calendar seasons and the church year seasons, and publish the activity on the family website.

#4. Reading the Bible through the Year
Encountering God in the Bible through the year in Sunday worship and developing the practices of reading and studying the Bible with children, adolescents, and the whole family.

One way a congregation can implement this idea is through lectionary-based faith formation programming that explores the Sunday readings in family or intergenerational settings. Churches who do not use a lectionary-based approach can adopt a multi-week sermon series that focuses on a theme connected with Biblical teachings. Programing can include whole family activities, as well as age appropriate learning activities.

A second way to implement this idea is to focus on family resources that flow from the Sunday worship experience. The key is to extend and deepen the experience of Sunday worship at home through activities, practices, and resources. This includes providing a variety of age-appropriate and whole family digital content on the church's website. Determine a focusing theme or topic that emerges from the scripture readings and make that the lens you use to select resources. Many churches now provide weekly online faith formation for families and age groups centered on Sunday worship, the readings, and the sermon.

A family faith formation plan designed around the theme from Sunday worship can include the following elements:

- family conversation questions on the theme of the Sunday readings.
- activities for the church year feast or season (when appropriate).
- weekly table ritual.
- a podcast or video of the sermon with a study guide for the parents, children's creative Bible activities, storybooks, video presenting the Bible story.
- daily prayer, weekly family devotion.
- short Bible reading for each day of the week, online resources for studying the Bible (print, audio, video).
- ideas for living the biblical teaching in the family or in the community.

#5. Family & Intergenerational Programming

Intergenerational Service Models

Intergenerational service provides many benefits to the whole church community. Intergenerational service helps narrow the generation gap between older and younger church members; recognizes that all people in the church, regardless of age, have talents to contribute that are valuable and important; assists young people in feeling a part of the church today, not just the church of tomorrow; connects the generations and builds relationships as they serve God by serving their neighbor; and communicates

that it is the responsibility of all Christians, regardless of age, to serve people and work for justice as a follower Jesus Christ.

Here a several ideas for creating new programming that engages all ages in serving those in need, caring for creation, and working for justice. There are so many local, national, and global organizations that provide educational resources and action projects your church can use to create new intergenerational programming.

An Annual Church-Wide Service Day

Mobilize the whole faith community through an annual church-wide justice and service project. Create a four-week, church-wide campaign that culminates on a Sunday where the entire congregation engages in service projects in and with the community. As an individual church or with churches in your area, select a local and global project already developed by a justice or service organization. Then develop an annual theme, such as poverty, care for creation, peacemaking. Prepare the whole community for the service engagement, utilizing the resources developed by the partner organizations. Include 1) worship and prayer experiences focused on the particular theme or project; 2) educational sessions including social analysis of the issues and reflection on the teachings of scripture and the Christian tradition; 3) household activities on the theme or project such as prayers, learning resources, and action suggestions; 4) a website with the resources, activities, action projects, and features to allow people to share what they are doing; and 5) special presentations by experts on the issues and by people engaged in action on the issue.

A Monthly Intergenerational Service Project

Using the same design as the church-wide service day, a congregation can develop a monthly service project that addresses one particular need or issue (local and/or global) each month. Each month's project can include a short educational program of the topic, an action project, and reflection on the project. Themes for the service projects can correspond with calendar events and seasons, as well as church year seasons. Examples include Back to School (September) and school kits for students, Thanksgiving (November) and feeding the hungry, Lent (February or March) and serving the poor, and Earth Day (April) and caring for creation.

Intergenerational Service Nights at Church

Service Nights are simple, self-contained programs at church that feature five to ten service activity stations that engage all ages in doing a simple project for the benefit of a group in need. At one station people might create greeting cards for the elderly or for sick church members. At another booth they might make blankets for a homeless shelter. At another booth they might bake cookies or make sandwiches for a soup kitchen. Many organizations provide the organizational logistics a church needs to a service project, for example Feed My Starving Children provides the resources for people to pack food that will be shipped to people in need.

Intergenerational Learning Models

For more than 20 congregations from a variety of Christian traditions have been developing and implementing new models of intergenerational faith formation and learning. Intergenerational learning provides a way to educate the whole community, bringing all ages and generations together to learn with and from each other, build community, share faith, pray, celebrate, and practice the Christian faith. The key is that everyone is learning together—young and old, single and married, families with children and empty-nest families, and it involves the whole family—children, parents, grandparents, in a shared experience of the Christian faith.

We know from the research findings that one of the most significant features of intergenerational faith formation is the way it builds community among people, and relationships across ages and generations. Central to building relationships and community is creating an atmosphere of hospitality and welcoming at intergenerational learning sessions where everyone feels a sense of belonging, acceptance, and respect. *This welcoming spirit is as important as the content being taught.* The intergenerational learning model creates the environment and experiences where people of all ages learn from each other and grow in faith together. Adults gain meaningful insights from their interaction with children and youth; and children and youth experience meaningful support from non-parental adults. Intergenerational learning creates an environment in which participants feel safe to learn, ask questions, and grow in faith on a deeper level.

We know from the research that intergenerational learning strengthens parental and family faith by encouraging the whole family to participate—children, teens, parents, and grandparents. It equips parents (and grandparents) to be faith formers of their children by developing their competence and confidence through such faith-forming experiences as sharing stories, celebrating rituals, praying together, reading the Bible, and more. Intergenerational learning provides activities that model the practices that churches want parents and families to live at home. The research findings also revealed that families *enjoy* opportunities to pray, learn, and be together (even if parents may resist participating initially).

Model #1. Generations of Faith

The Generations of Faith intergenerational model is based on the work of James White in his book *Intergenerational Religious Education* (Birmingham: Religious Education Press, 1988). White identified four patterns of relationships that shape the four components of an intergenerational religious education learning experience: 1) in-common experiences, 2) parallel learning, 3) contributive occasions, and 4) interactive sharing.

The model created by the Generations of Faith Project used White's four components in the following way. This model can be used for all ages intergenerational faith formation or for family faith formation with children, adolescents, and their parents (and grandparents).

1. Gathering and opening prayer
2. All-ages learning experience: intergenerational learning begins with a multigenerational experience of a theme that all generations can share together.

3. In-depth learning experience: through structured learning activities each generation—families with children, adolescents, and other adults—explores the biblical and theological understanding of the topic, using one of three possible formats:
    - The *Age Group Format* provides parallel, age-appropriate learning for groups at the same time. Though age groups are separated, each one is focusing on the same topic—utilizing specific learning activities that are designed for their life cycle stage: families with children or children alone, adolescents, young adults, and adults.
    - The *Whole Group Format* provides a series of facilitated learning activities for everyone at the same time using intergenerational or age-specific small groups or table groups.
    - The *Learning Activity Center Format* provides structured intergenerational and age-specific learning activities at a variety of stations or centers in a common area.
4. Sharing learning reflections and application: in intergenerational groups participants share what they learned and prepare for applying their learning to daily life using resources and activities provided in print or online.
5. Closing prayer service

Congregations are using the intergenerational model of learning in a variety of ways:

1. To develop a faith formation curriculum for the whole community using intergenerational faith formation as the primary learning model, supplemented by age-specific and affinity group faith formation models
2. To extend a topic featured in the faith formation program for children or teens, to the whole community through intergenerational learning
3. To replace a topic in the children or adolescent program with intergenerational learning on the same theme
4. To add intergenerational learning to milestone and sacramental preparation and celebrations
5. To conduct intergenerational faith formation around church year feasts and seasons, such as Advent-Christmas, Lent, Holy Week, Pentecost, and more
6. To add intergenerational learning experiences into a vacation Bible school, camp, or summer program
7. To conduct intergenerational learning in preparation for service projects and actions for justice
8. To sponsor an intergenerational retreat for the whole community.

Churches that make intergenerational learning their core faith formation experience for all ages conduct monthly, bi-weekly, or weekly intergenerational programs, and then offer a variety of age-group or affinity-group programs throughout the month or year to address specific age-appropriate needs. These churches replace or modify their age group programming to place the emphasis on all ages learning together. They develop a multi-year curriculum for the whole community built around themes from the Bible, the cycle of Sunday lectionary readings, church year feasts and seasons, Christian practices, service and social justice, prayer and spiritual disciplines, core Christian beliefs, and moral teachings.

Model 2. Logos

A second model of intergenerational (and family) learning has been created by *GenOn Ministries* (www.genonministries.org) and includes weekly intergenerational experiences for children and/or youth that creates an intentional arena where all ages can learn about and practice the art of Christian

relationships. In these cross-generational gatherings, everyone eats together, plays together, studies together, and prays together. These four parts, plus weekly congregational worship, make up the whole, providing everyone involved a cross-generational arena in which to have a complete, holistic experience of Christian nurture. In addition, young people also lead in congregational worship on a regular basis.

The four-part learning model includes:

1. *Bible study*: A time for each grade or a combination of grades to study the Bible as the model for Christ-centered living. Churches can use a non-denominational curriculum developed by GenOn for LOGOS or their own curriculum.
2. *Worship skills*: Choir, drama, bells, or other arts are rehearsed at LOGOS and then presented regularly in corporate worship. Each church decides the best fit with its own liturgy and worship style.
3. *Family Time*: The shared meal is a time to gather regular "table families" of various ages who eat together each week for the entire program year. Kitchen teams prepare dinners that are served family style, using table settings and serving dishes practicing the art of serving one another.
4. *Recreation*: All have great fun in a cooperative atmosphere, often drawing on the hobbies and interests of adults in the congregation willing to share their passions on a one-time basis or longer.

Model 3. Messy Church

A third model of family/intergeneration learning is *Messy Church* (http://www.messychurch.org.uk, http://messychurchaustralia.com.au) started in 2004 in the UK with a simple question: "How can our small church reach the many families in our community?" Messy Church was created for those outside the church, and became church for them, not a stepping stone to Sunday morning church. Messy Church is church for families who may not find other forms of church appealing and who don't yet belong to a church. There are now thousands of Messy Churches all around the world in most denominations.

A typical Messy Church meets monthly and includes four parts:

1. A flexible, relaxed arrival time with drinks and snacks
2. Creative exploration of a Bible story or theme through many 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 or theme together
3. A short but explicit time of worship with story, music and prayers that builds on the creative exploration that has already occurred.
4. A generous welcome and hospitality is expressed through an invitation to share a delicious home-cooked, sit-down meal with others

The key values which define Messy Church are Christ-centeredness, creativity, and joyful celebration in a spirit of generous, inclusive hospitality. Messy Church tries to focus on people as they are and form relationships with whole families, no strings attached.

Model 4. Intergenerational Vacation Bible School

A fourth, emerging model is family/intergenerational vacation Bible school. Congregations have begun to re-think vacation Bible school, redesigning a child-only experience into a family or intergenerational experience. One approach to intergenerational VBS has all ages participating for three or four evenings in the summer with food, fun, music, learning, and games. The program incorporates typical VBS Bible content and interactive learning, but everything is intergenerational. A typical evening design (3 hours) could look like this: registration, light meal, opening /music, Bible story, outdoor activity/inside craft, and snacks and closing. A second approach begins each evening with a family-style meal. Then the children participate in Bible stories and activities, while the adults (parents, grandparents) participate in an adult-themed session. Families then reunite in the church for music and prayer to close the evening.

Other Models
For additional models of intergenerational faith formation check out the case studies in the two volumes of *Let's Kill Sunday School and Birth Cross+ Gen Ministries* from Faith Inkubators.

#6. Equipping Parents and Grandparents as Faith Formers
Equipping parents and grandparents with the knowledge and skills necessary for faith-forming: how to transmit faith and values to their young people, how to become a Christian role model, and how to build a community of faith at home that nurtures faith growth in the young.

Marcia Bunge has identified practices from the Christian tradition that describe how parents can fulfill their duties as Christian parents. These eight practices are often mentioned in the Christian tradition as ways to strength a child's moral and spiritual development. These practices resonate well with the research on faith transmission and can serve as the basis of programs and resources for equipping parents and grandparents as faith formers of their young people.

1. Reading and discussing the Bible with children.
2. Participating in community worship, family rituals, and traditions of worship and prayer.
3. Introducing children to good examples and mentors.
4. Participating in service projects with parents or other caring adults and teaching financial responsibility.
5. Singing together and exposing children to the spiritual gifts of music and the arts.
6. Appreciating the natural world and cultivating a reverence for creation.
7. Educating children and helping them discern their vocations.
8. Fostering life-giving attitudes toward the body, sexuality, and marriage (14–17).

Christian Smith and Justin Bartkus identify three primary roles parents play in transmitting religion. These three roles can provide a framework and content for developing the faith forming roles and practices of parents and grandparents.

1. *Sponsor of the Faith*: Parents are the point of access between the church and their children. If children are not initially exposed to the Christian faith by their parents, they usually will not be exposed to it at all.

2. *Gatekeeper of the Faith.* Parents have nearly total control over how much and what sorts of religious content their children encounter—whether prayer, reading the Bible, or receiving Communion will occur regularly in their lives; whether they will be exposed to relationships and communities that have a religious dimension, and so forth. Parents are thus the "gatekeeper" of religious content for their children. To use another metaphor, parents are like a faucet, determining whether religious content will arrive in children's lives at an occasional drip or in a regular flow.

3. *Interpreter of the Faith.* Parents are definitive role models, mentors, who embody a specific manner of being Christian. They teach children how to apprehend the world, how to understand what is good and what is evil, how one ought to affectively, intellectually and practically engage with the world, and so on. They do not just "represent" the faith; in many cases, they are the only meaningful embodiment of that faith in the lives of children. Parents render faith a matter of flesh and blood rather than a lifeless mishmash of doctrines and teachings. If children do not "see" the Christian faith in the "face" of their parents, they will likely never gain sufficient familiarity with it to commit to practicing the faith in the long run. (Adapted from Smith and Bartkus, 15)

Content for Parent Programming

There are three major content areas of a parent and grandparent strategy: 1) promoting spiritual and religious growth, 2) developing faith forming skills, and 3) equipping with the knowledge and skills for parenting today. Use this content in developing and curating programming and resources for parents.

Adult spiritual and religious growth. This content needs to be tailored to the four spiritual-religious identities of parents—active, occasional, spiritual/uninvolved, and unaffiliated; and to the traditions, beliefs, and practices of the particular Christian tradition. This content includes the ten characteristics of faith maturing, presented in developmentally appropriate ways for parents.

1. Developing and sustaining a personal relationship and commitment to Jesus Christ
2. Living as a disciple of Jesus Christ and making the Christian faith a way of life
3. Reading and studying the Bible—its message, meaning, and application to life today
4. Learning the Christian story and foundational teachings of the Christian faith (Trinity, Jesus, creed, morality and ethics) and integrating its meaning into ones life
5. Praying—together and by ourselves, and seeking spiritual growth through spiritual disciplines
6. Living with moral integrity guided by Christian ethics and values
7. Living the Christian mission in the world—serving those in need, caring for God's creation, and acting and advocating for justice and peace.
8. Worshipping God with the community at Sunday worship, ritual celebrations, and the seasons of the church year
9. Being actively engaged in the life, ministries, and activities of the faith community
10. Practicing faith in Jesus Christ by using one's gifts and talents within the Christian community and in the world

Faith-forming skills and practices. Based on research findings and the wisdom of the Christian tradition we can identify important skills and practices for faith forming. This content includes, but is not limited to:

- having family conversations about religious topics
- reading and discussing the Bible with children and teens
- prayer as a family and encourage children and teens to pray
- participating in Sunday worship as a family
- celebrating family rituals and milestones
- celebrating holidays and seasons as a family
- engaging in actions of service, justice, and care for creation as a family and encouraging children and teens to serve
- talking about faith and the religious tradition, and providing moral instruction and discussing moral issues with children and teens

Knowledge and skills for parenting. Based on the Developmental Relationships research from the Search Institute we can identify important practices for effective parenting. This content includes, but is not limited to:

- expressing care to young people by listening to them, being dependable, encouraging them, and make them feel known and valued
- challenging young people by expecting them to do their best and live up to their potential
- providing support for my young people by encouraging their efforts and achievements and guiding them to learn and grow
- treating young people with respect, hearing their voice, and including them in decisions that affect them
- inspiring young people to see possibilities for their future, expose them to new experiences and places, and connect them to people who can help them grow
- demonstrating a warm and affirming parenting approach
- creating a warm, caring supportive family environment.
- practicing effective communication skills
- managing "screen time" and social media use
- learning effective discipline practices
- creating a warm, caring supportive family.

Ideas for Parent Programming

Here are a variety of ideas for developing programming around the three content areas of parent and grandparent formation.

1. **Parent website**. A parent or family faith formation website can provide online learning experiences (workshops, webinars, courses, audio podcasts, video programs). A website can provide parents with resources in all three content areas in a variety of media. The website can also extend learning from gathered parent programs. The website can include original programming created by the congregation and curated programming from other sources. Digital initiatives, such as the website

or webinars, provide a way to reach a wider audience of parents in the community. A great example of a website designed for parents is ParentFurther (http://www.parentfurther.com).

2. **Parent programs.** In gathered settings (large group or small group) or online (webinars, online courses, video programs) parent programs can be created and/or curated using the content suggested earlier.

    - Incorporate parent formation and education into congregational events that already engage parents, such as parent preparation programs for baptism, first communion, or confirmation, as well as the celebration of milestones
    - Add a parent-only component to family-intergenerational learning programs that addresses parent faith formation or skills development while their children are participating in child-focused activities. Gather the groups together for a shared experience to put into practice what they learned.
    - Add a parallel parent program to the existing children and adolescent program where parents can gather occasionally while their children are in age-specific programs.
    - Add a parent component to vacation Bible school in the evenings or online.

3. **Laboratory experiences.** Immerse parents in hands-on experiences—with or without their children—that teach knowledge and skills for faith-forming and parenting. A family-centered worship experience can be an opportunity to teach parents about worship, reading the Bible, and how to do these things at home. A church-wide service day can be an opportunity to teach parents about the biblical basis of service and how to integrate service into family life. A church year seasonal celebration can be an opportunity to teach about ritual and how to celebrate rituals and church year seasons at home. These immersion experiences can be supported with online content for parents and for the whole family.

4. **Parent mentors.** Provide guidance and support for parents and the whole family at each stage of life with mentors drawn from the grandparent generation who are actively engaged in church and bring decades of parenting and family life experiences. Congregations can identify and provide training for mentors (mentoring skills, understanding today's family, learning how to access online resources and activities, and more). Developing relationships between parents and mentors can begin with birth/baptism. Mentoring can be life-cycle specific with mentors who focus on children or adolescents. Churches can also identity mentors (spiritual guides) who attend to people's spiritual life, guiding them in growing in their relationship with God and learning more about the Christian faith.

5. **Life cycle or affinity groups for parents**. Create gathered settings (church, home, community) and in online groups (such as a Facebook parents group) that provide opportunities for parents with children in the same age group to talk about parenting, get information and encouragement, discuss family life issues and challenges, and more. Congregations can also sponsor support groups for divorced parents, parents in blended families, parents of children with special needs, and other affinity groupings. An example of a life cycle support group is MOPS (Mothers of Preschoolers).

6. **Have parents practice new skills with their own children during program sessions**. This is in contrast to training programs where no practice takes place or where parents are asked to role-play with another parent or the group leader.

7. **Design programs that engage parents in the learning experience**. Parent programs need to have content that is relevant to parents and processes that help parents learn and want to participate in new learning. Here are several tips for designing and leading effective educational experiences for parents.

   - Create a supportive, caring environment for learning. Greet parents, provide time for them to get acquainted with one another, and encourage mutual support during and after the experience.
   - Actively engage parents in the learning. The amount they learn will be in direct proportion to how much they put into the experience.
   - Let parents be the experts. Show that you value their knowledge and experience by giving them opportunities to contribute to the learning experience.
   - Tie the learning activities around the parents' experiences and values so they know "this is for me and about my family."
   - Focus the content on real needs, issues, and concerns, not just on content that parents ought to know. If, for example, you want to help parents teach their child/teen about healthy concepts of right and wrong, first identify the ways this connects with parents' needs or concerns regarding moral values, then develop the experience to reflect those concerns.
   - Include information and skills parents can put into action immediately. Such application reinforces and helps parents internalize what they learn.
   - Demonstrate how to use skills and practices during the program so that parents have a direct experience of how to use the skills or practice at home.
   - Provide resources that parents can use for their own personal growth and with their family. Consider developing a parent website with resources and links to websites to enhance and expand the learning experience.

8. **Use a variety of environments and methods to engage all parents, anytime and anywhere**. Use a variety of settings—independent, mentored, at home, in small groups, in large groups, church-wide, in the community, and in the world—to offer a diversity of programs as well as to offer the same program content in multiple learning environments. This provides parents with more options to participate and broadens the scope of parent formation and education offerings.

9. **Use online platforms and digitally enabled strategies**. Utilize the abundance of digital media and tools for parent formation and education—to engage parents anytime, anyplace, and just-in-time—and extend and expand faith formation from physical, face-to-face settings into their daily lives through digital content and mobile delivery systems.

   Online platforms for parents (websites) integrate the content (programs, activities, resources), connect people to the content and to each other, provide continuity for people across different learning experiences, and make everything available anytime, anywhere, 24-7-365. Digital media tools and resources—social media (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and more), webinars and online learning, video conferencing, videos, audio podcasts, and much more—provide more features in

designing parent programs, more methods for delivering programs, and more ways to connecting parents to each other.

10. **Give parents a plan**. Reggie Joiner and the Think Orange team emphasize how important it is to give families a plan. "When parents show up at church, they are often asking silent questions that we must answer; questions they don't even know they're asking. To begin looking at parents through a different filter, imagine that every time a parent walks through the door, he or she is asking you to do three things:

- *Give me the plan*. Most parents are parenting reactively, yet many of them desire to be proactive. They want a plan that will give them a system of support, consistent influence, and a steady flow of relevant information. In essence, what they need from the church is a partner.
- *Show me how it works*. Parents need to be influences as much as children do, and they desire to be engaged in the process in a way that prompts them to take the best next step. Church leadership has the potential to challenge them collectively and give them a network of families to connect with personally.
- *Tell me what to do today*. If we are going to truly partner with parents, we have to give them specific instructions or resources to use this week. Sometimes parents have a lack of vision, but often they just don't know where to start. Give parents a map and a schedule. (Joiner 2010, 89–90)

Part 4. Digital Strategies for Faith Formation

We need to design faith formation with digital strategies embedded in them. We need to design faith formation that is mobile; that takes advantage of the abundance of content so we can personalize faith formation; that provides an activity or program in multiple formats so that people can learn in the way they learn best; that utilizes a website as a hub for faith formation and online classrooms for programming; and that provides micro-faith forming activities/experiences that connect together into a seamless faith formation program.

Design faith formation that is *digitally-enabled*—blending gathered community settings with online learning environments and utilizing the abundance of digital media and tools for learning and faith formation; and *digitally-connected*—linking intergenerational faith community experiences, peer experiences and programs, and daily/home life using online and digital media and/or reaching people at home and in daily life with online faith formation content and experiences.

Fully Online	Mostly Online	Online and Gathered	Gathered and Online Content	Gathered with Online Content
An online program with all learning done online and limited face-to-face, gathered learning settings	A mostly online program with opportunities for regular interaction in face-to-face, gathered settings	Online learning focused on presenting the content of the program *combined with* face-to-face, gathered sessions using active learning methods to discuss, practice and apply the content.	A gathered event or program that provides online content and activities to extend and expand the learning from the gathered program	A gathered event or program that uses online content as part of the design of the event or program

Here are five strategies for using digitally enabled strategies in faith formation.

1. **Extend Programming**: We can extend gathered events and programs into people's daily lives by providing online content that helps people to go deeper. For example, we can extend Sunday worship into the home and daily life with daily Bible readings, prayer activities, learning activities, faith conversations, and more.

   We can extend an age group program with online activities that deepen knowledge and provide application activities or projects. We can extend intensive programs like VBS or camp or retreats with regular online content and activities.

2. **Flip Programming**: We can "flip the classroom or program" by creating a digital platform to provide the content that people would learn in the gathered setting in an online learning space using print, audio, video, and more. And then transform the gathered program using interactive activities, discussion, project-based learning, and practice and demonstration.

   We can redesign children's faith formation so that children and their parents are learning online at home and doing activities together, and then refocusing "class time" to engage children in creating projects and activities that demonstrate their learning.

   We can design a high school confirmation program that provides the content that used to be taught in the weekly sessions in an online platform for individual learning—watching videos, reading short materials, and writing a reflection journals; engages the young people in small groups during the month to discuss their online learning; and then meets monthly in a large group gathered session for discussion, interactive activities, and application of the content to living as a Christian today. During the year retreats, worship, and service projects offer additional gathered sessions. One example of the type of video content for adolescents is the Video Catechism, produced by the Catholic Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston, WV (vcat.org), that provides short videos for the major teachings in the Catholic Catechism. There are similar types of video program in all Christian traditions.

3. **Online Programming**: We can develop a complete online faith formation experience with faith forming content and experiences. For example we can build an online "forty-day Lenten curriculum" that connects the Lent events at church with online content for experiencing and practicing Lent in daily and home life. We can include prayer activities, daily Bible readings, daily devotions, Lent study resources, videos, service activities, and more.

   We can use video conferencing with services like Zoom.us to create webinar programming for adolescents, parents, and the whole family. For example we can create a monthly one-hour parent formation webinar program delivered to parents at home using a video conferencing program like Zoom. We can build the program around the knowledge, skills, and practices for effective parenting and for parent as faith formers. Invite a guest presenter and invite parents to participate online. Sponsor two or three parent dinners during the year (with babysitting) for parents to gather in-person to meet each other, discuss the webinars, etc.

We can also set up online faith formation centers with resources for people to access 24x7. For example, we can providing an online prayer and spirituality center where people can access daily prayer reflections and devotions, offer prayer intentions, pray for others, learn about spiritual practices, download prayer activities for the home, and more.

4. **Multiple-format Programming**: We can develop multiple formats for gathered programs by video and/or audio recording programs and then developing small group and independent programming using the video or audio content. Produce a webpage with the video or audio content and the programming for small groups and independent learning. Use social media (like a Facebook group) or an online classroom to facilitate online interaction and discussion. This provides a great way to offer other ways for people who cannot participate in the fixed time program to access the content and engage in learning at a time that works best for them.

5. **Prepare and Follow-Up Programming**: We can utilize online formats to prepare people for an event or program, such as the celebration of a sacrament or milestone, or participation in a mission trip. This is an especially helpful process when it is difficult to gather people for the preparation and/or follow-up. Use the online platform to *prepare* people for the event with the appropriate content (experiences, activities, video/audio, and resources). *Engage* people in the event or program. Use the online platform to *sustain and apply* the learning and growth with appropriate content (experiences, activities, video/audio, and resources). Use social media (like a Facebook group) or an online classroom (like Edmodo or Google Classroom) to facilitate online interaction and discussion.

Part 5. Personalizing Faith Formation

There are two ways to design a personalized plan for faith formation. The first utilizes a *Pathways Guide* to help people discern their faith growth needs and then provides *Playlists* of content, experiences, and activities to address those needs. The second approach personalizes a congregation's faith formation offerings by tailoring them to distinct faith growth needs through a variety of *Playlists* and inviting people to select the activities that best address their spiritual and religious journey.

Approach One: Personalize the Faith Pathways for People

A *Pathways Guide* is a process for helping people discern where they are in their faith journey and to chart a path for faith growth—to get from where they are to a closer relationship with Jesus and a deeper practice of the Christian faith.. People should be able to clearly understand where they are in their faith journey and their next steps in faith growth. They don't have to do everything, they just need to do the one next thing.

A *Pathway* focuses on faith maturing. The goal of a Pathway is to develop disciples and promote faith growth. A Pathway is created around the church's vision of discipleship and maturing faith—identifying characteristics of faith maturing that can be used for people to discern their faith journey and chart a path for growth.

Approach One uses the ten faith maturing characteristics (or similar characteristics from your Christian tradition) to create a *Pathways Guide* to help people discern their faith growth needs, and then design

Playlists of content and experiences that address each characteristic. The *Pathways Guide* incorporates a rating scale for discerning faith growth needs, for example: Getting Started, Growing, Going Deeper.

Playlists of content and experiences are developed for each characteristic with activities targeted to each rating on the discernment continuum (getting started, growing, going deeper). There are *Playlists* for each "level" on the continuum. *Playlists* incorporate a variety of programming including gathered programs at church, small groups, online learning and resources, mentoring, and more. The *Playlists* are published on a digital platform to make it easy for people to access them. They can also be connected to an online classroom like Google Classroom or Edmodo.

Approach One works well around major milestones and sacrament preparation, providing a way to connect with people where they are in their faith journey and personalizing their preparation experience. Create a *Pathways Guide* for Christian initiation and new member formation, marriage, baptism, first communion, confirmation. A *Pathways Guide* can be used at the beginning of a new year of gathered faith formation programming to provide a more personalized experience for people. A *Pathways Guide* can be used with parents to discern the growth needs of parents and the whole family at parent meetings and family-centered programming. It works best in an environment where you can guide people in discerning their faith growth needs and connecting them to *Playlist* that is designed for them.

> **Design Process**
> 1. Identify a target audience(s): children, adolescents, parents, and/or the whole family.
> 2. Identify how and where you will use the *Pathways Guide*.
> 3. Develop the characteristics of faith growth you want to use in your *Pathways Guide*. Use the ten characteristics of maturing faith or use characteristics of faith growth specific to the content of the event or program (such as preparing for confirmation).
> 4. Develop a 'discernment continuum" that gives people a way to reflect on their current growth. Use a faith growth continuum: Getting Started, Growing or Making Progress, Going Deeper; or a rating scale: How true is each statement for you: 1= not true from me , 3=somewhat true for me, 5=very true for me.

Approach Two: Personalize the Faith Formation Offerings

A second approach to personalizing faith formation, when you cannot use a *Pathways Guide* with people, is to offer a variety of content, experiences, and activities developed around the ten characteristics or the program's content, and tailored to the different faith growth needs of people (getting started, growing, going deeper). In Approach Two the *Playlists* provide the way to personalize faith formation. For example, to help children, adolescents, parents, or the whole family read and study the Bible, we can offer three different types of Bible content and experiences for those who are getting started, growing, and going deeper. These activities can be online, gathered, small group, family-centered, and more. All of the content and experiences are published on a digital platform for people to access.

Faith Formation Playlists

A faith formation playlist is a curated group of digital (online, video, audio, print) and gathered (church, home, small groups, etc.) faith forming experiences and resources that are tailored to the specific faith growth needs of people around a particular characteristic of faith maturing or theme/topic. Playlists are developed for each "stage" on the discernment continuum, such as Getting Started, Growing, Going Deeper. Each playlist provides a variety of ways for people to learn and grow in faith.

Playlists incorporate intergenerational, family, age group, and online/digital faith forming content, experiences, and activities. In Chapters Two through Four you identified an abundance of current and new programming that can be utilized in creating *Playlists* of content, experiences, programs, and activities for children, adolescents, parents, and the whole family. Here's a checklist for designing *Playlists*.

Design Process
1. Develop *Playlists* for a target audience: children, adolescents, parents, or the whole family.
2. Select content and experiences to address each faith maturing characteristic with activities for each "level" of discernment, e.g., Getting Started, Growing, Going Deeper. Use the four types of content and experiences in your *Playlists* as appropriate: intergenerational, family age-specific, and online and digital. Some of the resources and programming will apply to multiple "levels" of faith growth needs. Review the "Curating Resources" section to develop a process for finding, reviewing, and using resources, especially digital resources, in designing your *Playlists*.
3. Using a variety of settings or environments for faith growth: independent, mentored, at home, small group, large group, intergenerational /whole church, and world.
4. Address the ways people learn through a variety of activities: verbal-linguistic (word/book smart), logical-mathematical (number/logic smart), visual-spatial (art/picture smart), bodily-kinesthetic (body/movement smart), musical-rhythmic (music/sound smart), naturalist (nature/environment smart), interpersonal (people/group smart), intrapersonal (self/introspection smart).
5. Use a variety of methods: reading; writing/keeping a journal; storytelling and creating stories; watching feature films, TV shows, videos; creating a media project or video; viewing or creating art; viewing or taking photographs; watching drama or acting; listening to or creating a podcast; listening to or creating music; conducting a demonstration or exhibit; experiencing games, simulations, video games; analyzing or creating a case study; developing an apprenticeship or internship; experiencing prayer and rituals; creating prayer experiences; taking a field trip; participating in a mission trip; engaging in or creating a service/action project; developing a mentor relationship; and more.
6. Publish the *Playlists* on a digital platform and use social media for connection, interaction, and sharing learning reflections. You can add the playlists to your existing church website or create a website just for faith formation and link it to your church website. Building a website is made much easier today by the availability of online website builders that provide predesigned website templates, drag-and-drop features to create webpages, and hosting for the website. Three popular website builders to explore are *Weebly*, *Wix*, and *Squarespace*. All three have easy to use features and very reasonable subscription fees. For advanced users *WordPress* provides thousands of predesigned templates, lots of customization features, and ready-to-use apps. *WordPress* does require an understanding of web design and some programming ability.

Part 6. Curating Resources for Faith Formation

One of the essential skills for developing Playlists of rich content and experiences is learning how to *curate* high quality faith formation content in all forms and media that can engage people in learning and growing in developmentally appropriate ways targeted to their faith growth needs.

Curation may be a new word for many, but it has a long history. The term *curator* comes from the Latin word *curare* meaning "to care for." Every time we visit a museum we experience the work of museum curators who acquire, care for, develop, display, and interpret a collection of artifacts or works of art in order to inform, educate, and entertain us. Museum curators are subject-matter experts who guide a museum's overall art collection. Librarians have a similar curation task—they curate books and media in a variety of forms, including digital—to inform, educate, and entertain us. Like museum curators, librarians have done this for centuries. The Library of Alexandria (Egypt) in the ancient world have had curators over two thousand years ago!

A content curator is someone who continually finds, groups, organizes, and shares the best and most relevant content on a specific subject to match the needs of a specific audience. Content curators provide a personalized, high-quality selection of the best and most relevant content and resources available. They do not create more content, but make sense of all the content that others are creating.

How does curation apply to faith formation? When faith formation was a matter of selecting the right print resource or program from the right religious publisher, there was little need for curation. Leaders simply selected the right resource. But even in the era of "the resource is the curriculum," many faith formation leaders were curators. To design home-grown programming they would search through print resource, films, and music to design a retreat or a youth meeting or an adult topical series or a parent workshop. They never thought of themselves as curators, but that is what they were doing—searching through a variety of resources, selecting the most appropriate resources to match with the needs of the people and the program, and then using the resource in the program design.

We now live in a era where there is an abundance of religious content in digital form—audio, video, apps, e-books, websites—and in print form. We are benefiting from the rise of online resource centers with freely accessible, high quality religious content and experiences that congregations, families, and individuals can access. In the new digital world of abundant resources, the role of the faith-formation leader is shifting from *providing* religious content and programming to *curating* religious content and experiences for all ages.

So what is a faith formation curator? A faith formation curator is a trusted guide who continually finds, groups, organizes, and connects the best and most relevant content and resources on a specific subject to match the needs of a specific audience. The resources can come in many forms: people resources, programs at church and in the community, and media resources (print, audio, video, online, digital). Curation is the way that faith formation leaders connect programming with high quality resources.

We can identify three steps in the process of curating faith formation: 1) research and organize resources, 2) evaluate resources, and 3) connect the resources to programming. The research and

organize phase of the process is continuous. Good curators are always searching for new resources and organizing them for future use.

Step 1. Research and Organize the Resources

The first step in the curation process is researching and reviewing resources. This is the collection phase. There's no need to select or evaluate resources at this stage—the key is to collect as many high-quality resources for faith formation for children, adolescents, parents, and families.

It is helpful to develop a list of trusted expert curators to assist you in researching and evaluating resources. We all know people in faith formation who make it part of their work to stay current with the best resources. Make a list of these people and invite them to be part of the curation support system.

It is also helpful to develop a list of high-quality online resource centers with high-quality content. Be selective—this does not have to be a long list of websites. Select resource centers with well-produced content. Review websites from national and regional denominational agencies, religious publishers, churches, and religious organizations online faith formation content for children, adolescents, parents, and families. For a list of online resources for faith formation go to the "Curation" section of the LifelongFaith.com website.

Be sure to subscribe to faith formation blogs and newsletters that review faith formation resources to make it easier for you to keep up-to-date on what's new. Blogs and newsletters are produced by individuals, denominational offices, seminaries, religious organizations, and religious publishers. A good example of a faith formation blog (and online resource center) is *Building Faith* (www.buildfaith.org) from Virginia Theological Seminary.

Here is a checklist of the types of resources to research:

- People: teachers, mentors/guides, program leaders, small group leaders, guest presenters
- Community programs: churches, agencies, organizations,
- Educational institutions: colleges, seminaries, educational organizations
- Retreat and spiritual life centers, monasteries
- Regional and national denominational programs, events, and websites
- Museums
- Books (with study guides)
- E-books
- Apps
- Audio podcasts
- Audio learning programs
- Videos, feature films, and TV shows
- Video learning programs
- Online courses
- Online activities

One of the easiest ways to develop a library of faith formation resources is to create homegrown resources by saving and archiving church programming. Develop a plan for recording presentations and programs at church in audio/and or video format. Think of all of the opportunities throughout the year for recording program that can be used in other learning formats such as self-study or small group study. Consider weekly sermons, presentations, special events, concerts, and more. Develop a YouTube channel for the congregation to store and categorize all of the video recordings.

Step 2. Evaluate Resources

Every faith formation curator needs standards for evaluating faith formation resources that reflect their Christian tradition and the needs of their congregation. A set of evaluation standards needs to be developed locally. Consult denominational resources for evaluating curriculum resources. Most denominations have evaluation standards for assessing educational resources or textbooks. This can serve as a basis for developing the congregation's evaluation standards.

Here are ten categories for developing a resource evaluation checklist. Add one or more focusing questions to each category. Try to keep the checklist short so that it is easy to use. Use the evaluation criteria to review potential resources.

1. Biblical content and interpretation
2. Theological content and emphasis
3. Developmental appropriateness
4. Ethnic-cultural appropriateness
5. Inclusive of diversity
6. Respect for diverse ways of learning
7. Appearance and visual appeal
8. Ease-of-use
9. Quality of experience
10. Ability to be incorporated into daily and home life

Step 3. Select Resources for Playlists

Select the best resources for your target audience—children, adolescents, parents, and the whole family to match with each faith maturing characteristic on your *Pathways Guide* and with the different "levels" of faith growth. Select content and experiences for your *Playlists* that include intergenerational, family age-specific, and online and digital.

Example: Parent Faith Growth Pathway

Here is an example of a *Parent Pathways Guide* to help them identify their strengths and areas of growth in their faith life, and as faith formers of their children and adolescents. All of the items are based on the ten characteristics of faith maturing. Parents respond by answering the question: "How true each statement is for you" using the rating scale: 1 = Rarely true of me, 2 = Sometimes true of me, 3 = Occasionally true of me , 4 = Almost always true of me, 5 = Always true of me.

1. I am growing in a personal relationship with Jesus Christ.   1 2 3 4 5
2. My faith shapes how I think and act each and every day.   1 2 3 4 5
3. I make the Christian faith a way of life by integrating my beliefs into the   1 2 3 4 5
    conversation, decisions, and actions of daily life.
4. I am aware of God present and active in my own life, the lives of others, and the   1 2 3 4 5
    life of the world.
5. I have a real sense that God is guiding me.   1 2 3 4 5
6. I seek spiritual growth by actively pursuing questions of faith, learning what it   1 2 3 4 5
    means to believe in God, and what it's like to be a disciple of Jesus Christ.
7. I devote time to reading and studying the Bible.   1 2 3 4 5
8. I use the Bible to discover how I should think and act.   1 2 3 4 5
9. I pray to God and take quiet time to reflect and listen to God.   1 2 3 4 5
10. I am growing spiritually through spiritual practices such as contemplation, praying   1 2 3 4 5
    Scripture, daily reflection, and meditation.
11. I can articulate the fundamental teachings of the Christian faith.   1 2 3 4 5
12. I am growing in my understanding of the Christian faith—beliefs, traditions, and
    practices.
13. I exercise moral responsibility by applying Christian ethics, virtues, and values to   1 2 3 4 5
    making moral decisions.
14. My Christian faith helps me know right from wrong.   1 2 3 4 5
15. I live a life of service by caring for others and reaching out those in need.   1 2 3 4 5
16. I am involved in ways to promote social justice and address injustice in the world.   1 2 3 4 5
17. I am involved in actions to care for creation.   1 2 3 4 5
18. I share the Good News of Jesus through my words and actions.   1 2 3 4 5
19. I participate actively and regularly in the worship life of the church community.   1 2 3 4 5
20. I participate in the life, ministries, and leadership of the church community.   1 2 3 4 5

Areas Where I Need to "Get Started" (look at the 1 and 2 rating)

Areas Where I Need to "Grow" (look at the 2 and 3 ratings)

Areas Where I Want to "Go Deeper" (look at the 4 and 5 ratings)

Example: Family Practices Pathway

Here is an example of a *Family Pathways Guide* for parents to help identify their strengths and areas of growth as a family. All of the items are based on the ten characteristics of faith maturing. Parents respond by answering the question: "How true each statement is for you" using the rating scale: 1 = Rarely true of me, 2 = Sometimes true of me, 3 = Occasionally true of me , 4 = Almost always true of me, 5 = Always true of me.

1.	We eat together as a family.	1 2 3 4 5
2.	We engage in positive communication as a family.	1 2 3 4 5
3.	We have family conversations about things that are important to us.	1 2 3 4 5
4.	We make decisions and solve problems as a family.	1 2 3 4 5
5.	We treat each other with respect and dignity.	1 2 3 4 5
6.	We support each other: encouraging, expressing care, standing up for each other.	1 2 3 4 5
7.	I demonstrate a warm and affirming parenting approach.	1 2 3 4 5
8.	I create a warm, caring supportive family environment.	1 2 3 4 5
9.	I practice effective communication skills with my children/teens.	
10.	We talk about faith as a family.	1 2 3 4 5
11.	We pray as a family (meal time, bedtime).	1 2 3 4 5
12.	We pray as a family during times of struggle or crisis.	1 2 3 4 5
13.	I encourage my children/teens to pray.	
14.	I provide moral instruction and how to decide right and wrong.	1 2 3 4 5
15.	We celebrate meaningful traditions and rituals as a family (holidays, birthdays, accomplishments, etc.).	1 2 3 4 5
16.	We read the Bible as a family.	1 2 3 4 5
17.	We use the Bible as guidance for how we should think and act as a family.	1 2 3 4 5
18.	I encourage my children/teens to read the Bible.	
19.	We serve people in need as a family.	1 2 3 4 5
20.	We work to overcome injustice in our world as a family.	1 2 3 4 5
21.	We engage in projects to care for the environment as a family.	1 2 3 4 5
22.	I encourage my children/teens to talk about their doubts and questions about faith.	1 2 3 4 5
23.	I talk about faith and our religious tradition with our children and teens.	1 2 3 4 5
24.	I ask about out children/teens perspectives on faith, religion, moral issues, social issues, etc.	1 2 3 4 5
25.	We participate in Sunday worship as a family.	1 2 3 4 5
26.	We participate in church activities as a family.	1 2 3 4 5
27.	We celebrate the church year seasons at church (Advent, Christmas, Lent, Easter).	1 2 3 4 5
28.	We celebrate the seasons of the church year at home (Advent, Christmas, Lent, Easter).	1 2 3 4 5
29.	I encourage and support our children/teens to participate in church activities.	1 2 3 4 5
30.	I encourage our children and teens to pursue their talents and interests.	1 2 3 4 5
31.	I work with my children/teens to manage "screen time" and social media use.	1 2 3 4 5
32.	I express care to my children/teens by listening to them, being dependable, encouraging them, and make them feel known and valued.	1 2 3 4 5
33.	I challenge my children/teens by expecting them to do their best and live up to their potential.	1 2 3 4 5
34.	I provide support for my children/teens by encouraging their efforts and achievements and guiding them to learn and grow.	1 2 3 4 5
35.	I treat my children/teens with respect, hearing their voice, and including them in decisions that affect them.	1 2 3 4 5
36.	I inspire my children/teens to see possibilities for their future, expose them to new experiences and places, and connect them to people who can help them grow.	1 2 3 4 5

Areas We Are Strong as a Family (Review ratings of 4 and 5.) . . . .
Areas We Need to Grow as a Family (Review ratings 1, 2, and 3) . . . .

Part 7. Designing Family Faith Formation

1. **Describe the target audience (one or more): Families with Young Children, Families with Older Children, Families with Young Adolescents, Families with Older Adolescents, Parents**
   - Who is your target audience? Develop a profile of your target audience by describing the life stage & religious-spiritual characteristics of your target audience. What are their greatest needs or interests?
   - What challenges are you trying to address in reaching/engaging your target audience?

2. **Develop creative responses:**
   - What are you currently doing with the target audience - programs, activities, etc.? How is your target audience currently engaged in parish life?
   - What do you need to strengthen in your current approach?
   - What do you need to eliminate or redesign in your current approach?
   - What do you need to create? How can you creatively address the needs and interests of your audience? Imagine the types of experiences, programs, activities, resources you could offer.
   - How will you use the six family faith formation strategies:
        - #1. Nurturing Family Faith Practices
        - #2. Celebrating Milestones
        - #3. Celebrating the Seasons of the Year
        - #4. Reading the Bible through the Year
        - #5. Family & Intergenerational Programming
        - #6. Equipping Parents and Grandparents as Faith Formers

3. **Identify potential directions:**
   - Review your list of what to strengthen, redesign, and/or create: Which ideas, strategies, programs, activities have the most promise?
   - Do your ideas respond to the challenges you are trying to address in reaching/engaging your target audience.
   - Select the ideas you would like to develop.

4. **Design for the four religious-spiritual identities:**
   - People with a vibrant faith and relationship with God who are engaged in the faith community.
   - People who participate occasionally in the faith community and whose faith is not central to their lives.
   - People who are uninvolved in a church but spiritual.
   - People who are unaffiliated and have left involvement in organized religion.

5. **Personalize the process and the faith formation offerings with a variety of content, methods, times, and formats designed to engage all people.**

6. **Use digitally enabled and connected strategies to enhance and expand faith formation. Design a website platform and a social media strategy.**

7. **Develop the complete faith formation plan, implementation steps, and timeline.**