



Moving Faith Formation Online

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Many churches have cancelled gathered faith formation programs (and even Sunday worship) to prevent the spread of the Coronavirus in their communities. But that doesn't mean faith formation needs to stop. One way we can respond is to move faith formation online and into people's homes and personal lives.

Digital Tools for Online Programming

You will need a few digital tools to make online programming effective. Here are a few essentials:

- **Website:** Create special pages on your church's website or create a special website for online faith formation. One of the easiest tools for creating a website for online programming is Weebly (<https://www.weebly.com>). They have a basic plan that is free (you can always upgrade if you need it). It would be easy to create several webpages of content. Weebly will host your site and provide a free domain name.
- **E-Newsletter:** Create a weekly e-newsletter with the learning activities for the week. Use your church's email or use an online email service like MailChimp (<https://mailchimp.com>) or ConstantContact (<https://www.constantcontact.com>). MailChimp is free for up to 2000 names. ConstantContact is \$20 per month for up to 500 and \$45 per month for 501-2500 (there is also a nonprofit discount).
- **Texting:** Use texting to send reminders and links to activities on the faith formation website. There are a variety of texting apps (free) that you can use with iOS and Android. Check out GroupMe – app and web-based interface (<https://groupme.com/en-US>), Telegram—app and web-based interface (<https://telegram.org>), WhatsApp (<https://www.whatsapp.com>), and Viber (<https://www.viber.com>).
- **Facebook Group:** Organize Facebook Groups that are targeted to the audience for each of your online programs. You can organize groups for adults to discuss the Sunday Scripture readings or to share insights from an online Bible study or theology course. You can organize groups for parents to share their family experiences with the Bible story of the week or prayer practice.
- **Online Learning Platform:** There are members of your church (such as a teacher) who have experience in using online learning platforms like Edmodo (<https://new.edmodo.com>). Edmodo is free for individual teachers and classes. An online learning platform provides a way to connect children and youth (and parents) with teachers/leaders and the content in a safe environment. This can provide a long-term format for blending gathered and online learning.

Strategies for Online Programming

Here are a few ideas to help you think about how to organize online programming for the people in your church. Since it's online you might want to partner with other churches in your area to develop the digital platform and curate the resources.

1. **Redesign your gathered program into an online program.** Use the lesson plans or program designs you already have and redesign them into self-directed online learning sessions for individual or family use. You can publish these sessions on a website or use a learning platform like Edmodo. You can also create a Facebook Group for interaction and discussion.
2. **Focus on the Sunday Scripture readings and/or the church year season.** There is an abundance of resources on the Sunday readings that would make it easy to develop a webpage for each Sunday with the readings, a video, a podcast, and activities for different age groups.
3. **Develop a weekly theme or focus for the online program.** This could take the form of a "Bible Story of the Week" or a "Christian Practice of the Week." Develop a webpage with the content (print, audio, video) and activities for the week.
4. **Develop online mini-courses.** This could take the form of a short course on prayer practices (varieties of ways to pray) or the study of a book of the Bible (pick a book with lots of online resources like the Gospels) or an exploration of social justice issues (lots of video and websites to explore different issues).
5. **Use live streaming for presentations or a mini-course:** Offer a presentation or course online via streaming that is delivered to people at home. The guest presenter and the host are the only people online while everyone watches on their laptop, tablet, or television. People can ask questions via a chat box. Live streaming can be used for all age groups. You can use Zoom video conferencing (<https://zoom.us>), which is free for a 40 minute session, or Facebook Live (<https://www.facebook.com/facebookmedia/solutions/facebook-live>), also free.
6. **Provide a variety of resources for independent learning.** There are so many online programs that we can offer people, especially adults. Develop a webpage for self-directed independent learning with courses from seminaries, universities, websites, etc.

Online Resources

I have selected a variety of great resources that are either free or low cost that you can use to develop online faith formation programming for all ages in your faith community. Many of these resources can be utilized to provide weekly faith formation for all ages in your faith community. If you are using a published program or textbook from a Christian publisher, be sure to check-out their website for online learning resources. Several publishers have produced digital versions of their textbooks.

A good resource for keeping up to date on faith formation resources is the **Building Faith** blog and website from the Center for Ministry of Teaching. Building Faith offers practical resources for ministry with children, youth, and adults with articles, advice, reviews, features, and resources for Christian formation with people of all ages. Go to <https://buildfaith.org>.

Children's Faith Formation (and Parents)

Bible App for Kids: <https://bibleappforkids.com>

The Bible App for Kids is a free app for Android, Apple, and Kindle devices, available in over 50 languages. The App introduces children to 41 of the "big" Bible stories and helps them understand the overall story that the Bible is telling. Throughout each story, fun, interactive animations keep children engaged, and select stories even include games designed to help them learn, understand, and retain important Bible story concepts.

Catholic Kids Media: [YouTube Channel](#)

Catholic Kids Media provides quality Catholic programming for kids to help parents and teachers instruct children in the Catholic faith and practices. These videos tackle questions such as "What is the Eucharist?" and "What is the Trinity?"

Children's Ministry: <https://childrensministry.com>

ChildrensMinistry.com from Group Publishing has a library of lesson plans for all children of all ages on a wide variety of themes or topics, as well as on holidays throughout the year. In addition to the library of lesson plans, there is a library of Bible activities and teaching tips for leaders.

Episcopal Children's Curriculum (ECC): [Curriculum Website](#)

The Episcopal Children's Curriculum is a thematic Sunday school curriculum tied to the seasons of the church year. It was developed by the Center for the Ministry of Teaching under the direction of the Rev. Locke E. Bowman, Jr. and [Amelia J. Dyer, Ph.D.](#) Although no longer in print, ECC curriculum materials are available for free download.

Lesson Plans that Work: <https://lessonplansthatwork.org>

Published by The Episcopal Church and designed to follow the Revised Common Lectionary, these lesson weekly plans include sessions for young children, for older children, and usually a lesson plan for adults. Intergenerational lesson plans are available for many major feast days throughout the liturgical year. Most lesson plans are based on the Gospel, and some also have an Old Testament Lesson Plan.

Life.Church Open Network Resources for Young Children: <https://open.life.church/categories/301-early-childhood>

Created to work in tandem with the Bible App for Kids, the Life.Church Open Network curriculum features interactive videos, leader training, in-class activities, and all support materials. This 23-unit, two-year curriculum teaches young children about Jesus and allows them to reinforce what they learn in church at home through the app.

Life.Church Open Network Resources for Elementary Age Children:

<https://open.life.church/categories/301-early-childhood>

The Life.Church Open Network elementary curriculum includes colorful, Bible-based series for elementary students of all ages. You'll find free lessons, videos, art, teacher guides, and in-class activities for children in 1st grade through 4th grade.

Loyola Press Catholic Resources: <https://www.loyolapress.com/our-catholic-faith>

Loyola Press Catholic Resources are a library of activities for the family, liturgical year, prayer, sacraments, saints, Scripture and tradition, and Ignatian spirituality.

Ministry to Children: <https://ministry-to-children.com>

Ministry to Children provides free lessons, activities, and printables. Download a single lesson plan or choose a curriculum series. There are thousands of Bible lesson plans and activities. You can search by Scripture, Bible story, or theme.

Minno Kids (formerly JellyTelly): <https://www.gominno.com>

Instantly stream or download thousands of hand-picked episodes reflecting the Christian faith and values including 30 episodes of class VeggieTales and shows like What's in the Bible, Superbook, Friends and Heroes, and more. The goal is to help families connect with God through amazing stories, books, and resources. The monthly cost per family is \$6.99 (or \$69.99 per year

Saddleback Kids Videos: [YouTube Channel](#)

On this channel you'll see some of the videos Saddleback Church produces for Saddleback Kids curriculum, including a variety of Bible story videos that can easily be organized into a Bible program for children.

The Religion Teacher: <https://www.thereligionteacher.com>

The Religion Teacher provides a large collection of Catholic religious education activities for various liturgical seasons, topics, and age levels. The activities include crafts, worksheets, prayer ideas, etc.

Adolescent Faith Formation

Catholic Video Catechism for Teens: <http://vcat.org>

The Video Catechism for Teens includes videos developed around the Creed, sacraments, morality, and prayer. At the heart of each video is a key message from the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, presented in stories and language that make it more understandable for young people.

Episcopal Curriculum for Youth: [Curriculum Website](#)

Episcopal Curriculum for Youth (ECY) is a thematic program developed by the Center for the Ministry of Teaching at Virginia Theological Seminary under the direction of [Dr. Amy Gearey Dyer](#). Although it is no longer in print, all curriculum materials are available for free download. CY is offered in modular format for maximum flexibility. The materials may be used in any order for classes, retreats, or youth group meetings.

Faith Lens (ELCA): Faith Lens: <https://blogs.elca.org/faithlens>

Faith Lens provides weekly Bible studies that engage youth and young adults in connecting world events with the Bible, faith, and everyday life.

Life.Church Open Network Resources for Grades 6-12: <https://open.life.church/categories/267-6-12th-grade>

Life.Church Open Network makes available engaging video dramas and Bible-based topics from the Switch curriculum for middle and high school series—complete with leader guides, youth pastor notes, video promos, and activities. There are over 100 topical sessions available for download.

Saint Mary's Press Resource Center: <http://www.smp.org/resourcecenter>

The Saint Mary's Press Resource Center presents hundreds of free activities, videos, and teachings organized by theme (church, Jesus, morality, prayer, sacraments, Scripture, social justice). liturgical resources (liturgical events, prayer, and seasonal activities), activities, and media.

Youth Ministry: <https://youthministry.com>

YouthMinistry.com from Group Publishing is a library of ideas, lessons, events, and service opportunities for youth ministry. The Lessons and Resources section provides ideas and inspiration for creating, planning and delivering weekly youth lessons.

Adult Faith Formation

(For Bible versions/translations online the best source is Bible Gateway: www.biblegateway.com.)

BibleProject (<https://bibleproject.com>) and The Bible Project TV (<https://bibleproject.com/stream>)

BibleProject is a nonprofit animation studio that produces short-form, fully animated Bible videos, podcasts, and Bible resources to make the biblical story accessible to everyone, everywhere. People can now stream BibleProject videos on their television at home using the most popular streaming devices: Roku, Amazon Firestick, and Apple TV.

Chuck Knows Church (Videos): <https://chuckknowschurch.com>

Chuck Knows Church who helps people learn more about our church while inviting them to have deeper conversations. The Original Series is all the objects, symbols and terms we often hear in church. There are more than 100 episodes (2-6 minutes in length) available on a variety of topics that can easily be combined into multi-session programs.

Church Next - Online Adult Faith Formation: <https://www.churchnext.tv/p/churchnext>

ChurchNext provides a wide variety of adult faith formation courses from expert teachers in Scripture, liturgy, and important Christian topics for a small fee. Adults can interact in a safe, online environment that's convenient, engaging, and affordable. They also have videos on YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/user/ChurchNext>.

Daily Discipleship and Daily Faith Practices (ELCA): <https://www.elca.org/Resources/Bible-Studies>

Daily Discipleship and Daily Faith Practices are downloadable Bible studies based on the lectionary used at Sunday worship (Revised Common Lectionary). These two-page Bible Studies connect the Word of God with daily life experiences and strengthen faith practices in everyday living.

Faith Gateway: <https://www.faithgateway.com>

Faith Gateway is an online community for readers to discover great content and engage with Christian authors. Faith Gateway brings together content in many different forms: daily blog posts, book excerpts, devotionals, free downloads, videos, giveaways, contests, author chats, and more.

Life.Church Open Network Small Group Studies: <https://open.life.church/categories/319-small-groups>

Life.Church Open Network makes available the entire library of Life.Church resources for adults including over 100 small group studies on a wide range of topics.

Living Well: Christian Practices for Everyday Life (LifelongFaith Associates): [Living Well: Christian Practices for Everyday Life](#)

Living Well: Christian Practices for Everyday Life presents twelve essential practices for a Christian way of life: Caring for the Body, Celebrating Life, Discernment, Dying Well, Eating Well, Forgiving, Keeping Sabbath, Managing Household Life, Participating in Community, Praying, Reading the Bible, and Transforming the World. Each chapter presents the Biblical foundation of the Christian practice and a variety of practical suggestions for living the practice in everyday life.

The Work of the People—Films for Discovery and Transformation: <https://www.theworkofthepeople.com>

The Work of the People is an eclectic, ecumenical, and growing collection of provocative short films and interviews with spiritual leaders and thinkers, authors, practitioners, and theologians. Films are available individually, in multi-session thematic series, in contemplative themes (visual prayers, poems, and benedictions), and as e-courses. There is a small fee for purchasing the films.

Theology Live Podcast: <https://theologylive.podomatic.com>

Once a month, the 20s and 30s community of Grace-St. Luke's Episcopal Church gathers over food and drinks to engage Memphis' most compelling theological minds. The Theology Live Podcast incorporates the presentation and interaction for each program.

YouVersion Bible Reading Plan(s) for Adults: [Reading Plans Online](#)

The YouVersion Bible App (<https://www.youversion.com>) has dozens of Bible Reading Plans online and in the App. Adults can download the App (for iOS and Android) and then select a reading plan. Your church can focus on a reading plan for all adults and then organize a Facebook Group to connect everyone.

Sunday Worship & Lectionary-Based Faith Formation

Daily Discipleship and Daily Faith Practices (ELCA): <https://www.elca.org/Resources/Bible-Studies>

Downloadable Bible studies based on the lectionary used at Sunday worship (Revised Common Lectionary).

Lectio Divina for the Sunday Readings in the Catholic Lectionary (American Bible Society): <https://www.americanbible.org/resources/lectio-divina>

Lectionary Sunday School Lessons for Kids (Ministry to Children): <https://ministry-to-children.com/toc/lesson-plans/lectionary>

Lessons for children according to the schedule of the Revised Common Lectionary.

Lesson Plans that Work: <https://lessonplansthatwork.org>

Weekly sessions for young children, for older children, and usually a lesson plan for adults for the Revised Common Lectionary.

StoryPath (Union Presbyterian Seminary): <http://storypath.upsem.edu/lectionary-links>

Resources connecting weekly passages from both the Revised Common Lectionary and the Narrative Lectionary with stories from children's and youth literature.

Sunday Connection (Loyola Press): <https://www.loyolapress.com/our-catholic-faith/liturgical-year/sunday-connection>

Background and activities from grade 1 through 8 and the whole family to better understand the Sunday Scripture readings and connect them to daily life in a meaningful way.

Sunday Gospels (Catholic Mom): <http://catholicmom.com/category/sundays-gospel>

Weekly lessons for children on the Sunday Gospel readings from the Catholic lectionary.

The Sunday Website at St. Louis University: <https://liturgy.slu.edu>

Resources for every Sunday in the Catholic lectionary that includes praying toward Sunday, the spirituality of the readings, and getting to know the readings.

The Text This Week: <http://www.textweek.com>

Lectionary, Scripture study, worship links, and resources for every Sunday of the year for the Catholic, Revised Common, and Narrative lectionaries.

Virtual Church School: <http://churchschool.info>

Lessons for every Sunday of the Revised Common Lectionary using easily-accessible resources and hands-on projects that can be done with limited resources.

Working Preacher (Luther Seminary): <http://www.workingpreacher.org>

Scripture commentary on each of the Sunday readings from the Revised Common Lectionary and the Narrative Lectionary.