

## Remote Faith Formation...For the Long Haul

A resource for faith formation ministries during the COVID-19 pandemic and beyond

As soon as churches began closing their physical doors and opening to the world on-line, we began seeing the internet and social media channels overflow with resources, links and ideas about how to navigate this new world. Faith formation leaders found themselves in a territory that they had been considering and tinkering in but now it was their new reality. The questions emerged. How do we offer faith formation and Christian education on-line? What about those that aren't comfortable on a digital platform? How do we connect to our youngest and our oldest? How much is too much when families are already having to juggle work from home and teaching their children? How are we supporting our faith communities and being responsive to their needs? As your faith community wrestles with these decisions, we invite you to consider the following.

**Take a breath. God's grace abounds.** This is a time of crisis in our world and anxiety is high. The situation changes by the day and sometimes the hour. Each member of our faith community has a set of circumstances to navigate and it is complicated for leaders to respond to those needs. Whether you are an educator, pastor, youth director or volunteer this isn't exactly what you signed up for so don't forget to give yourself grace and time to redefine your new role. It may seem like you need to have immediate resources for members, but this is most likely a marathon and not a sprint so take time to discern keeping in mind that relationships and human connection are the most critical need. Consider putting significant efforts into nurturing and maintaining connections and worry less about immediate comprehensive Bible studies. Keep it simple and meaningful. You can build upon a foundation.

**We've always had church members that have struggled to physically join us.** Many of us have been experimenting in digital faith formation because we desire to reach beyond those that are able to attend our programming and worship in person. We've already heard stories from churches that they are connecting with new people and people that they haven't seen for a while during this crisis. We may be able to use this time to develop long-term strategies to connect with those that have struggled to maintain faith community connections. Consider...

- Older adults that are in long-term facilities
- College students that live away
- Members that move away and struggle to find another faith community
- Families with children at home that find themselves navigating overwhelming schedules
- Children and youth in custody sharing situations and/or have grandparents that are the primary faith teachers.
- Children and youth that are experiencing a variety of isolating issues that make navigating traditional church norms a challenge.

**Develop rituals and routines for the long haul.** You know your faith community the best. There may be an overwhelming amount of resources being offered in the coming weeks but take some time to consider the needs and characteristics of your faith community. Resist the temptation to overwhelm them with resources. If you implement 5 new opportunities for remote faith formation/Christian education, then be intentional about considering that 3 of them are sustainable in the long run. Consider using this time to assist households in creating new rhythms and practices for their home faith life. Practice those rituals together and be as intentionally

intergenerational as you can. Nurturing relationships across generations just may reflect in your community when all are able to gather together again! We encourage you to use this time to be creative and innovative in new approaches—take risks! As you support, pray for and connect with your faith community know that the larger Church is part of your story. Reach out and connect with others to sustain your own leadership.

We have compiled a list of resources that could be helpful for you during the current COVID-19 situation and that may be helpful in developing sustainable remote faith formation for your community. Many resources are currently free of charge and this provides an opportunity to sample and experiment. We have done our best to access these resources, but you will want to determine what works for your community. In this list you will find resources to deal with the current crisis, studies for Christian education, blogs and ideas. This is your toolbox. We will update this list periodically over the coming weeks. Email us with new links to add.

**Christian Formation Collective:** We partner with the following 5 organizations to support faith formation over a lifetime. All these organizations are supporting faith formation leaders during this time in a variety of ways hosting zoom support groups, worship and curating resources for leaders. They are on the front lines and we encourage you to connect to a network. Visit their websites, connect to their Facebook pages or email [stephanie.fritz@pcusa.org](mailto:stephanie.fritz@pcusa.org) if you have particular questions about which organization to connect to.

- [Association of Presbyterian Church Educators \(APCE\)](#)
- [Presbyterian Youth Workers Association \(PYWA\)](#)
- [Presbyterian Church Camp and Conference Association \(PCCCA\)](#)
- [UKirk Collegiate Ministries Association](#)
- [Presbyterian Older Adult Ministry Network \(POAMN\)](#)

The following Facebook groups offer resources and support that is on-going and updated regularly:

- [PRC - Practical Resources for Churches](#)
- [Hope4CE \(faith formation/Christian education\)](#)
- [UKirk Leaders \(for collegiate ministries\)](#)
- [PYWA Discussion Group \(for youth workers\)](#)

**Official Presbyterian Church, USA site; it will be updated often:**

Coronavirus/COVID-19 Resources for Congregations and Members

[https://www.pcusa.org/covid19/#\\_6. Responding\\_to](https://www.pcusa.org/covid19/#_6. Responding_to)

**COVID-19 Specific Resources (other sources):**

- Children's Ministry and Covid 19: United Methodist Church <https://michiganumc.org/childrens-ministry-p/childrens-ministry-and-covid-19>
- Coronavirus –Resources for Home & Congregation: <http://homegrownfaith.net/coronavirus-resources-for-home-congregation>
- Children's Ministry During COVID-19: <https://christinevhides.com/2020/03/14/childrens-ministry-during-covid-19>

[Coronavirus, children, anxiety and the church \(BuildingFaith\)](#)

[Explaining coronavirus to kids and the science of soap](#)

[Talking to kids about coronavirus](#)

[On-line ministry when church is replaced](#)

[100 ideas for ministers and ministry leaders](#)

### Children's Ministry Resources:

- Curriculum from Special Offerings(PCUSA): <https://specialofferings.pcusa.org/resources/curriculum/>
- Earth Our Garden Home: Creation Care Lessons for Children: Available FREE today through Sunday, March 22. Also included in Kindle Unlimited: <https://amzn.to/3b3IsvR>
- Free resources & activities from Flyaway Books: <https://www.flyawaybooks.com/resources>
- [StoryPath \(linking lectionary to children's literature\)](#)
- 29 Ways to Do Ministry when Church is Cancelled by Coronavirus  
<https://ministry-to-children.com/online-ministry-when-church-is-cancelled>

Free resources from Cokesbury [https://www.cokesburykids.com/free-resources/church-at-home?fbclid=IwAR35XAXCPVFi2-Tsr\\_TWYt6Z1L0E4A9OhwLfC\\_-8FrMTE9rmt6W0hVD6AT8](https://www.cokesburykids.com/free-resources/church-at-home?fbclid=IwAR35XAXCPVFi2-Tsr_TWYt6Z1L0E4A9OhwLfC_-8FrMTE9rmt6W0hVD6AT8)

### Intergenerational and Family Ministry Resources:

- Illustrated Ministry: Illustrated Ministry is putting together free, weekly resources that individual church members and families can sign up for and have delivered to them weekly. By signing up, you will receive free faith formation activities for all ages once a week: <https://www.illustratedministry.com/flattenthecurve>.
- Faith @ Home: Faith@Home is providing a resource each day that includes something for families to watch, to listen to, to do and to pray about. Also, once a week, they'll also provide a "go deeper" resource that will help parents engage their kids in theological conversation concerning illness, crisis, anxiety, death: <https://www.dofaithathome.org/>
- Faith Finder Fun! Discover some faith finder fun here with your family! Youtube channel will be updated daily [https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCXIPsIx\\_Ov1u8Z-QOOCQDrw](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCXIPsIx_Ov1u8Z-QOOCQDrw)
- Pandemic Hope: A Family Devotional for Life During COVID-19  
[https://s3.amazonaws.com/media.cloversites.com/cb/cb0cd516-be94-40af-99bd-f2f2860b752e/documents/Pandemic\\_Hope\\_Devotional.pdf](https://s3.amazonaws.com/media.cloversites.com/cb/cb0cd516-be94-40af-99bd-f2f2860b752e/documents/Pandemic_Hope_Devotional.pdf)
- Variety of resources from Faith Incubators <https://faithink.com/>
- Everyday Ways to Help Families Form Faith When They're Stuck at Home:  
<https://network.crcna.org/childrens-ministry/everyday-ways-help-families-form-faith-when-theyre-stuck-home>
- 35 Tech Free, Faith Forming, Fun Activities For Families to Do at Home  
<https://network.crcna.org/childrens-ministry/35-tech-free-faith-forming-fun-activities-families-do-home>
- Spreading Hope: Activities for Families Stuck at home: <https://familyministrytools.org/2020/03/13/virus/>

- Plans for a simple worship service for families with children to share at home each week. Each one will be based on at least one of the lectionary texts for the day:  
<https://worshipingwithchildren.blogspot.com/2020/03/worshiping-at-home-on-march-22-2020>
- Let's Play! Faith Prompts for When We Need to Stay Home: <https://christinevhides.com/2020/03/16/lets-play-faith-prompts-for-when-we-need-to-stay-home>
- Forming faith blog: <https://spiritandtruthpublishing.com/blog/>
- Online family retreats through <https://www.facebook.com/juliegville.aplaceofgrace/>  
[Church at Home resources \(Grow Ministries\)](#)  
[Lent Engage Together \(can be adapted for home/small group use\)](#)  
[Kitchen Table Project](#)  
[Faith Resources for Families](#)  
[Strandz \(great ideas for faith at home\)](#)  
[Dwell \(5 Ways series and a Holy Week journey\)](#)
- **Easter at Home:**  
[Easter Story Stones](#)  
[Colourful Light Ray Cross](#)  
[Mini-Resurrection Garden](#)  
[He is Risen! Easter Biscuits](#)  
[Easter Family Scavenger Hunt](#)
- **Messy Church Responses to COVID-19:**  
[Family Prayer Time Idea - Sharing](#)  
[Family Prayer Time Idea – Breaking Bread](#)  
[Ideas from Facebook live gathering and Facebook page](#)

### **Youth and Collegiate Ministries:**

Our youth and college students especially need to maintain connections to their peers and greater faith communities. We are seeing many churches and campus ministries host zoom gatherings. If you are a leader of one of these age groups, we highly encourage you to connect with the organizations listed under the Collective above for support, ideas and encouragement. Resources can also be gleaned from the intergenerational list as well as the adult lists.

- Shared document of ideas and support for youth ministries: [Ways Youth Workers Can Remotely Support/Connect/Engage with Youth](#)
- Resources and recorded webinar from Youth Mission Co <https://youthmissionco.org/resources/>
- Online devotional <https://d365.org/>
- Justice Unbound has online devotionals and other resources for young adults. <https://justiceunbound.org/>

- Presbyterian Outlook article about a college chaplain: <https://pres-outlook.org/2020/03/building-virtual-community-as-a-college-chaplain/>

### Adult Education/Formation Resources:

- High quality video lessons for all stages of faith formation. They do sell dvd's but some videos are available for free on their website <http://www.theoacademy.com/> and youtube channel <https://www.youtube.com/user/Theoacademy/videos>
- **Just Worship: The Documentary:** Just Worship explores the deep connection between worship and justice. This 33-minute film urges the church to answer God's call to work for justice, reveals how taking part in worship is part of doing justice, and encourages the church to enact Spirit-filled worship that welcomes the coming reign of God. The documentary offered here shares highlights from the Just Worship conference in Austin, Texas. Documentary and discussion guide are online here: <https://www.presbyterianmission.org/ministries/worship/just-worship>
- **Everyday God-Talk from Theology and Worship** ongoing series of videos that also include discussion and reflection questions. Visit this Facebook page where everything will be posted. <https://www.facebook.com/theologyandworship/>

### Resources from Presbyterian Publishing (Thoughtful Christian, WJK etc.):

- You can [download chapter five](#) from Walter Brueggemann's new book [Materiality as Resistance](#). This chapter is about how the materiality of place informs our faith. As our concept of place changes during this crisis, this is an appropriate chapter to study individually or as a church community.
- The following three ebooks are available for free through Amazon Kindle:
  - [Living into Lent by Don McKim](#) can be used as a devotional or group study. Please share this link with your church members and utilize the book for devotion and group study. You may read aloud from the book on live-streaming platforms. We ask that you read small sections at a time and not have your videos permanently online. Facebook groups are a great way to organize book studies. Leaders can ask questions, post videos and all can participate.
  - [Mindfulness and Christian Spirituality by Tim Stead](#) can help provide readers with mindfulness practices during this time.
  - [Overcoming Stress by Tim Cantopher, MD](#), offers information on both acute treatments and longer-term management in avoiding stress and its ill effects.
- [Facebook group about reading the Bible in a year](#) using the resource, [The Year of the Bible](#). You don't need to have the book to participate in the group, though it is part of the sale noted directly above. Additionally, the readings and group discussion questions are posted in the group.
- A very comprehensive site with information about doing church (worship, ministry, study, etc) online from a solely online church. There are a number of resources here: [https://thechurch.digital/get-started-with-church-online?utm\\_source=Updates+from+The+Thoughtful+Christian.com](https://thechurch.digital/get-started-with-church-online?utm_source=Updates+from+The+Thoughtful+Christian.com)

Visit [pcusa.org/formation](http://pcusa.org/formation) to learn more about the Office of Christian Formation