

Three Hybrid Faith Formation Models for the Fall of 2020

Zoom Meeting, Tuesday September 1, 2020

Family-Based Faith Formation

This model focuses on supporting and resourcing families to build up rituals, conversations and activities at home. It allows families to get away from their screens for a while and build faith together at home.

Curriculum Recommendations and Links

- **DWELL Flex** (Faith Alive, Christian Reform Church of America) - this is a newly written, scaled back, one page curriculum designed intentionally for families to use at home or for SS teachers to use online with their classes. The weekly lesson is brief and easily participated in by all ages. Each lesson has four parts; Breathe, Tell and Wonder, Pray, and Respond. You can find information about Dwell Flex here: <https://dwell.faithaliveresources.org/flex.html>
- **Daily Examen for Families** - The examen is an ancient ritual of devotion which can be adapted easily for families to use together. While originally a private practice, families are encouraged to turn off their screens, gather together daily (or weekly) and reflect on their day(s) through the practice of reading of scripture (stories), praying with one another, and blessing each other at the close of the day (week). For churches who wish to encourage families to adopt this ritual, provide daily or weekly scripture stories to get families started, and consider making a sample video of the practice as a model for families. There are five steps in an examen. Here they are:
 1. Share - your highs and lows of the day
 2. Read - a bible story or passage
 3. Talk - about how the story/passage might relate to your highs and lows
 4. Pray - for one another
 5. Bless - one another
- **Growing in God's Love: A Story Bible Curriculum** (Westminster John Knox Press, Presbyterian Church (USA)) - this brand new curriculum was designed for families and/or churches that wished to adopt an intergenerational model for faith formation. This curriculum makes use *Growing in God's Love: A Story Bible*, written by Elizabeth Caldwell and Carol Wehrheim. In this case the lesson plans are very good, but very detailed and quite lengthy. If your church were to email these lesson plans home to parents they may wish to consider scaling them back and making use only of the family pages in the lesson plans. You can find a link to the curriculum here: <https://www.pcusastore.com/Pages/Item/13638/Story-Bible-Curriculum.aspx>.
- Use your curriculum budget for the fall and instead **buy and deliver easy to read bibles and/or story bibles to each family in your church**. Follow this up with a weekly email recommending great stories/texts to be read each week with a few 'I wonder ...' questions included to encourage conversation about the stories being read. You could also try and align the scripture texts/stories up with the weekly scriptures you will be using in worship, or line the weekly scriptures for worship up with the chosen bible stories for the week. You could even invite families to email the minister with thoughts, reflections and questions that might be elaborated on in the upcoming Sunday's worship. Most people do not read scripture/bible stories as a daily or weekly practice at home, so this alone is a brand new key faith formation practice for your families to initiate. Encourage families to find a consistent time and place to read the bible together; following a meal, before bed, or when the kids get tired in the afternoon and need a break. A really great bible story book to consider is *Growing in*

God's Love: A Story Bible by Elizabeth Caldwell and Carol Wehrheim, particularly because it includes three consistent questions for family reflection at the end of every story. For families with older children know that the Good News Bible is written for a grade six level of reading and the New Revised Standard Version is written for a grade eight level of reading.

- **Sparkhouse Family Sunday School** - this is a free, eight-week series of family-based Sunday School lessons that was made available last spring by Sparkhouse for churches to send to families to do together at home. Rather than asking parents to become their children's Sunday school teachers, Sparkhouse shifted direction with Dr. Dawn Rundman leading weekly, video-recorded lesson plans for families to do together. While these videos have not carried on and Sparkhouse has adapted their curriculum in other ways for the fall, Dawn is encouraging churches to take a look at these videos and feel free to record your own family Sunday school lessons using the same simple parts to each lesson plan. You can find these eight videos and handouts here: https://www.wearesparkhouse.org/promos/family-sunday-school/?utm_content=126079066&utm_medium=social&utm_source=facebook&hss_channel=fbp-128544820522453&fbclid=IwAR0X4K7dcqpb84Eudtwg_uGbJEgtWLjap9PzmrOqx46dMhTQcp63LIQH4YI.

Zoom Meeting

This model highlights the desire to continue to build Christian relationships with each other over a live, online format. This option is particularly advantageous for older children and youth as they miss their friends and other adult mentors in their church community.

Curriculum Recommendations and Links

- You can easily adapt the curriculum you are already using by scaling back the content for a Zoom context, always keeping in mind that your priority is on building Christian relationships. Focus your lesson on a warm welcome that includes a check-in, telling the bible story/ reading the scriptures and discussing the questions which relate to the story, discussing their application to daily life and closing with prayer that is personal and includes everyone's participation either through names requests or active participation.
- DWELL *Flex* and the Daily (Weekly) Examen (see above) lend themselves well to a relationally focused Zoom context.
- If you wish to stay with pre-existing Dwell curriculum, Faith Alive has created shortened lesson plans that would also lend themselves to a Zoom context. You can find these here: <https://network.crcna.org/childrens-ministry/template-leading-simplified-dwell-session>.
- Sparkhouse has also created video guides to help you adapt their pre-existing curriculum for online classes as well. You can find information on that here: <https://go.wearesparkhouse.org/creating-remote-sunday-school?redirected=true>.

Online/Google/Bitmoji Classroom

This model highlights the content of a more traditional Sunday School classroom. It does not place the parent in the role of the teacher and does not require everyone to 'go to Sunday school' at the same time. Participants can enter the classroom independently at any time during the week and can return many times over the course of the week.

Curriculum Recommendations and Links

Most curricula that is downloadable and has defined activities is well suited to be translated to Google Classroom.

Create your Sunday school visual 'classroom' following Youtube instructions, making sure to include items in your classroom that the kids already use in their at church classroom as a means through which they can link to the individual lesson activities. With Google Classroom you will create a consistent classroom look that remains more or less the same each week, and you will replace the links to the lesson content each week through those consistent classroom items. For instance, a white board becomes the link to a weekly video, books on a bookcase become links to the bible story, scripture text and or contemporary stories, a pile of papers on a desk are the link to questions about the story that week, and a cup of pencil crayons are the link to a colouring sheet or other activity. Link each of the lesson plan parts from your downloadable curriculum to the coordinating items in your online classroom each week. Set up a poster on the wall or a blackboard on which you can post instructions for participants to follow when they enter the classroom. You can find out how to set up a Google/Bitmoji Classroom using this Youtube video:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s-P_WdQWPc8&t=1023s. When you get to this video you will find there are many more Youtube teaching videos for Google Classroom to help you out. This is also a great opportunity to ask a younger member of your church to help you set up and maintain your classroom.

Any Sparkhouse digital curriculum (Spark, Holy Moly, Connect and Whirl) is an excellent candidate for Google Classroom, because whichever curriculum you subscribe using the the digital format gives you access to all of the curriculum options. By downloading the Scope and Sequence sheets for each of the curricula you can cross reference bible stories and take advantage of one curriculum's video clip, another's bible story, and another's class activity, thus expanding kids options for discovery in their online classroom. Here is a link to Sparkhouse curricula: <https://www.wearesparkhouse.org/store/category/286737/Children>.

Young Children and Worship is also a great candidate for Google Classroom. Set up your classroom to reflect a YC&W worship space with a place in the centre of the room for the bible story to be shared through a video link, including the 'I wonder' questions for reflection. Bookcases with boxes and baskets surrounding the outer walls of your classroom could provide links to other YC&W stories, and a basket with floor mats could become links to various activity options. You could also link a tray with cups and a plate on it to the closing conversation and closing prayer. While not interactive, it does allow the opportunity to celebrate a special meal together each week. While Youtube has a wealth of videoed YC&W stories to download and link into your classroom, try and record a familiar YC&W leader from your church telling the story in your church's YC&W space. Perhaps the pre-existing, pre-recorded videos could become space holders on your bookcase while you build up your own collection of stories to be shared.