



**USER'S GUIDE**

**TO THE FAMILY FAITH FORMATION**

*Toolkit*

View the toolkit at [crcna.org/FaithFormation/toolkits](https://crcna.org/FaithFormation/toolkits)



Christian Reformed Church  
**Faith Formation  
Ministries**

[crcna.org/FaithFormation](https://crcna.org/FaithFormation)



**“THE PROMISE IS  
FOR YOU AND YOUR  
CHILDREN AND FOR  
ALL WHO ARE FAR  
OFF—FOR ALL WHOM  
THE LORD OUR GOD  
WILL CALL.”**

**—ACTS 2:39**



The brochure you're holding is a user's guide to our online Family Faith Formation toolkit.

The toolkit contains dozens of exciting ideas and practices to help families grow in faith together. And many of these ideas are from Christian Reformed churches like yours!

Before you read further, open the toolkit at [crcna.org/FaithFormation/toolkits](http://crcna.org/FaithFormation/toolkits).

## What's in This Toolkit

In the Family Faith Formation Toolkit you'll find all sorts of resources, including practical ideas, thought-provoking articles, resource lists, ministry tools, family practices, and more. Specifically, you'll find help for the following:

- \* family faith formation essentials for church leaders
- \* seasonal and topical activities and practices for families and churches
- \* tried-and-true ideas from churches
- \* recommended books, blog posts, and websites
- \* and much more!

## About Our Toolkits

The Family Faith Formation toolkit is one of several topical toolkits created and designed by the Faith Formation Ministries team in collaboration with CRC church leaders *for* CRC church leaders. Our toolkit resources are gathered from real-life church practices, from online sources, and from published materials.

As new tools become available, we'll add them to the online toolkit. If there's a tool you need but can't find, or if you have an idea to contribute, let us know! You can contact us at [faithformation@crcna.org](mailto:faithformation@crcna.org).

**WE'RE HERE TO HELP!** For assistance with faith formation challenges in your church, contact one of our Regional Catalyzers at [crcna.org/FaithFormation/coaching](http://crcna.org/FaithFormation/coaching).



Visit the Family Faith Formation toolkit at [crcna.org/FaithFormation/toolkits](http://crcna.org/FaithFormation/toolkits)

# FRESH IDEAS FOR FAMILY FAITH FORMATION

BY KAREN DEBOER

I'm a child of the 1970s who was raised in a ranch-style home in small-town Ontario by Dutch immigrant parents. Our family attended the local Christian Reformed church. On Sunday mornings I learned about God in Sunday school. On Friday nights I donned a blue skirt, white shirt, and blue scarf to attend Calvinettes. In my teen years I went to catechism classes and a profession of faith class. During the week I went to Christian school with the same kids I saw on Sundays, Tuesdays, and Fridays.

Family devotions looked like this: a pre-meal prayer led by Mom or Dad, followed by a rapid-fire delivery of “Lord-bless-this-food-and-drink-for-Jesus'-sake-amen” by me and my brothers. After we ate, there was a reading of a Bible storybook when we were young and *Today: The Family Altar* devotions when we were teens.

In those years, similar scenes played out across North America in other Christian Reformed homes.

Flash-forward to today's CRC parents, whom ministry leaders describe this way:

- \* exhausted
- \* overwhelmed and overcommitted
- \* concerned about the impact of technology and culture on their children

- \* unsure about how to nurture the faith of their kids at home
- \* afraid that their kids will walk away from the faith
- \* above all, busy

## Life has changed for families. Could it be that the church needs to change too?

What if we embrace the truth that the present is different from the past (not better or worse, but different), and that this difference requires **new faith formation strategies**?

What blessings might we experience if we paint a vivid picture of the exciting **possibilities** for family faith formation?

What might change if your congregation created a vision for family faith formation that engaged people of all ages and built on each family's **strengths**?

When asked to identify those strengths, ministry leaders describe today's families in terms like these:

- \* resilient
- \* devoted and caring
- \* fun

“ THE FAMILIES IN MY CHURCH DO NOT NEED MORE ACTIVITIES TO DO, MORE DUCKS TO JUGGLE. NOR DO I. WE NEED HELP SETTING ASIDE ALL THE DOING THAT WE CLUTCH SO TIGHTLY, SO THAT OUR HANDS CAN BE OPEN TO RECEIVE THE GIFTS GOD HAS IN STORE—AND SO THAT OUR EARS ARE TUNED TO THE NOTES GOD WOULD HAVE US PLAY. WE NEED TIME TO BE. ”

—<https://youngclergywomen.org/when-doing-more-isnt-enough/>

- \* active
- \* thoughtful and open to trying new ideas
- \* intentional about teaching their kids to make a difference in the world
- \* interested in exploring faith formation

**The Family Faith Formation toolkit is designed to help your church tap into these strengths and develop new ways to support families as they grow in faith, both in community and at home. Open it at [crcna.org/FaithFormation/toolkits](https://crcna.org/FaithFormation/toolkits) today.**

Karen Deboer works for Faith Formation Ministries and volunteers in children's ministry.

# SIX FAMILY FAITH FORMATION SHIFTS CHURCHES MUST MAKE

In *Families at the Center of Faith Formation* (Lifelong Faith Associates, 2016), Dr. Gene C. Roehlkepartain, vice president of research and development at the Search Institute, suggests that in order to become an integral partner with families in nurturing faith in today's complex and changing world, churches need to make the following six shifts in approach:

## FROM AN EMPHASIS ON

Programs

Parenting as a strategy

Pathologizing or idealizing families

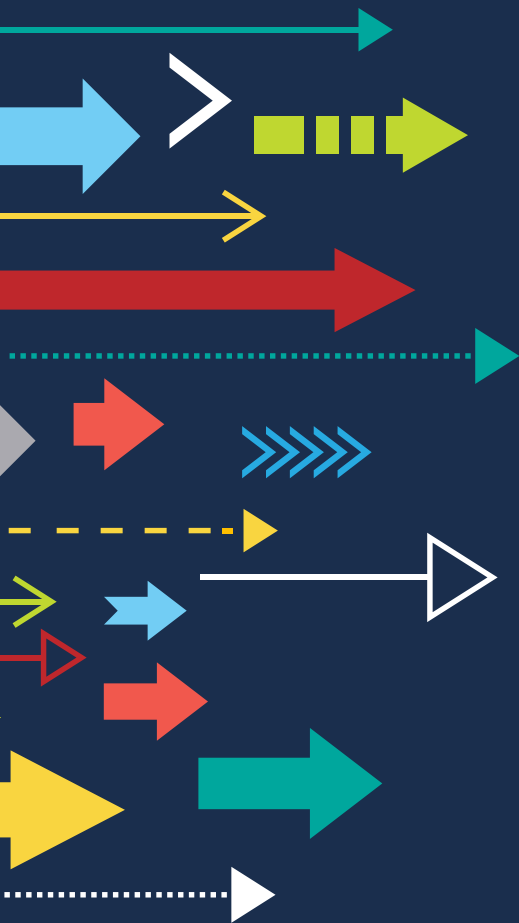
“Passing on” the faith

Serving families

Congregation-centered ministries



INTRIGUED? LEARN MORE ABOUT THESE SHIFTS  
IN THE FAMILY FAITH FORMATION TOOLKIT  
([CRCNA.ORG/FAITHFORMATION/TOOLKITS](http://CRCNA.ORG/FAITHFORMATION/TOOLKITS)).



## TOWARD AN EMPHASIS ON

Relationships

Parenting as a relationship

Tapping their strengths and resilience

“Living into” the faith

Empowering families

Community-centered ministries

# TEN WAYS TO HELP FAMILIES GROW IN FAITH

- 1 Love their children.** Show and tell kids that they belong to God and to God's family. Brighten your eyes and greet children/youth when you see them. Know them by name. Take an interest in their lives. Laugh together. Pray together. Include children, and teach others to do the same.
- 2 Plan ways to nurture the faith of parents and caregivers** so that they can live into their faith with the children they love.
- 3 Welcome, value, and include all ages in worship** in ways that say "You belong here." (See how in the Intergenerational Church toolkit.)
- 4 Share resources and practices** that can be easily woven into existing family patterns. You'll find dozens of ideas in the Family Faith Formation toolkit.
- 5 Provide opportunities for families to serve together**—locally, nationally, and globally.
- 6 Teach faith practices** by weaving them into worship and other gatherings. Send home tools so that families can reinforce what they've discovered in church.
- 7 Move beyond a one-size-fits-all approach.** Provide families with a variety of faith-forming choices (programs, devotions, social media posts, and more) to select from. Learn more in the Family Faith Formation toolkit.
- 8 Be in relationship.** Provide opportunities for all ages to interact in ways that build relationships and nurture faith. (For ideas, see the Intergenerational Church toolkit.)
- 9 Celebrate milestones together.** Baptisms, birthdays, graduations, and personal "firsts" are examples of milestones that can point families back to God in gratitude.
- 10 Cultivate a storytelling culture.** Sharing stories of God at work nurtures faith and shapes our identity as members of God's big family. See the Faith Storytelling toolkit for ideas.

## Learn More in Our Online Family Faith Formation Toolkit

The Family Faith Formation toolkit is an online resource designed to help you support families as they grow in faith, both in community and at home. You can access this toolkit and others at [crcna.org/FaithFormation/toolkits](http://crcna.org/FaithFormation/toolkits).

For help with encouraging families in your church, contact one of Faith Formation Ministries' Regional Catalyzers ([crcna.org/FaithFormation/coaching](http://crcna.org/FaithFormation/coaching)).

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Christian Reformed Church

**Faith Formation  
Ministries**

Helping Churches Grow Faith for Life

[crcna.org/FaithFormation](http://crcna.org/FaithFormation)