

A VISION FOR FAITH FORMATION FOR UDL

"For this reason, since the day we heard it, we have not ceased praying for you and asking that you may be filled with the knowledge of God's will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, so that you may lead lives worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him, as you bear fruit in every good work and as you grow in the knowledge of God."

- Colossians 1:9-10



Our Current Vision for Faith Formation at UDLCL:

- Faith Formation at Upper Dublin Lutheran Church is "life long, life wide, and life deep." It activates our baptismal faith and identity throughout all the seasons of our lives, so that we grow in love for God and neighbor, deepen our understanding and appreciation of our traditions, both theological and Biblical, and feel empowered to live out our faith in the world. -written by Pastor Keith (2021)



Faith Formation was changing well before COVID. COVID accelerated that change. We are now where we thought we might be a few years from now.



Faith Formation is Trending Away From

- The "tentpole" model of Sunday School, Confirmation, and Adult Forum that began in the post WWII era
- People segregated by age
- Faith education as the imparting of information from teacher to student with the assumption that wisdom only flows in one direction
- Assumption that change happens slowly (this was an assumption across all areas of congregations)
- Emphasis on programs: "build it and they will come"
- Assumption that parents would be formed through their children's Christian education experience
- Faith formation primarily happens at church and is led by paid staff
- Assumed a culture in which it was accepted and expected that people belonged to and attended a church regularly

TO UDLC'S CREDIT, IT MAXIMIZED THIS MODEL FOR MANY YEARS AND LONGER THAN MOST CONGREGATIONS



In a sense, we have fallen victim to our own success. Because of our relative success, we haven't paid attention and adapted to the changing faith formation landscape, as other successful churches have done. We are still using a model that was birthed in the 1950's with some tweaks along the way. Seventy years later, our world and our lives are different. The current model's extremely limited framework makes it difficult to meet the evolving needs of our families.

Where is Faith Formation going?



Faith Formation is Trending Toward

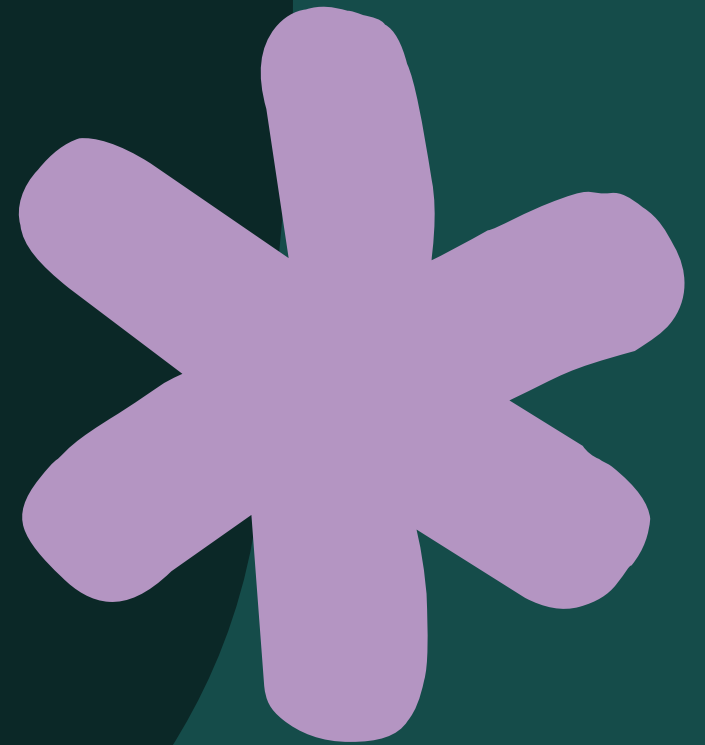
- Intergenerational Learning and Experiences
- Supporting Faith in the Home and Everyday Life
- Adapting to new methods of learning that we see in our schools
- Faith formation that supports the whole person, balancing a traditional emphasis on intellectual formation with formation of emotion, body, and experience
- Supporting children, youth, and adults as they adapt to a rapidly changing world
- Relationships are the new programs
- Uses appropriate technologies to support, communicate, and inspire

What do we mean by Faith Formation?

"This emerging vision of lifelong ecclesial faith formation has several defining characteristics:

- To utilize the whole life of the church as the faith formation curriculum through church year feasts and seasons, sacraments and liturgy, justice and service, prayer and spirituality, and community life.
- To engage all generations in more active participation in church life, especially Sunday worship.
- To develop an events-centered core curriculum for all generations in the church community, while offering age-appropriate programming to address specific life cycle learning needs.
- To involve all of the generations in learning the core curriculum together through intergenerational learning.
- To equip and support families, and especially parents, to practice the Christian way of life at home and in their daily lives.
- To transform the church community into a community of lifelong learners."

~ John Roberto, "Lifelong Faith Formation for all Generations" (2008)





70/30 Rule

Intergenerational Christian Formation: Bringing the Whole Church Together in Ministry, Community and Worship (2012) by Holly Allen and Christine Lawton recommends 70% of faith formation be intergenerational and 30% age segregated.

"In an earlier framework, educational ministry could be considered as individuals and/or officials of a church instructing children to know the lore and obey the law of the church. In a newer one, the whole community is educating and empowering the whole community to engage in ministry in the midst of the world."

- Maria Harris, Fashion me a People: Curriculum in the Church (1989)



We have experienced some foretastes of this shift in recent years:

- Intergenerational VBS
 - When our traditional model for Vacation Bible School fell apart, we shifted to an "Intergenerational Dinner Church" model with an all-ages community meal and faith activities



We have experienced some
foretastes of this shift in recent
years:

- Tuesday Nights at Church
 - Our children's music ensembles rehearsal nights have become a lively community time where parents connect as their kids rehearse
 - We moved Confirmation to Tuesdays to make this night a focal point
 - Both have a great combination of kids and adults
 - There is great potential for more connections, meals, activities, etc.



We have experienced some foretastes of this shift in recent years:

- Faith at Home
 - Pastor Keith and a small team piloted a project some time ago to support faith at home with a monthly newsletter and events like:
 - Sunday Morning Family Gentle Yoga
 - A presentation by a pediatrician who also has a seminary degree reflecting on how those intersect



We have experienced some foretastes of this shift in recent years:

- Service Opportunities
 - ASP brings together youth and adult mentors to serve and learn together
 - Meal Packaging events had kids, youth, and adult working side-by-side to package meals for the hungry
 - Our new Community Garden can bring together youth and adults to do, serve, learn, and share



We have experienced some foretastes of this shift in recent years:

- Mental Health Offerings
 - Even prior to COVID we were offering adult forums and other gatherings around mental health. They were very well-received and a number of members followed up for further information and help.



We have experienced some
foretastes of this shift in recent
years:

- Retreats
 - Our Men's, Women's, and Youth retreats have been very successful in building enduring relationships and helping people grow in faith



An underwater photograph showing a stream of bubbles rising towards the surface. Sunlight filters through the water from the upper left, creating a bright, hazy area. The water is a deep blue color.

Life Long, Life Wide, Life Deep

- We have, in some areas, often by necessity or luck, begun to nudge closer to this renewed approach to faith formation. In other ways we have just simply approximated it. With greater intention and integration, we can all realize a greater depth and meaning through formation that we experience as "life long, life wide, and life deep."

"Now we are in a time of movement toward a broader, more inclusive, and more complete understanding of what it means to educate. Such education includes education to and by teaching, to and by worship, to and by community, to and by proclamation and prophetic speech, to and by service."

- Maria Harris, *Fashion me a People: Curriculum in the Church* (1989)

Faith Formation Needs to
Happen Across Every Area
of the Congregation



"The church does not have an educational program; it is an educational program."

- Maria Harris, Fashion me a People: Curriculum in the Church (1989)



Charting our Course: The Next Chapter of Faith Formation at UDLC

- Vision and Direction

- Create a vision and direction for faith formation that has broad input and support among our families
- Employ outside assistance as necessary to drive this process and learn from other congregations

- Managing Staffing Transitions Well

- Provide Care and Support for Staff in Transition
- Express Gratitude and Celebrate
- Share Institutional knowledge and relationships
- Ensure we have strong lay leadership in all our faith formation teams
- Communicate well with the congregation





The faith formation staffing transition is one of the most important things we will do together.

We need to treat this transition like a pastoral transition of a pastor who has served a church for 30 years. Unless a good transition takes place, the person who follows them will become an unintentional interim.

Charting our Course: The Next Chapter of Faith Formation at UDLC

- Hire Excellent New Staff to Help us Realize our Vision
 - Move away from the current model of very small staff position to a consolidated 30 hour a week position that oversees all children, family, and youth ministries. This will allow us to attract good candidates and better integrate our faith formation ministries across age groups and seasons of families' lives.
 - We must do the groundwork for this staff person to succeed through articulating our vision and direction, doing an excellent staff transition process, and having buy-in from the congregation.
 - We can hire a great person with a new vision, but if we don't lay the groundwork it will fail.



Charting our Course: The Next Chapter of Faith Formation at UDLC

- Seeing every area of church as a locus of faith formation
- Supporting Faith in the Home and Everyday Life
- Supporting Parents
 - Meals for New Parents, Encourage Parents in their Faith, Small Groups, Programs Tailored to Parent Needs, etc.
- Encouraging Robust Spiritual Lives for All Ages
- Improving Communications and Program Management
- Utilizing Technology to Facilitate Connection and Engagement
- Emphasizing Discipleship



Tending to Key Transitional Moments



- Our Faith Formation Ministries from Cradle Roll, Sunday School, Youth, and Adults needs to be more integrated and aligned. Among other things, this will enable us to manage critical transitions for both kids and their parents, including:
 - From Baptism to the Beginning of Children's Programming
 - From Grade School to Confirmation
 - From Confirmation to Youth Group
 - From Graduation to Young Adulthood
 - Both for students as well as their parents as they become empty nesters

Youth Ministry Is An Integral Part of our Vision for Faith Formation



- Our Youth Ministry has declined in recent years due to stagnation and cultural changes. Like many of our ministries, it has been activity-oriented, but often treated the activity as an end in itself. Gatherings are the opportunity to meet our kids where they are help them grow in their relationship with God and build a faith that will endure the changes and changes of life. We have the opportunity to reimagine youth ministry as an integrated part of our faith formation vision focused that is joyful, inclusive, engaging, helps youth make faith their own, build lasting connections, and serve. That is, to help them live out their baptismal identity in the world their whole lives long.



Curriculum Writer and Designer, Bethany Stolle, likens faith formation activities, including classes, groups, worship, and special events to a campfire. She says, "The campfire is the gathering point, but what is really valuable about that time together is the experience, the shared experience, the relationships, and the conversation. It's more about this being the gathering point where shared experiences can happen." Setting and lighting the fire is only the beginning. The evidence of our success will be faith deepened and lives renewed through encounters with God's love and grace. This requires us to dig deeper into what we want faith formation for our youth to look like and will require an adjustment from our previous approach.

Potential 2022-2023 Timeline

April

- Approve Ministry Architects proposal contingent on funding from Living Waters
- Approve extending Kathleen Getaz as Interim Youth Director, which is budgeted at 6 hours a week.

Summer

- June: Staff Planning Meeting for the 2022-2023 Year
- Renovation Team Through the Summer preparing for Fall Program Design Summit

January and Beyond


- Post Job for Director of Faith Formation
- Publicize position. Begin interviewing candidates.
- Ministry Architects coaches new hire for six months
- Ministry Architects concludes in June

May

- Finalize contract with Ministry Architects
- Assemble Renovation Team
- Ministry Architects On-Site Kick Off

Fall

- Begin 2022-2023 Program Year
- Ministry Architects On Site for Program Design Summit



"So Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, to equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.

Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of people in their deceitful scheming. Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will grow to become in every respect the mature body of him who is the head, that is, Christ. From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work." -

Ephesians 4:11-16



A VISION FOR FAITH FORMATION

Upper Dublin Lutheran Church

