

Faith, Family & Friends

What is it?

Faith, Family & Friends is an innovative approach to parish wide religious education and faith formation. It offers our children, singles, couples and families the opportunity to work on faith formation together on one community evening.

How does it work?

Families and individuals gather weekly on Tuesday evenings from 6-7:30PM to learn about and grow in their faith. Each gathering begins with a general presentation on the theme of the month which will be connected to our liturgical year calendar (Advent, Lent, Easter, etc.) followed by age appropriate break-out sessions and instruction for pre-school; elementary students (grades 1-6); Jr. High students (grades 7-8); High school; and adults. One time per month, the evening begins with a meal, and the entire group often remains together for a community building activity that relates to some aspect of our Catholic Christian faith. Other times the children will be dismissed to their classes and just the adults will remain for a special program. Music, drama, activities and small group instruction help to create a spiritual formation and religious learning process that is interesting and dynamic.

Who participates in Faith, Family & Friends?

EVERYONE! All ages, singles, couples, families, extended family members, friends, visitors, teenagers, people from other parishes, neighbors, EVERYONE!

Faith, Family & Friends is intended to be shared by individuals and by entire households. The idea is for everyone to learn and share together as a parish family. It will also help members of our entire parish community to become better acquainted with one another and be better prepared to participate in our liturgical celebrations.

Faith, Family & Friends is also designed to provide families with ideas, suggestions, materials and support to enable them to integrate faith into their daily family life.

Goals:

- Facilitate conversations about faith & religious issues among family members
- Continue learning with age appropriate materials
- Help develop family ritual celebrations that foster Catholic identity, tradition & faith
- Encourage family prayer
- Help to reflect on life experiences in light of faith
- Help to enable us to act justly, and to serve those in need in and out of the home.
- Become aware of “moments of meaning and grace” in normal daily life
- Filter experiences through the lens of faith and spirituality
- Become aware of God’s presence in our lives... and respond to it.
- Develop a faith “rapport” with one another
- Connect informal faith experiences with the more formal religious practices of the Church.
- Become intentional about growing in faith

Is it mandatory for parents/guardians to attend with their children?

- **Yes**, we expect parents to attend with their children. We are asking parents to be full partners with the church in the spiritual development of their children.
- However, we realize there might be situations in which this is not possible—i.e. parents may have to work—in which case a responsible adult who is involved in the child's life (grandparent or other relative, godparent or family friend) **must** attend in the parent's place.

What we believe about families:

- We believe that parents are the primary educators of the faith to their children and we are asking parents to be full partners with the church in the spiritual development of their children.
- We believe that children—adolescents and teens included—need their parents and other adults to be involved in their faith journey, to provide positive role models and encouragement.
- We believe that parents want to know what their children are learning, and believe they want to share in their children's faith journey.
- We believe that the faith formation of your children is possibly the most important task a parent has in their role as a loving parent. Raising children in the Catholic faith cannot be a separate extra-curricular activity.

What the Church believes about families:

- Families are holy and sacred. "A family is our first community and the most basic way in which the Lord gathers us and acts in the world. The early Church expressed this truth by calling the Christian family a domestic church or church of the home... Your domestic church is not complete by itself, of course. It should be united with and supported by the parishes and other communities within the larger Church" (Follow the Way of Love, p.8)
- Each Christian family is in its own unique way a living image and historical representation of the mystery of Church... They not only receive the love of Christ but become a saving community" (Familiaris Consortio).
- As Christian families, you not only belong to the Church, but your daily life is a true expression of the Church" (Follow the Way of Love, p. 8)
- The family is the original cell of social life... The family is the community in which, from childhood, one can learn moral values, begin to honor God, and make good use of freedom. Family life is an initiation into life in society (CCC 2207)
- Parents are the primary educators of the Faith (GDC 255).
- "...all members make up the family, and each can make a unique contribution to creating the basic environment in which a sense of God's loving presence is awakened and faith in Jesus Christ is confessed, encouraged, and lived" (NDC).