

Forming Faith through Playlists

Rev. Kathy Pittenger

To say that 2020 has been interesting might be the understatement of the year. There have been a lot of challenges and opportunities for creativity this year. The work is exciting and exhausting! One of the opportunities that I have been able to invest in this year are playlists – a curated collection of resources, learning activities, videos, music, books, etc. that individuals or families can use to learn more about a specific topic or theme.

Last Spring, I started curating playlists that churches and families could use at home. The focus of these playlists were children and families. The themes focused on topics like faith and fear, patience, and hope. Then we added Bible stories and The Lord's Prayer. We added playlists for parents and families about anti-racism and Hispanic Heritage Month. Lately we created a playlist for children who are receiving a new Bible with activities that they can use to learn about their Bible.

As churches began to use them, leaders wanted to know how they could create playlists specific for their families. Some leaders attended the Vibrant Faith MasterClass about Playlists. Others used the examples from the Michigan Conference and other examples to create their own. The idea of playlists can be used in so many ways. You can curate a playlist and send it out in an email, create a webpage, or use a Bitmoji Classroom as a visual playlist.

While some churches have reopened in-person worship, there are many churches that have not. Churches who have gathered outside are now considering what will need to change with the approaching winter weather. Some families are not ready to return, while others are eager to gather in person. Playlists are a great way to equip and empower individuals and families to continue their faith growth at home in ways that are not overwhelming or add “one more thing” to life. A family could read the Bible story and talk about wondering questions during a meal or before bedtime. They could spread the activities out over the week or do them on a weekend morning or afternoon.

I have received positive feedback from leaders who are using playlists in their church that families find them useful for faith formation at home. Parents feel equipped and empowered and not overwhelmed with the easy to access materials and ability to do it on their timeframe. The analytics data from the website is encouraging that people are looking at the playlists and spending time with them.

Examples of How Playlists Can Be Used

Faith and Family Playlists

<https://michiganumc.org/resources/childrens-ministry-tool-box/faith-family-playlists>

Bible Studies

You can curate a playlist that people can use to go through before a gathering (either in-person or online).

Worship

You can curate a playlist with resources that people can use to go deeper after worship. These could be used in small groups or individually.

Confirmation

You can create playlists that students can do ahead of time, or use after a synchronous meeting to go deeper in a particular area. For an example go to: <https://www.launchfaith.com/three-rules.html>

Sunday School

Holt UMC Faith Formation: <https://holtumc.weebly.com/kingdom-kids.html>

Seasonal

Catholic Community of Saint Jude Advent Playlist:
<https://stjudeadventplaylist.weebly.com/advent-basics.html>

Church Leaders

Launch! Faith Formation: <https://www.launchfaith.com>

Parents, Children, and Youth

First Presbyterian Church, Stillwater OK: <https://www.fpcfaithfulfamilies.com>

Bitmoji Classrooms and Playlists

Christine Hides: <https://christinevhides.com/2020/09/20/bitmoji-classrooms-and-play-lists-oh>

Examples of Platforms that You Can Use for Playlists

- Email (services like Constant Contact, MailChimp, Flocknote)
- Google Drive
- Website (easy to use website builders such as Weebly, Wix, or Squarespace)
- Bitmoji Classroom
- YouTube
- Classroom management apps (such as Google Classroom, Edmodo, Seesaw)

Rev. Kathy Pittenger is an Ordained Deacon and serves as Children's Initiatives Coordinator for the Michigan Conference of the United Methodist Church. Kathy teaches two courses in Vibrant Faith's MasterClass program: "Developing Playlists of Faith Formation Content and Experiences for All Ages" and "Developing Pathways to Faith Growth and Discipleship."