Designing Faith Formation Playlists for All Ages

A **playlist** weaves together faith forming experiences into a sequenced pathway centered on a common theme. Playlists broaden opportunities to engage in cohesive, interest-driven connected learning experiences that combine a variety of settings for learning: online, peers, families, intergenerational, community, and world.

Playlists are designed with **micro-learning** experiences: short-form 5, 10, 15 minute learning experiences designed for anywhere, anytime learning that be combined into multi-part learning programs. We can curate a series of micro-learning experiences on a digital playlist to engage people in all types of faith formation content. Breaking content into small learning units, micro learning, will enhance comprehension and retention of knowledge, skills, and practices.

Playlists are designed with **multiple ways of learning** incorporating the eight multiple intelligences (see Howard Gardner) into learning experiences, providing a greater variety of ways for people to learn. While not every playlist can incorporate activities for all eight intelligences, having a greater variety of ways to learn promotes more effective learning and engages people more fully in the learning experience.

- verbal-linguistic (word smart, book smart)
- logical-mathematical (number smart, logic smart)
- visual-spatial (art smart, picture smart)
- bodily-kinesthetic (body smart, movement smart)
- musical-rhythmic (music smart, sound smart)
- naturalist (nature smart, environment smart)
- interpersonal (people smart, group smart)
- intrapersonal (self-smart, introspection smart).

Playlists are designed with **practice-oriented learning**, incorporating real-life application activities into the learning experience. Practice is a part of the learning process, not the result of it. Research is demonstrating that people learn more deeply when they apply knowledge to real-world problems and when they take part in projects that require sustained engagement and collaboration.

Playlists are designed with a **mix of methods and media**. Here is a list to illustrate the great variety of activities that can be included in a playlist.

- Reading short articles and stories
- Writing reflections or keeping journaling
- Storytelling and creating stories
• Viewing videos
• Listening to podcasts
• Creating a video or podcast
• Conversing with others (online chat, Facebook Groups)
• View and/or creating art
• Viewing and/or taking photographs
• Viewing and/or engaging in drama or writing a drama
• Viewing and/or conducting a demonstration
• Experiencing games and/or simulations
• Analyzing and/or creating a case study
• Viewing and/or creating an exhibit
• Experiencing and/or creating prayer and rituals
• Taking a field trip or tour (virtual or physical)
• Participating in a mission trip
• Engaging in and/or creating a service/action project
• Developing a mentor relationship
• Taking online quizzes
• Engaging in personalized skill practice with online resources

Playlists can utilize a variety of learning apps that provide easy ways to create interactive learning and engage participants in creating projects to demonstrate their learning. Here are examples by method. See the “Digital Learning Methods and Apps” at the end of this document for the descriptions and links to each app.

• For creating podcasts: Anchor
• For creating videos: Animoto, Clips, Flipgrid, Kapwing, Loom, Magisto, Typito, WeVideo
• For creating animated videos: PowToon, PuppetMaster
• For making a video into a lesson: Edpuzzle
• For creating publications: Book Creator
• For making animated GIFs: Brush Ninja
• For giving photos a voice by taking a picture: Chatterpix Kids
• For creating interactive lessons: Deck.Toys. Nearpod
• For creating multi-media blogs: Edublogs
• For creating presentations: Genially
• For creating multi-media posters: Glogster
• For creating scavenger hunts: GooseChase
• For drawing and animating: Green Screen by Do Ink
• For creating online binders: LiveBinders
• For engaging discussions: NowComment
• For creating boards, documents, and webpages: Padlet
• For creating digital stories: Pixie
• For creating digital stories using photos: PhotoPeach
• For creating digital flashcards and interactive games: Quizlet
• For creating immersive 360 tours: Tour Creator
• For creating playlists and newsletter: Wakelet
Designing Playlists

There are at least two ways to design faith formation playlists: 1) a menu approach of faith forming activities on a topic or theme, and 2) a sequenced learning design on a topic. Select the approach that will work best with your goals and target audience. First we will look at how to use your existing curriculum and program resources.

For curated lists of digital faith formation resources that can be used to create playlists go to the Curate section on www.LifelongFaith.com.

Transforming Your Current Curriculum Resources, Texts, and Programs into Playlists

Most churches do not need to start from scratch to create playlists. You already own curriculum resources, textbooks, and programs that can be transformed into playlists for age groups and whole families. Curriculum resources for children and adolescents already use a learning process designed in an educational program to be taught in a physical location. The task is to translate these sessions into online playlists.

Use the lesson plans or program designs you already have and create online playlists for at-home, small group, and/or self-directed online learning sessions (in a menu or sequenced approach). Publish these playlists on a website or use a learning platform like Edmodo. Add video conferencing or live streaming presentations to add a synchronous component to the program design. Create a Facebook Group or other group sharing app for interaction and discussion. Review all of the digital tools, methods, media, and learning apps already presented to assist you.

Approach #1. A Menu of Faith Formation Activities on a Topic or Theme.

In the Menu approach activities and experiences are organized by categories, such as Learn, Read, Watch, Listen, Participate, Pray, Live. People are given a variety of options for faith formation in each category from which they can select activities. You might want to include how long each activity will take.

Playlist for Adult Bible Study
Here is an example of a Bible study playlist on the Gospel of Luke that offers a variety of ways to explore the Gospel. This template can be applied to other books of the Bible, and to most themes or topics. Each of the offerings would include a description of the activity and a link to activity (if it is not included within the playlist).

Read
- Read Luke: Everyone Bible Study Guides by N.T. Wright (IVP Connect)
Watch

- Explore the Gospel of Luke in a five-part, animated video series from The Bible Project (https://bibleproject.com/explore/gospel-series)

Participate


Listen


Pray and Reflect


Playlist for a Church Season at Home

Here is an example of a Playlist for children and parents for Lent. The activities can be organized into categories like the adult Bible study example. Each year there are dozens of free activities produced for Advent, Christmas, Lent, Holy, Easter, Pentecost, and more that you can use. Each activity would be described with links to the activities (if not included on the web page).

- Video: “Lent in 3 Minutes” introduction to Lent video (rom Busted Halo
- Video: Ash Wednesday and Lent from Chuck Knows Church videos
- Daily Lenten prayers
- Daily Scripture readings
- Lenten calendar with short activities for each
- Ash Wednesday service at home
- Lenten service projects: at home, at church, in the community and world
- Daily devotional for Lent for children and for adults/parents
- Video commentary for each Sunday Gospel reading in Lent
- Creative activities for each Sunday of Lent and Holy Week (like Weekly symbol and ritual activity
- Rituals: Stations of the Cross
- Children’s storybooks on the themes of each Sunday’s lectionary readings from Storypath (http://storypath.upsem.edu)
**Approach #2. Sequenced Learning on a Topic or Theme.**

In the **Sequenced** approach a learning process structures the faith formation experiences and activities. Sequenced playlists include synchronous and asynchronous activities. A simple process for learning, based on the 4MAT learning cycle developed by Dr. Bernice McCarthy has four movements: 1) engage the learner in the topic or theme, 2) explore the topic of theme, 3) practice and demonstrate learning, and 4) perform/present the project. (See [https://aboutlearning.com](https://aboutlearning.com).)

![Diagram of the 4MAT learning cycle]

**Playlist Design**

Here is an example of a playlist design for all ages that includes synchronous and asynchronous activities. It is designed as a four-session mini-course (though it would be easy to make this six sessions) on a particular theme or topic. It could easily be re-designed into an asynchronous playlist, especially after the live session in week one is video recorded. It also provides a way to use your curriculum resources and programming in a playlist format. The sequenced learning process can be used effectively with all five of the examples of online and blended programming describe in #4 above.

**Week 1. Engage the learner in the topic or theme (synchronous)**
Begin the playlist with a synchronous live streamed session (on Zoom or Facebook Live or YouTube Live) to “gather” the group, introduce the topic/theme, and show how it connects to the life of the learner. One or more methods can be used, e.g., a combination of presentation, demonstration, video, storytelling, and even participant contributions if you use Zoom.

**Week 2. Explore the topic of theme (asynchronous)**
Learners select one or more activities that go deeper into the topic or theme. This can take many forms (video, audio, text, reading, prayer or ritual, etc.)

**Week 3. Practice and demonstrate learning (asynchronous)**
Learners use a variety of methods to create an activity, individually or with others in the group, that demonstrate learning. The learning apps (listed previously) can provide a creative way to design an activity.

**Week 4. Perform and present the project (synchronous)**
The conclusion of the mini-course engages the learners in presenting what they have created to demonstrate their learning (using Zoom or Google Meet).

**Design a Playlist Using the Four Movements**

The following questions are intended as a guide for designing the four movements of the learning process.

1. **Engage the Learner**
The question to be answered is “Why?” Why is this of value to me? Why do I sense the need to know this? This is something that intrigues them (a problem to solve), or connects to them (a situation that has real meaning in their lives), or touches them in a way that links to their faith or spirituality.
   - What will you do to get your learners excited about the content of the session?
   - What experience will you create that will inspire them to learn what you’re about to teach?
   - What discussion techniques will you use to give learners the opportunity to share what just happened in the experience you created?

2. **Explore the Topic**
The question to be answered is “What?” What is out there to be known? What do the experts know about this? What is the nature of the knowledge I am pursuing?
   - What is the key content for the session?
   - How will you teach or engage the learner with the content?

3. **Practice and Demonstrate**
The question to be answered is “How?” How will this be of use in my life? This is where learners take the learning and do something with it, something that has meaning for them. This is where relevance is demonstrated.
   - How will you determine if the learners understood the content?
   - What kind of practice is involved?
   - Where does your concept exist in life? Where is it useful?
   - Can you give learners an opportunity to interpret material, and adapt it to their lives and unique perspectives?
   - What will they do to show and use their new understandings and skills? Choose projects or performance requirements that are meaningful and useful in real life.

4. **Perform and Present**
The question to be answered is “What If?” If I use this in my own way, what will happen? What can I create and how will that creation expand, enhance, and maybe even transform the world I
know? The word “per-form” means to form through and that is the essence of this step. It represents the merging of the learning and the learner.

- What will the learners be able to do that they can’t do now?
- How will they synthesize the learning?
- How will learners explain or perform their work?
- What procedures will you put in place for feedback and mentoring?

Dr. Bernice McCarthy emphasizes that knowledge must be used. It must operate in one’s life. And because all human beings are unique, we use and then integrate learning in our own inimitable, incomparable ways. What we learn is transformed into a particular use, a distinct way of doing, a matchless refinement of a method, a unique understanding. It is transformed. It becomes for us. It is in the transformation that real understanding happens.

**Examples of Methods for Each Stage of the Process**

The following methods are suggested for each movement of the learning process. Not all methods will apply to online faith formation using a playlist. The list of methods and media, and of learning apps listed previously can also be used to design each step of the learning process.

1. **Engage the Learner: Why do learners need to know this?**
   - Actual case studies
   - Stories (audio, video, illustrated)
   - Personal storytelling
   - Direct experience, like a field trip
   - Simulated experience or game
   - TV-style game show
   - Interactive dialogue
   - Personal reflection/journal
   - Feature film segment
   - Media presentation: images and music
   - Dramatic presentations
   - Personal reflection tool/worksheet
   - Quiz
   - Self-assessment or inventory
   - Prayer or ritual experience
   - Witness presentations

2. **Explore the Topic: What is it that we are teaching (or engaging) the learners?**
   - Video presentation
   - Audio presentation
   - PowerPoint presentation with content and images/music
   - Guided reading and research
   - Interviewing experts
   - Demonstration
   - Prayer or ritual experience
• Panel presentation
• Study groups: read and analyze/reflect on selecting readings, and present findings in a small group or to the large group
• Debate
• Inquiry-oriented discussion

3. Practice and Demonstrate: How will the learners use it in their lives?
• Case study demonstrating how to use the information
• Practice activities and exercises
• Mentoring
• Role play / skill practice
• Field work
• Simulations
• Demonstrations
• Panel presentations
• Compare and contrast activities
• Creative writing activity
• Creative activity: art project, song/music video, video, drama

4. Perform and Present: What will the learners become and do as a result of the learning experience?
• Conduct a demonstration
• Write a report, article, or story describing performance to share with others
• Create action plans
• Create a photo or video documentary of practice
• Field trip or action project
• Participate in a church ministry
• Keep a journal of performance efforts
• Get involved in an action learning project (service project, teaching others, leading an activity).

Works Cited
Digital Tools for Faith Formation

You will need a few digital tools to make online programming effective. You don't need expensive or complex technology to implement online faith formation. Here are a few essentials:

- **Website**: Create special pages on your church’s website or create a special website for online faith formation. One of the easiest tools for creating a website for online programming is to use a website builder. There are three very good options: Weebly (https://www.weebly.com), Wix (www.wix.com) and Squarespace (https://www.squarespace.com). Purchase the website builder plan (no need for e-commerce). Weebly is probably the easiest of the three website builders. All three services will host your website and provide a free domain name. There are tutorials available for all three.

- **Video Conferencing & Streaming**: Zoom (https://zoom.us) provides is an easy, reliable cloud platform for video and audio conferencing, collaboration, chat, and webinars across mobile devices, desktops, telephones, and room systems. You can use Zoom to live stream worship, programs, presentations, etc. You can use Zoom to organize online interactive classes, small group studies (Bible study online), and much more. Google Meet (https://meet.google.com) provides many similar features. Facebook Live and YouTube Live provides an excellent ways to live stream worship, events, and presentations. All three allow you to record the event for future use.

- **Online Learning Platform (Learning Management System)**: An online “classroom” provides an environment for sharing content, texts, videos, projects and assignments with people online. It is an environment where teachers/leaders can guide learning and where they can interact with participants in a safe space. A learning platform is essential for online-only and blended models of faith formation. Edmodo (https://new.edmodo.com) is a free platform for individual teachers/leaders and classes, as is Google Classroom (https://edu.google.com).

- **Facebook Group**: Facebook Groups provides an online interactive environment for online programs and blended programs that you can add to all programming. You can organize groups for adults to discuss the Sunday Scripture readings or to share insights from an online Bible study or theology course. You can organize groups for parents to share their family experiences with the Bible story of the week or prayer practice. And much more.

- **E-Newsletter**: Create a weekly e-newsletter to communicate the faith formation activities and schedule for the week or month. There three very good online email services: MailChimp (https://mailchimp.com), Constant Contact (https://www.constantcontact.com), and Flocknote (https://flocknote.com). The three services are very similar (Flocknote adds texting) so review the prices and features. Check into non-profit discounts.

- **Texting**: Use texting to send reminders, links to activities on the faith formation website, and short activities (prayer, Bible verse, etc.). There are a variety of texting apps (free) that you can use with iOS and Android. Check out GroupMe – app and web-based interface

• **Social Media:** Facebook and Instagram, to name two of the more popular social media platforms, provide excellent ways to communicate and share faith forming content, and to invite people to share what they are learning and doing through videos, images, and text. A YouTube channel also provides a great to communicate and share content. A real advantage of using these tools is that people already have the apps on their mobile devices.

Digital Learning Methods & Apps

The following digital tools have been selected because of their ability to be used in learning and faith formation. They include websites and apps, and often both formats. Most are free or have a low cost subscription. The American Association of School Librarians does a yearly review of the best websites, tools, and resources for teaching and learning. Check out the ALA website at: [wwwala.org/aasl/standards-guidelines/best-websites](http://wwwala.org/aasl/standards-guidelines/best-websites) and [http://wwwala.org/aasl/awards/best](http://wwwala.org/aasl/awards/best).

Anchor: For creating high quality podcasts with a free and easy to use creation tools and hosting service that includes a variety of sound effects and audio clips. ([https://anchor.fm](https://anchor.fm))

Animoto: For creating videos from your photos, video clips, music, and text. ([http://animoto.com](http://animoto.com) and [https://animoto.com/business/education](https://animoto.com/business/education))

Book Creator: For engaging in the real-world application of online publishing by creating and publishing fiction, non-fiction, comic books, picture books, how-to guides, and more. ([https://bookcreator.com/](https://bookcreator.com/))

Brush Ninja: For making animated GIFs (elementary and up). ([https://brush.ninja](https://brush.ninja))

Chatterpix Kids: For giving photos a voice by taking a picture, drawing a line to make a mouth and recording your voice. ([http://www.duckduckmoose.com/educational-iphone-itouch-apps-for-kids/chatterpix](http://www.duckduckmoose.com/educational-iphone-itouch-apps-for-kids/chatterpix))

Clips: For turning your iPhone into a video production studio by creating and editing dynamic videos with the ability to add subtitles, animated stickers, filters, and music, all within the app. ([https://www.apple.com/clips](https://www.apple.com/clips))

Deck.Toys: For creating interactive lessons with paths and activities for students to follow. ([https://deck.toys](https://deck.toys))

Edpuzzle: For making any video your lesson by finding a video, adding questions, and assign it to the group, a great resource for the flipped classroom ([https://edpuzzle.com](https://edpuzzle.com))

Edublogs: For creating multi-media blogs that include videos, photos and podcasts—all in safe, easy, and secure environment. ([https://edublogs.org](https://edublogs.org))

Flipgrid: For engaging and empowering every voice in a class or at home by recording and sharing short, awesome videos ([https://info.flipgrid.com](https://info.flipgrid.com))

Genially: For creating presentations, infographics, video presentations, resumes, and more with templates with access to photos, animations, and illustrations giving the user the ability to make any image or text interactive (grades: 6-8). ([https://www.genial.ly](https://www.genial.ly))

Glogster: For creating online multi-media posters that combine images, graphics, audio, video and text on one digital canvas. ([http://edu.glogster.com](http://edu.glogster.com))
**GooseChase**: For creating and facilitating scavenger hunts with mobile technology to create exciting learning (elementary+). ([https://www.goosechase.com](https://www.goosechase.com))

**Green Screen by Do Ink**: For making it easy to animate and draw, and to create incredible green screen videos and photos by combining images from multiple sources into a single video. ([http://www.doink.com](http://www.doink.com))

**LiveBinders**: For creating online binders with digital content: websites, audio, video, and text ([http://www.livebinders.com/welcome/education](http://www.livebinders.com/welcome/education))

**Kapwing**: For creating everything from video montages and memes, to stop action videos and sound effects (grades 4 and up). ([https://www.kapwing.com](https://www.kapwing.com))

**Loom**: For creating screen cast and webcam video creation of presentations, how-to videos, and more. (grades 4 and up). ([https://www.loom.com](https://www.loom.com))

**Magisto**: For creating polished short videos from photos and video clips using a smart video editor to create a video story. ([https://www.magisto.com](https://www.magisto.com))

**Nearpod**: For creating interactive lessons in a 1:1 setting by easily importing existing lessons (pdfs, jpegs, ppts) and adding interactive features such as virtual field trips, 3D objects, quizzes, polls, open ended questions, etc. ([https://nearpod.com](https://nearpod.com))

**NowComment**: For having rich, engaging discussions in both large and small groups that allows people to converse about documents, videos, and images (grades: 5 and up). ([https://nowcomment.com](https://nowcomment.com))

**Padlet**: For creating beautiful boards, documents, and webpages that are easy to read and fun to contribute to. ([https://padlet.com](https://padlet.com))

**Pixie**: For creating digital stories, nonfiction pages, comics or podcasts with little instruction using an authoring to share ideas, imagination, and understanding through a combination of text, original artwork, voice narration, and images. ([https://www.tech4learning.com/pixie](https://www.tech4learning.com/pixie))

**PhotoPeach**: For creating digital storytelling using photos, music, and more in a slideshow. ([https://photopeach.com](https://photopeach.com))

**PowToon**: For creating animated videos and presentations, and converting a PowerPoint presentation into a video. ([https://www.powtoon.com](https://www.powtoon.com) and [https://www.powtoon.com/edu-home](https://www.powtoon.com/edu-home))

**PuppetMaster**: For creating animation that can bring to life any image, just by acting things out in front of the camera with voice recorded resulting in an animated video (preschool – middle school). ([https://www.shmonster.com/puppetmaster](https://www.shmonster.com/puppetmaster))

**Quizlet**: For creating digital flashcards, and generating interactive games. ([https://quizlet.com](https://quizlet.com))
**Stop Motion Studio:** For creating stop action movies with a frame-by-frame editor, backgrounds, foregrounds, sound effects, paint brushes, and more. ([https://www.cateater.com](https://www.cateater.com))

**Tour Creator:** For building immersive, 360 tours right from a computer with photos, points of interest, image overlays, boxes with informational text, and “did you know?” points of interest. ([https://arvr.google.com/tourcreator](https://arvr.google.com/tourcreator))

**Typito:** For creating videos incorporating icons, shapes, photos, audio, and video files (grades 4 and up). ([https://typito.com/social](https://typito.com/social))

**Wakelet:** For creating playlists and newsletters by curating and creating stories with links, images, notes, titles, PDFs, YouTube and Vimeo videos, Tweets, Facebook and Instagram posts, Google or Dropbox Documents, Soundcloud tracks, Spotify playlists, Google Maps, Flipgrid responses. ([https://wakelet.com](https://wakelet.com))

**WeVideo:** For video creation, with a stock media library of videos, images, and music tracks. ([https://www.wevideo.com](https://www.wevideo.com))

For more information about **Digital Learning Methods and Apps** go to the **Tools** section on [www.LifelongFaith.com](http://www.LifelongFaith.com).