

# FAITH FORMATION IN CHILDREN



## FLOURISHING CHILDREN

### COMMON TO CHILDREN OF ALL AGES:

1. Regular church attendance.
2. Inspiring, competent and trained leaders/mentors.
3. Family faith rituals.
4. To be present at the gathered worship service (for part or all, where appropriate) to share in and learn about the traditions, rhythms, rituals and celebrations of the faith community. Celebration of faith and life-stage milestones.
5. Strong peer relationships within the faith community.

### 0 - 4 YEAR OLD CHILDREN NEED:

1. Family faith rituals and rhythms:
  - Prayer that is modelled
  - Age appropriate Bible reading
  - Spoken blessings
  - Songs and stories
  - Mealtime grace.
2. Children need to observe their parents' personal faith rituals. Ritual and rhythm also feeds the preschooler's need for things that are familiar.
3. Unconditional love and nurture and an understanding that God loves them.
4. Short truths; e.g. God loves me, God loves others, God wants me to love others too.
5. People who are familiar and routines that give security. This is especially important in the church crèche and preschool programmes.

### 5 - 7 YEAR OLD CHILDREN NEED:

1. To discover who God is and how to have a personal relationship with him.
2. To know that God's love is greater than any human love we can experience.
3. Family faith rituals and rhythms—this follows on from what has already been happening in the home, with the addition of family devotions and faith conversations.
4. To learn to:
  - Pray on their own
  - Read the Bible—both with the family and on their own, as appropriate
  - Memorise Scripture.
5. Age appropriate service opportunities within the church.
6. Positive peer relationships within the faith community.
7. Older role models—especially older children and teens.
8. Intergenerational relationships within the faith community.

### 8 - 10 YEAR OLD CHILDREN NEED:

1. A deepening understanding of God: know who he is; he loves and has a plan for us; he also loves the world and wants us to make a difference in it.
2. Opportunities to make a personal commitment to following Jesus.
3. A discipleship pathway that helps them learn to: pray on their own, read the Bible, memorise Scripture, hear from God, develop daily faith rhythms, share their faith with others, show grace and love to those who have a different worldview.
4. Positive peer relationships, and programmes that encourage these.
5. Service opportunities, both within the church and in the local community.
6. Worship response times at Children's Ministry—I can know God and he can speak to me.
7. Room to ask questions and express doubts in a safe place.
8. Peak experiences; e.g. camps.
9. To hear the faith stories of older believers.
10. Older role models and intergenerational relationships.
11. Help to transition between Children's Ministry and Youth Ministry.

## FLOURISHING FAMILIES

### COMMON TO CHILDREN OF ALL AGES:

1. Faith rituals in the home.
2. Parenting resourcing and support—Faith@Home sessions, social media, Toolbox courses, Spiritual Parenting classes, @home resources etc.
3. Regular church attendance—aim for weekly.
4. Strong peer relationships within the faith community for support and encouragement—for both parents and children.
5. Modelled discipleship.
6. Positive and intentional intergenerational relationships; e.g. with Children's Ministry leaders and other mentors.

### FAMILIES OF 0 - 4 YEAR OLDS WILL HAVE:

1. Bedtime and mealtime faith rituals and rhythms.
2. Peer relationships for encouragement and support; e.g. mainly music, playgroup.
3. Parents who model the showing of grace, so that children will later see how this reflects God's grace to us.
4. Parenting support and resourcing—at this stage parents are at their most receptive.
5. Grandparent figures and intergenerational relationships from within the church community (ongoing through all age stages).

### FAMILIES OF 5 - 7 YEAR OLDS WILL HAVE:

1. Modelled discipleship—parents will share with their children their faith stories and testimonies. Children need to observe their parents' personal faith rituals.
2. Family faith rituals and rhythms—continue with what is already being done and add family devotions.
3. Beliefs that are reinforced: "In our family we..."
4. Opportunities to develop intergenerational relationships within the faith community.
5. Strong peer relationships for encouragement and support.

### FAMILIES OF 8 - 10 YEAR OLDS WILL HAVE:

1. Modelled discipleship—parents will continue to share with their children faith stories and testimonies.
2. Family faith rituals—add discussion of life issues and worldviews.
3. Opportunities to develop intergenerational relationships within the faith community.
4. Family service opportunities—both within the church and the community.
5. Strong peer relationships; e.g. through social events, home groups.
6. Beliefs that are reinforced: "In our family we..."

## FLOURISHING CHURCHES

### COMMON TO CHILDREN OF ALL AGES:

1. Value ministry with children and families—giving it support, resourcing and profile.
2. Provide resourcing for parents and children; e.g. discipleship, sacraments, parenting.
3. Have an intergenerational focus in all aspects of church life.
4. Celebrate faith and life stage milestones.
5. Have a relational focus, i.e., more than Sunday morning.
6. Have a strong discipleship focus and provide discipleship resourcing for the home.
7. Be outward focused—look for ways to engage community families and children.
8. Provide role models and mentors for both children and parents.
9. Ensure that church is a safe place, both spiritually and physically.

### CHURCHES OF 0 - 4 YEAR OLDS WILL:

1. Welcome and accept children and noise—showing grace to families.
2. Celebrate the faith milestone of baby dedication.
3. Have beliefs that are reinforced: "In our church we..."
4. Have strong preschool Sunday ministry with consistent leaders and set routines.
5. Provide role models and mentoring relationships; e.g. grandparent figures.
6. Provide programmes or events that encourage peer relationships and give opportunity for outreach to community families; e.g. mainly music, playgroups.

### CHURCHES OF 5 - 7 YEAR OLDS WILL:

1. Resource parents and children so they can flourish in faith.
2. Have strong Sunday programmes.
3. Provide discipleship resources that can be used in the home.
4. Include children in Sunday services, wherever possible.
5. Develop intergenerational lenses through which to view services and other church activities.
6. Celebrate the life stage milestone of starting school.
7. Have spaces where children of different ages can interact on Sundays outside of the Children's Ministry; e.g. a sport space where older and younger can play games together.

### CHURCHES OF 8 - 10 YEAR OLDS WILL:

1. Celebrate faith and life stage milestones, e.g. graduating primary school, making a faith decision.
2. Provide peak experiences; e.g. camps.
3. Where possible, have weekday clubs and events that further discipleship.
4. Provide programmes that encourage peer relationships and give opportunity for outreach to community children; e.g. Launchpad, ICONZ, IFG.
5. Have strong connections between children's and youth ministries—an integrated strategy.
6. Provide parents with teaching and information on the sacraments of communion and baptism.
7. Include children in Sunday services, wherever possible.