



Office of Lifelong Formation
3525 South Lake Park Avenue
Chicago, IL 60653
pvm.archchicago.org/lifelong-formation/

Kevin Foy
Director, Office of Lifelong Formation
kfoy@archchicago.org

July 24, 2020

Dear Parish Leaders and Staff,

Thank you for your creativity and dedication as the COVID-19 pandemic has prevented you from facilitating physical gathering in your ministries to children and youth. While the ongoing challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic create significant stresses on our efforts to form children and their families in the faith, I am also inspired by the many ways our parishes have attended prayerfully to the movement of the Holy Spirit in this moment. Throughout the spring, so many of you answered the call to help families take a stronger lead in fostering faith at home, to build a deeper sense of community among parents and catechists, and to develop strategies to make the Church more fully present in the lives of others beyond the parish walls, particularly within the virtual spaces of our lives. These efforts not only respond to the current situation but move our ministries forward in the task of making disciples, building communities and inspiring witness, which stands at the heart of Renew My Church.

As we continue to navigate the pandemic and look towards the fall, it is imperative that we continue to find new and creative ways to minister in extraordinary times while safeguarding the health of our communities. During this time of great uncertainty and turmoil for the individuals, families and communities served by our Church, we remain committed to leading them closer to Christ and one another in order to share the Gospel as a light to our world. We also recognize the need to foster a sense of community and connection, and the eagerness of many communities to once again gather young people and their families in person. Gathering is a core component of our faith. As Jesus instructs us, “For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.” (Matthew 18:20) In our current situation, however, gathering necessarily must take on different forms, not always reliant on sharing physical space.

The following Religious Education and Youth Ministry Program Framework is intended to assist parishes in planning quality, relevant faith formation programming as we navigate a rapidly shifting reality in our world, nation, city and communities. We provide clear options for your fall programming, and pathways to safely gather the children and youth on our campuses while also limiting the frequency and size of these gatherings in the interest of health and safety. Each parish is asked to thoughtfully discern the frequency and necessity of in-person gathering within their programs. When in-person gatherings do occur, parishes must follow the policies outlined here for when and how to safely gather young people.

Please note that in creating this document we did study carefully “Reopening with Trust: A Planning Framework for the 2020/21 School Year” developed by the Office of Catholic Schools, which in turn was crafted in careful consideration of the Transition Joint Guidance document (released on June 23, 2020) issued by the Illinois State Board of Education and the Illinois Department of Public Health. The guidelines within this document apply only to programming for minors (under age 18). Adult faith formation experiences and parent gatherings are subject to the regular guidelines for non-liturgical gatherings.

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Please know that the Office of Lifelong Formation and other Archdiocesan offices are committed and available to support you in your efforts to facilitate safe, meaningful programming for children, youth and their families beginning this fall.

For questions and concerns regarding reopening policies and procedures, please contact ReopenREYM@archchicago.org.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kevin Foy".

Kevin Foy
Director, Office of Lifelong Formation
Archdiocese of Chicago