



Christian Formation Celebration Week

Kick-Off Sunday, Rally Day and Intergenerational Events

The Presbyterian Church (USA) planning calendar recognizes a week of Christian Formation in churches and faith communities. This week begins the Sunday after Labor Day but churches may choose different weeks. When considering all the ways in which formation happens in our faith communities, we can use this time to kick-off a new program year for Christian education, commission faith formation leaders and highlight and start ministries. Your church might have a Rally Day or Kick-Off Sunday to celebrate and mark new beginnings. This event might be after a worship service, on a Saturday or even as a mid-week event. Here are some ideas and ways to think about marking this time in the church year.

When planning the timing to a new program year and a kick-off event of some kind you should spend some time evaluating the habits and characteristics of your church and community.

- When does the school year begin for most of the schools in your area?
- Do your church members and participants travel a lot of the summer? When do they typically return? Do you have a lot of retired members that travel in the early fall?
- Pay attention to community events in late summer and early fall. Many communities have festivals, races, and other events this time of year. How can your church be part of the community rather than being frustrated with competing events?
- Listen to the parents of children and teens in your congregation about how the start of the school-year impacts their family schedules. They may feel that the first few weeks of school are full, and their children need space to adjust before starting a lot of new church routines.
- There is not a perfect time for everyone to be sure. What used to work for your church may not anymore. Always be ready to re-evaluate every 2-3 years.

Ideas for marking Christian Formation Celebration Week

Ways to celebrate rally day or kick-off Sunday

- Festival with games for all ages
- Stations that introduce an all-church theme for your faith formation programs
- Mission Fair with displays or projects to engage everyone in your community partnerships
- Engage with an existing community event by having an interactive booth
- An all-church meal with table conversations and activities
- Open house or drive through event
- Joint meal or event that is open to your community
- Partnership event with one of the organizations in your community
- Involve your camp and conference center leadership in a camp style event with energizers and music
- Include a back to school blessing if plans coincides with return to school or do on two separate days

Make it intergenerational! Plan an event that offers time and space for enhancing intergenerational relationships. These relationships are what will be the foundation of Christian formation in your faith community.

- Play together! Have stations, table games and other ways to gather in small groups and engage.
- Sing! Do not forget how music nurtures our faith formation. Engage and include your music program to offer intergenerational singing.
- Make sure your publicity and invitations are clear that the event is for “all-church”.
- Consider a meal that intentionally mixes generations at tables.
- If you are having a festival type event, plan games that have mixed generational teams.
- Intergenerational relationships need nurturing and take time. At an event you may need to have conversation starter suggestions, allow for smaller children to be with one parent when mixing generations and you or someone on your team should mingle and facilitate positive interactions—you may need to redirect children or teens that cluster away from the group.
- Intergenerational events can foster community and relationships, but it will take time. Consider looking at your calendar and continuing to offer space for these sorts of events in your faith community.

Include service and your community in your event. Engaging in partnerships in your community is another way to nurture faith formation as you actively practice the message of the gospel. The kick-off of a program year is an excellent opportunity to highlight and introduce your community partnerships.

- Invite community organizations to have displays, host different tables at a meal or to have a few minutes in worship or at your event to talk about their organization. Make sure to focus on storytelling and to consider all ages.
- Offer a service project that easily works for an on-site event. Pack blessing bags for those experiencing homelessness, assemble school supplies for your community schools or even do Presbyterian Disaster Assistance suggested projects. (<https://pda.pcusa.org/page/kits/>)
- If your faith community has accepted the [Matthew 25 invitation](#), this is a great time to introduce how you will be engaging and to offer a way for your members to commit.
- You may have had a summer full of mission and service. Use this time of gathering together to tell stories of impact and begin plans for next summer.

You might consider this approach if you feel like finding a time for everyone is challenging or if you want a mid-week option to accompany your weekend event.

- Pick a range of hours for your drive through event and have different stations that cars can pull up to or treat it as an open house where everyone still parks and comes into the church and visits stations.
- Include dropping off supplies for a service project that will be done by a group in the church.
- This is a great way to offer back to school blessings if your regular church programming doesn't kick-off until after the school-year begins.

Introducing faith formation opportunities, engaging with your faith community, and reaching out to your neighbors are excellent ways to mark Christian Formation Week. The Office of Christian Formation also has resources for you to mark the beginning of the school year in homes, and in worship and liturgy and worship ideas for commissioning all those engaged in faith formation. These resources can all be found at pcusa.org/christianformationweek

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