

New Era

But where to Begin?

This September, all those involved in youth work have faced the significant challenge of preparing to safely begin reconnecting with young people and support them in their faith.

The continuing pandemic and necessary social distancing restrictions make many of our usual models and methods redundant but young people are expressing a desire to come together to explore faith and be part of church community. Of course, churches never shut, but there is a felt urgency to start community activities and services, welcoming those looking to discover meaning, purpose and value.

I am confident that the church is still a necessary part of faith development for young people and critical in their discovering abundant life in Jesus, so how do we meet this challenge?

Many of us are working with a reduced capacity, supporting family and with pressures such as job security taking much of our energy. Sometimes it's easier to continue what we have done before, or add to it, in the hope things will eventually go 'back to normal'. Even if you have already begun to meet again, let's take some time now to pray, listen and plan for a new era.

It can feel overwhelming to think about starting again, to review our community, ministry, and provision and then plan creatively within a fresh vision. So here are some exercises to get you started. Print these sheets and scribble down thoughts as they come to you, share those thoughts with other leaders and pray at every step.

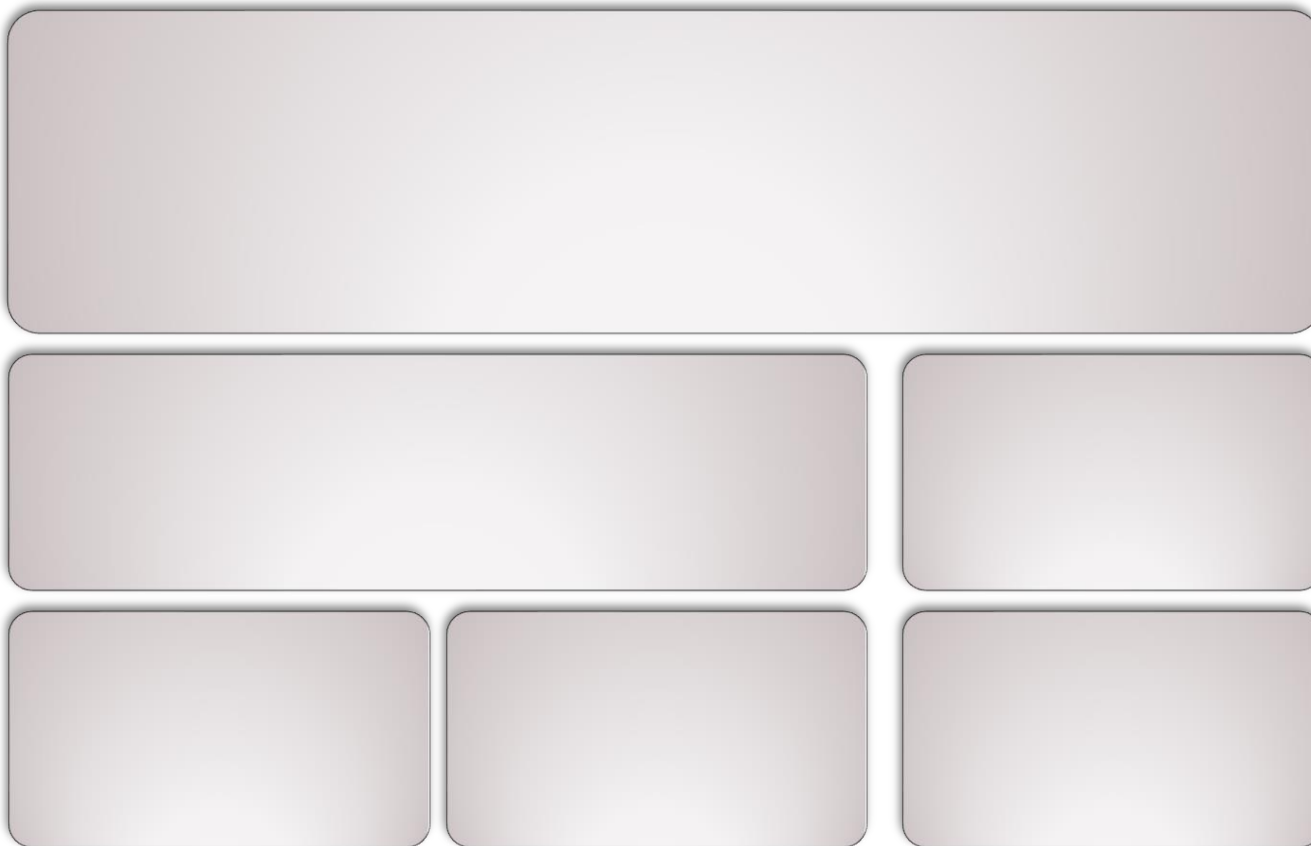
What's included:

- 2) What do you want to see? Vision mind map
- 3) Team First –
- 4) blank page
- 5) Locked doors and keys – challenges and what you have to face them
- 6) Year Planner - headlines for each term.
- 7) Faith Forming environments
- 8) Rooted in Faith
- 9) Building closer connections
- 10) My rhythms – what will sustain you?

What do you want to see? Mind-map here your hopes for the young people you are supporting. Pray as you consider and write your thoughts. Fill the sheet with as much as comes into your mind, then circle thoughts that stand out or your team agree are key.



What will build and sustain your team?

A grid of seven rounded rectangular boxes for notes, arranged in three rows: one large box in the top row, two boxes in the middle row, and three boxes in the bottom row.

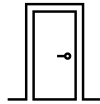
Here are some headings to consider:

Which are important for your team of leaders and helpers and how will they feature in your plan?

- Clear Expectations
- Regular commitment
- Friendship
- Shared Vision
- Opportunities for input and equipping
- A space for celebration
- Rest
-
-
-
-

Explore the challenges you face and consider how you may meet these with your strengths.

- 1) What are the main challenges or obstacles? (list them around the locked door)
- 2) What are your key strengths and your church, team and ministry? (list them around the key)
- 3) How might they connect?



Headline planning by term.

What will be your key events in the academic year, for the first and second half of each term?

Autumn

A large, dark grey trapezoidal shape representing the Autumn term. It is wider at the top and tapers towards the bottom. A horizontal black line is drawn across the middle of the shape, dividing it into two sections.

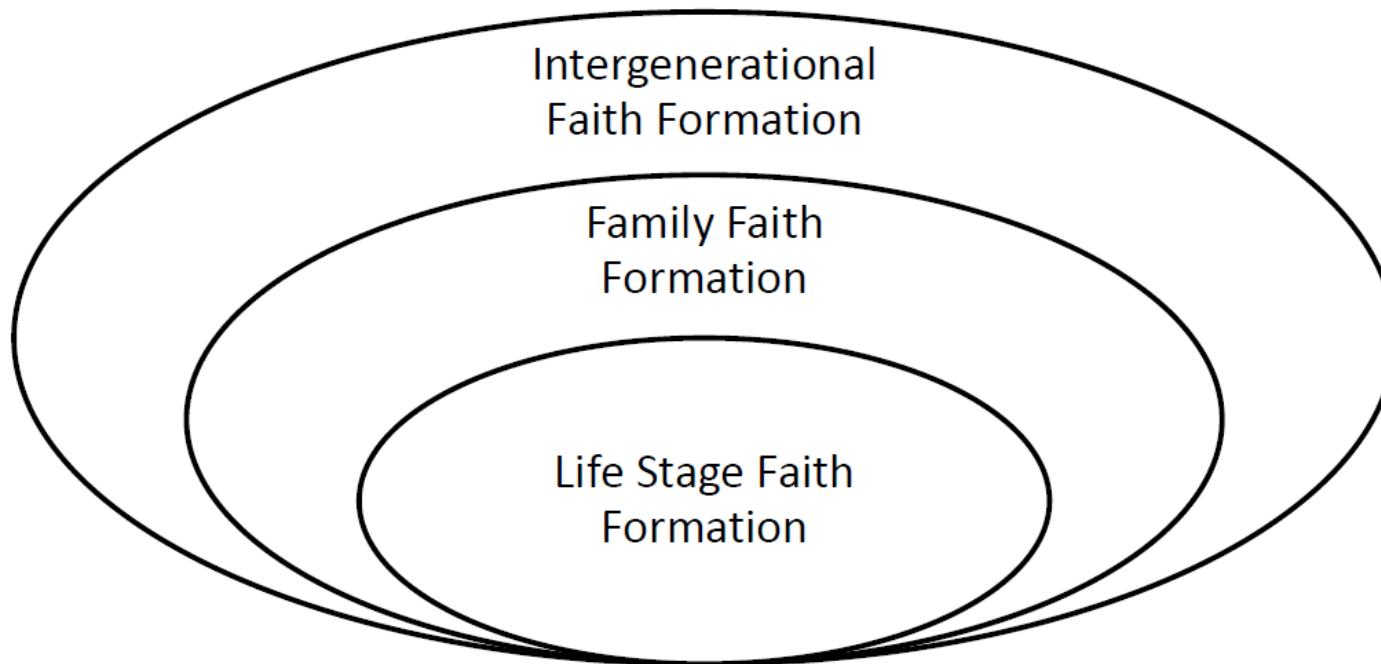
Spring

A large, dark grey trapezoidal shape representing the Spring term. It is wider at the top and tapers towards the bottom. A horizontal black line is drawn across the middle of the shape, dividing it into two sections.

Summer

A large, light grey trapezoidal shape representing the Summer term. It is wider at the top and tapers towards the bottom. A horizontal black line is drawn across the middle of the shape, dividing it into two sections.

Vibrant Faith describe three faith forming environments. What activities can we plan to invite young people into each of these three environments?



1

¹ Taken from Vibrant Faith's 'A guide to Transforming Faith for a New World, John Roberto <https://vibrantfaith.org/>

Research has found key factors that help young people stay rooted in church². Give yourself a rating for each of these areas. Which needs attention?

Inclusion

- "There has to be some way of getting us to be part of a whole family"
- Importance of intergenerational relationships

Equality

- "I was treated maturely really early. I was valued as a person"
- Faith flourishes in action
- Young people want to be involved in leadership and decision-making to help make a difference

Space

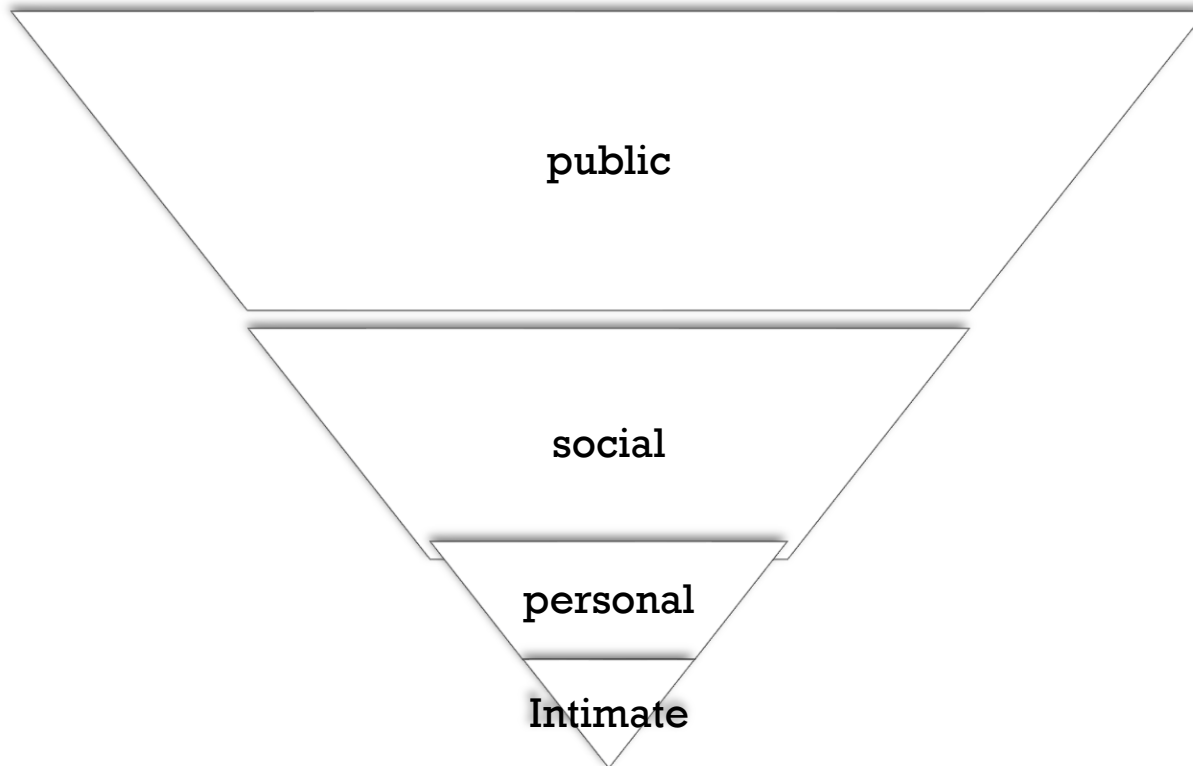
- Adolescence brings upheaval and questions
- Safe space to explore, welcomed and accepted

Leadership

- Young people seek genuine, meaningful experiences and relationships
- Youth leaders who act as 'bridge people' to wider church
- Youth leaders need support and whole church vision and strategy.

² Rooted in the Church. Church of England Education Office 2016 https://www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2017-10/2016_rooted_in_the_church_summary_report.pdf

Use this proxemics diagram as a way to think about the strength of your connections to young people in the community. How might you increase your public connections? Social distancing means we will always be at a 'public' distance from each other, so how might you still invite young people to deeper relationships in the church community?



Rhythms

What rhythms and routines will sustain you this term?

List examples for each of these headings, then think about how to add them into your diary.

Rest?

Learning?

Fun?

What energises me?

How will I hear God?

