



M E N D

Leader Guide



Faith and Family Life
Catholic Ministries

AN INVITATION

You have been invited to accompany families as they encounter Jesus and experience the beauty of Reconciliation as it connects to daily life. Families will experience the love of Jesus as they talk together about the mending of relationships and the healing power of forgiveness.

As we begin this process, we must be mindful that many of our parents are not regularly going to Reconciliation. This can leave a void and disconnect as parents try to encourage their children to receive a sacrament they are not participating in. You are invited to help fill this void. Your accompaniment, encouragement, and patience could lead parents back to the sacrament with their children.

PARENT MEETING

Mend begins with a Parent Meeting geared specially for parents to reflect upon their own experience of Reconciliation.

FAMILY MEETINGS

Mend is a family based curriculum facilitated by parents in 7 at-home Family Meetings. These Family Meetings focus on God's love for us, the origin of sin, and God's plan of reconciliation. Each Family Meeting includes: a gathering ritual, opening prayer, check-in question, experiential activity, teaching, and closing prayer. Each Family Meeting is designed to take 30-40 minutes.

GATHER

The gathering ritual invites all family members to come together in a shared space, pray the Our Father together, and concludes with a parent asking God's blessing for each of the other family members. Rituals are meaningful moments that, when continually shared, help to unite a family. This blessing ritual will help provide a regular rhythm to begin Family Meetings. Each family meeting begins with an opening prayer. As families gather, God fills the space around them and within them.

CHECK-IN

The check-in question is meant to get the conversation started between family members. The question is loosely based on the session's theme, and is one that is easy to answer.

ACTIVITY AND TEACHING

The activity provided is meant to teach the children through a fun and interactive experience. A teaching is also provided that coincides with the activity. Parents are given the language to teach an essential part of the catechesis related to the theme.

Children remember what they “do” and parents remember what they “teach.”

PRAYER

To end each Family Meeting, a prayer is included to be read by the child preparing for first Reconciliation.

A FEW TIPS

- By reading and experiencing the content yourself, you will be best equipped to accompany this program. We recommend first becoming familiar with the material before implementing it.
- Families can be placed in small groups of 6-8 families to share this journey with. Parents can learn from each other as they recount their Family Meeting experiences. Companions and catechists can weave together these individual families into a small church community.
- The At-Church Support materials include 2 Sessions and 1 Mini-Retreat for parents and children. If beginning Family Meetings with *Mend*, use “Time is Holy.” If continuing on from *Seek* and *Root* use “Celebrate.”
- Check in with families regularly using our Family Follow Through system available on Martha or as a PDF. This helps with accountability.
- Share photos from the Family Follow Throughs in your bulletin, newsletter, emails, or bulletin boards.

SCOPE AND SEQUENCE

Family Meeting	Theme	Activity	Values Taught
Parent Meeting	For the parent(s) only. Take a moment before beginning this process with your family to reflect on your own experience of confession.	-Watch a powerful video about the parable of the Prodigal Son. -Learn about how to lead a family meeting.	-Healing -Mercy -Importance of Family Bonding
1	Learn that we are all created in love for love by God, each handmade and unique.	-Mold the Creation Dough, or clay, into your own shape.	-Creation -Dignity of the Person
2	Learn about how God created human beings with free will.	-Color the paper apples and use them to talk about free will, and the hope of Jesus and the cross.	-Original Sin -Making Good Choices
3	Learn about Jesus as the Good Shepherd. He will always seek each one of us.	-Play a game of hide-and-go-seek with the wood sheep.	-God's Loving Pursuit of Us
4	Learn about the cross, the pouring out of grace, and the sacrament of Baptism.	-Have each family member write their name on the wood cross. -Renew your Baptismal promises as a family.	-Grace -Baptism -New Life



5	Learn how sin is “missing the mark” and the guidelines God gave us in the 10 Commandments and Beatitudes.	-Play a field goal game with a mini football. -Engage the 10 Commandments and Beatitudes.	-Sin -The Consequence of Choices -Laws of Goodness
6	Learn about conscience and choices and how to evaluate your day. Participate in an examination of conscience and pray the Act of Contrition.	-Partake in the Examen prayer by using your Examen bag filled with hearts and stones. -Examination of Conscience.	-Conscience -Examen Tool
7	Learn how our decisions affect others. Learn what penance is and the outline of how to make a good confession. Celebrate God’s desire to “find” us.	-Make a string web together as a family.	-Penance -Forgiveness -Healing

MEND AT-CHURCH

It is important to have parents gathered periodically throughout the *Mend* process.

The goal of gathering is to:

- Find out what is going well and what parents are struggling with in the *Mend* Box Family Meetings.
- To encourage, deepen, and support their experience of the Family Meetings with any tips, inspiration, or information.
- To meet and hear from other parents on a similar journey. There is wisdom in any room of adults, especially parents!
- To give children a positive and meaningful experience at-church.
- To pray together - for each other and for their families.

This resource has been provided to support you in facilitating family Sessions held at-church throughout the *Mend* experience. The sessions include separate experiences for parents and children, and a combined family prayer experience to close your sessions.

There is plenty of content to fill a 1-1.5 hour time frame in the Sessions and a 3 hour time frame for the Mini-Retreat. The Sessions from the Mini-Retreat can also be broken up into additional individual Sessions. This material could be used from start to finish or you can use different sections to supplement things you may have already planned. Session 1 is designed to be used between Family Meeting 2 and 3. Session 2 is designed to be used between Family Meeting 6 and 7. We realize each of our directors have different gifts; some are wonderful teachers, some are storytellers, others are better facilitating small groups, some are gifted in finding volunteers to present material. Use your strengths to lead your family sessions, and look for others who can take the pieces you are not as confident in. It takes a team!

There are supplies that need to be pulled together to help bring these lessons to life. We have given you supply lists. We have also suggested ways to set a mood in the room; candles, music, dimming the lights etc. We feel it is critical to set holy spaces to lead parents into deeper intimacy with Christ and themselves. The children's sessions always begin with gathering around a prayer table covered with different items for each lesson to help draw them into the experience. Depending on the size of the group, you may decide to break the group up into classrooms led by catechists and helpers. We cannot over emphasize the impact of simple but beautiful decor, great hospitality, and intimate prayerful spaces.

Your attention to detail tells everyone this is important, we prepared for you!

As a Church we are just beginning the journey of calling parents into the opportunity of forming their children and themselves more deeply. We realize parents are in different places and stages in their own faith journeys. We have written sessions we feel best take into account today's parents. The majority of the parents we encounter have very little theological background, but have the wisdom of their own lives to reflect on. We have found that when we give them helpful prompts and time to process, they do very well in sharing with each other. Parents, for the most part, are coming to these sessions because they've been told they have to, and probably aren't expecting anything that will truly impact their lives. It is our hope that these sessions meet them where they are at and slowly lead them into something more. Feel free to scale the material up or down. It is most important that families leave with a positive experience of Church and community, feeling like they have a place in it.

MASTER PLANNER

Download the Pathways Master Planner [here](#) to schedule and organize your implementation of *Mend*.



FAMILY FOLLOW THROUGHS

Time with family is precious. Following through with this family experience tells your child this is important. With your child, please complete the following tasks after each meeting to turn in.



Family Meeting 1: Email a picture of what your family created out of the creation dough.

Family Meeting 2: After completion of the Teaching and Activity presented in Meeting 2, email a picture of your family's apples.

Family Meeting 3: Email a picture of where you found the lost sheep, with the sheep in place.

Family Meeting 4: Share one memory from your child's Baptism that you recalled today. Email a short response.

Family Meeting 5: Share your child's reflection and thoughts on the teaching and activity in this family meeting. Email a short response.

Family Meeting 6: Email a picture of your completed Act of Contrition card.

Family Meeting 7: Share your child's reflection and thoughts on the teaching and activity in this family meeting. Email a short response.