



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, 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. Families will need to have the holy water bottles included in their box filled at-church. You can fill them before distributing the boxes or during the Celebrate Session.

CHECK-IN

The check-in 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 Content includes 2 Sessions and 1 Mini-Retreat for parents and children. If you are introducing families to Immediate Formation resources for the first time, be sure to begin with the Celebrate Session available before Session 1.
- 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 gather 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 continue to form parents in their personal faith journeys.
- 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 2 Sessions and a 3 hour time frame for the Mini-Retreat. The parts from the Mini-Retreat can also be broken up into additional individual sessions. The Mini-Retreat material could be used from start to finish or you can use different parts to supplement content 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. If you are introducing families to Immediate Formation resources for the first time, be sure to begin with the Celebrate Session available before Session 1. This experience will help provide a framework for both the purpose and direction of this stage of formation. Families will need to have the holy water bottles included in their box filled at-church. You can fill them before distributing the boxes or during the Celebrate Session.

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 families 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.

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.

ACCOMPANIMENT TEAM NEEDS

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! Invest in time with your accompaniment team. Having a strong team of people committed to the same mission helps everyone. Offer time to get to know one another, provide skills training, and spend time in prayer together. We want our parents to feel like they are being invited into a group that has been preparing for them and enjoys each other. Our *Beside* resources can be helpful in forming and growing your accompaniment team.

Facilitator:

- Choosing a facilitator to lead your Sessions as an MC from the front is an important decision. This person will introduce and weave together the content for each Session. This person should be warm, engaging, confident, and it helps if they have a good sense of humor. This person needs to be open and non-judgmental. It will be their voice that will help the group grow together.

Companions:

- We recommend placing a companion in each small group if possible. Make sure companions feel comfortable with the flow of each Session. It is very helpful to have them walk through a sample Session together. Leave time at the end of each Session with the companions to evaluate the experience. To make this a great experience for all we must be checking in regularly, making any needed changes as soon as possible. The companions should be made aware of the following:
 - Make sure each group member has the chance to participate.
 - Do not allow any group member to control the sharing.
 - Do not make anyone feel forced to share. Parents can decide to “pass.”
 - Make sure all parents feel respected and listened to. Having cell phones put away will help with this.
 - Companions will set the tone for the sharing. If they want a deeper, more thoughtful response from parents, they will need to model that in their own sharing. The group will usually follow their lead.
 - Do not monopolize the sharing. It works well if companions begin the sharing and then pass it on to the other members.
 - Companions should be listening to all parent responses, and be ready to ask follow up questions that help expand parent’s answers. It is important that they remember information discussed and check in with parents in future Sessions: “How is your sick mother doing?”, “How was your vacation time with your family that you were looking forward to?”
 - Each group sharing time is preempted by a journaling and reflection time for processing. This should help the parents be prepared to share. No one likes to be put on the spot.

- If anything is ever discussed in small group time that is inappropriate or alarming it should be brought to the attention of the Faith Formation Director.

Catechist:

- Catechists will be leading and guiding the children in their Sessions. This will include playing games, leading crafts, having conversations with a small group, managing group dynamics, and providing a safe trusted space for the children to feel a part of. The catechists should be made aware of the following:
 - How you lead, your encouragement and your undivided presence, will be your greatest gift.
 - You may have other helpers joining you, including older children. Make sure they understand the Sessions ahead of time and what you expect from them. This will ensure a better experience for all.
 - You will be assigned a group of children to journey with. You will be the glue that holds the small group together. Your leadership will be important as you are called to help facilitate conversations, share the passion you have for your faith, and witness through your own life experiences with the children.

Hospitality:

- Hospitality is about much more than setting out cookies and water bottles. Great hospitality is the root for the growing that will take place. Having a team that interacts well together, and welcomes you into their community, will help the families get comfortable almost immediately. This will produce greater engagement in the Sessions. This type of hospitality requires that facilitator and companions become friendly with the families from the moment they arrive. It includes asking good questions, being vulnerable, and helping everyone feel seen.
- How the room “feels” is also an important part of the hospitality recipe. Covered tables, simple centerpieces, and the glow of a few candles will encourage the parents to lean into the conversation, like a great dinner party. Take the time to set the room in advance, so that families walk into a space that feels prepared for them. A prayer table up front with changing images each Session can also be a small voice speaking into the room. Find creative people in your community who have a heart for families and let them loose to work their magic.

Intercessors:

- Having intentional intercessors who are praying for your families and your ministry is an important step to staying on mission. Prayer always needs to be integral to the work we do. People in your parish community who take the time to talk with Jesus often and who understand the struggles and difficulties facing families are perfect to help in this role. These prayer warriors can be organized as a group, or

can individually come before God for the needs of the parish families each day. Prayer can be specially centered around this time of preparing for Reconciliation. Intercessors can be invited to pray specifically for the following needs:

- For adults who are now parents, that they could be open in a new way to hearing God's message of love and restoration for themselves.
- For children who are just beginning to know the weight of choices and decisions, that they learn to bring these feelings to the heart of Jesus through Reconciliation.
- For forgiveness, mercy, and grace within the life of our families. This is the first place children learn to reconcile and receive forgiveness.
- For the intentional time our families are spending at home sharing faith, that this investment will bear much fruit.
- For the other members of the accompaniment team at our parish who share their time and faith with our families.

MASTER PLANNER

Download the Pathways Master Planner found at the bottom of the Pathways for Parish use page [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.