

Family Ministry and Family Discipleship

**Rev. Andy Becker, Director of Family Ministry, The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod
Summer, 2026 Small Church Summit**

Family ministry is the support a congregation gives its families as places for faith formation. Support is needed. Research shows that religious identities tend to be formed in young people by age 18. Childhood becomes the battleground for faith formation.

One-third of presently “de-churched” adults (that is, people who attended church at one time but now no longer) had no religious training in their homes. Within our Synod, only 17% of families interested enough in family ministry to be working with the Concordia Center for the Family report that they conduct family devotions. Nationwide, 34% of the children enrolled in our preschools and early childhood centers are from families that had no church homes when these pupils were first registered. All of this underlines the importance of family ministry. The Christian family needs to be highlighted as the place where the faith is lived out, practiced as well as inscribed.

Family ministry includes matters of faith formation. It also embraces the importance of helping families with parenting, personal habits, sexuality issues, and marriage enrichment. There is a growing body of helpful resources on the Synod’s website. Check it out now, but return to it in the future at <https://www.lcms.org/how-we-serve/national/family-ministry>

Family ministry provides equipping for discipleship. *Family discipleship* refers to various efforts made within a family, including engaging in spiritual conversations (both intentional and as ripe occasions present themselves), teaching about generosity (both giving and serving), and parents making special efforts to impart verbal blessings to their children. It starts as newly married couples and new parents ask themselves what spiritual life will look like in their homes. It is best if the emphasis falls on practices that are simple and repeatable, especially at first.

It is sometimes said that the church always lies one generation away from extinction. Yet the church can be seen as constantly poised on the brink. For it is also only one generation away from a broad-based embrace of family practices that will reinforce the faith, as parents determine not only to provide material support for their children but also to bring them up to the praise and honor of the Lord. Small churches have particular advantages in relationships and church culture that they can put to good use. A new resource for family ministry in small churches should be available this fall.