**Online Topical Gatherings for Parents**

**-Fourth-Soil Parenting Project-**

**The Idea:** Parents gather online for a bi-monthly pain-point-topic discussion - for one hour. The focus is on connecting parents with each other—it’s not a lecture series, or a workshop or a Bible study. These online gatherings include plenty of interaction. They are kicked-off by a short “onramp” presentation by an expert or panel, followed by a leader-led discussion with the whole group, and in breakout rooms.

**Setting:** Online on Zoom (allows for parents to participate at a convenient time, without an extra trip to church or babysitting). Use the church’s Zoom account, or the Zoom account of the leader.

**Time Commitment:** One hour, every other month, for three gatherings, over six months.

**Structure & Guidelines**

• Decide on three “pain point” topics that tie into feedback and insights you’ve collected through the Congregational Texting Survey and Dinner-Party Focus Group. All of these topics need a “faith connection” that helps parents envision why and how to bridge into conversation with their kids. Possibilities include:

**1. Mental Health of Children** (Expert: A counselor or psychologist in your church or community who specializes in the mental health of children, followed by a leader-led discussion.)

**2. What I Wish I Knew Then That I Know Now…** (Expert: A panel of three “veteran” parents who are real, authentic, and able to convey insights and wisdom from their journey)

**3. Parenting Hacks for Talking About Your Faith** (Expert: Use a portion of Laura Fanucci’s Vibrant Faith MasterClass – it’s about 14 minutes long. Here is the Vimeo Link: <https://vimeo.com/808455528?share=copy> Follow this with a leader-led discussion.)

**4. Transitions In Parenting** (Expert: A counselor or psychologist or sociologist in your church or community who can talk about the developmental transitions among young people. Follow this with a leader-led discussion.)

**5. Engaging Media & Social Media Consumption** (Expert: A brief overview of media/social media consumption and its impact on kids, followed by a panel of parents who can talk, with perspective, about boundaries around media and social-media consumption. Follow this with a leader-led discussion.)

**6. Preparing Your Kids (and You!) for the Rest of Their Life** (Experts: A college advisor from your local high school and a counselor specializing in adolescent development. They dialogue about the challenges of next steps with teenagers who are headed toward graduation, and parents who will be “letting go” of their kids in a significant way. Follow this with a leader-led discussion.)

• Recruit an “expert” to kick off each discussion with a 10-15 minute “onramp” into the topic. It’s very important that this monologue portion of the gathering is short, followed by discussion questions with the whole group and breakouts with just three or four people.

• You’ll need a Host/Leader to convene the gathering and monitor the flow—this person will also move participants into and out of Breakout Rooms and monitor the Chat for questions and input. The Host/Leader will keep track of the time and open/close the gathering in prayer.

• The Leader and the Invited Expert(s) will ask questions of the whole group, post questions for the Breakout Groups, and respond and ask follow-up questions.

• The Leader and the Invited Expert will reserve the last 5 minutes of the gathering to highlight faith connections to the topic, and provide simple ways to talk about the topic with their kids from a faith perspective.

• Afterward, the Leader will put together a summary of the discussion, highlighting takeaways and any next steps.