

Lifelong Faith

the theory and practice of lifelong faith formation

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Special Report Faith Formation 2020: Envisioning the Future

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Faith Formation 2020

Lifelong Faith

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From the Editor

Welcome to the Summer 2009 issue of *Lifelong Faith* with the theme of “Faith Formation 2020: Envisioning the Future.” The focus of the **Faith Formation 2020 Project** is to address the question “*What will Christian faith formation in churches look like in 2020?*” and to develop processes, strategies, and resources to help churches plan for the future. This issue presents the first draft of a working paper to help churches understand the driving forces affecting the future of faith formation 2010-2020 and to envision the future of faith formation through four scenarios that describe what faith formation in 2020 could be like.

To launch the project, I invited a group of faith formation leaders from a diversity of Christian traditions to explore, discuss, and create the outline of the scenarios. I want to thank each of them for their contribution. They were instrumental in launching the project.

David Anderson (The Youth and Family Institute, Bloomington, MN)

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This issue of the journal begins a **consultation process** with leaders in a variety of settings in Christian faith formation—churches, universities and seminaries, church agencies, training and consulting, and publishing. I am inviting every subscriber of *Lifelong Faith* to participate in the consultation. **Go to www.LifelongFaith.com to participate in the consultation.** The process and directions are online. I really want to hear from you. Let's shape the future of faith formation together. Thank You!

John Roberto
Editor

Part One

Creating Scenarios for the Future of Faith Formation in a Changing Church and World



Introduction: Thinking about the Future

What will Christian faith formation look like in 2020? Can we begin now to envision the shape of faith formation in the year 2020. Can we prepare our churches for the future of faith formation? The last two decades have seen dramatic political, economic, social, and cultural changes affecting virtually every dimension of American Christianity. The new environment in which Christian faith formation will operate in the decade from 2010-2020 will demand new thinking and new models, practices, resources, and technologies to address the spiritual needs of all generations.

To help church leaders envision the future of faith formation we have employed a process called *scenario thinking*. Jay Ogilvy and Peter Schwartz of Global Business Network describe scenarios as “narratives of alternative environments in which today’s decisions may be played out. They are not predictions. Nor are they strategies. Instead they are more like hypotheses of different futures specifically designed to highlight the risks and opportunities involved in specific strategic issues.” The point is not to gather evidence for some “most probable” future. The point is rather to entertain a number of different possibilities in order to make better choices about the future of faith formation in the face of inevitable uncertainties.

Scenarios are created and used in sets of multiple stories that capture a range of possibilities, good and bad, expected and surprising. They are designed to stretch our thinking about emerging changes and the opportunities and threats that the future might hold. They allow us to weigh our choices more carefully when making short-term and long-term strategic decisions. At its most basic, scenarios help people and organizations order and frame their thinking about the long-term while providing them with the tools

and confidence to take action soon. At its most powerful, scenarios help people and organizations find strength of purpose and strategic direction in the face of daunting, chaotic and even frightening circumstances.

No one can definitively map the future, but we can explore the possibilities in ways that support preparation for the future and good decision-making about the directions church life and faith formation need to take. The four faith formation scenarios we developed can help you and your church wrestle with the key issues and developments that shape what the future may hold and prepare more effectively. The scenarios presented in this report are meant to stimulate discussion about what choices Christian churches need to make today in order to thrive in 2020. When reading this report, please bear in mind that *this work is intended to begin a stimulating discussion about the future of faith formation—not to propose readymade answers or solutions*. This is the beginning of a conversation!

The Scenario Planning Process

Over the last 40 years, in the face of increasing uncertainty and complexity, corporations and other large global organizations have begun to apply sophisticated scenario processes. A famous example occurred in South Africa in 1991, when the creation of the Mont Fleur scenarios catalyzed a nationwide discussion about the possibilities for post-Apartheid South Africa. These scenarios were developed as the political negotiations between the ANC and the apartheid-era National Party were taking place. The scenarios were presented as alternative outcomes to difficult decisions that the key stakeholders in South Africa would have to make (e.g. reconciliation versus revenge, the role of private property, minority rights for whites). The dialogue that stemmed from these scenarios enabled the

stakeholders to think through the implications of their decisions and consequently adjust their strategies. In recent years, scenario thinking has become one of the most popular strategy and long-term thinking tools, used by many of the world's top companies, influential government agencies, and community organizations and foundations to make sense of and succeed in a turbulent, uncertain world.

Three principles underpin any successful scenario thinking approach.

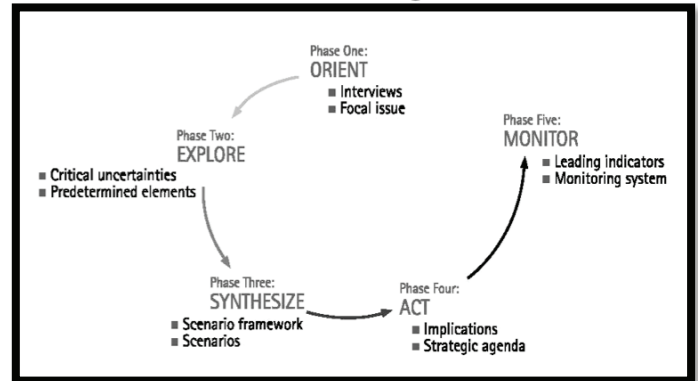
1. **Take the Long-View.** The day-to-day work of most organizations is driven by near-term concerns and 1-3 year planning horizons. However, in reality, most strategic choices—from new product concepts to shifts in policy to new leadership—are choices that will play out a long way into the future. Taking the long view offers a more proactive and anticipatory approach to address deep-seated problems; see both challenges and opportunities more clearly; and consider the long-term effects and potential unintended consequences of actions that you might take.
2. **Think from the “Outside-in.”** Most organizations are surprised by discontinuous events because they spend their time thinking about what they are most familiar with: their own organization. They think from the inside—the things they can control—out to the world in which they operate. Conversely, thinking from the outside-in begins with pondering external social, technological, environmental, economic and political shifts—changes that might, over time, profoundly affect your community and organization, creating new risks and opportunities in the process.
3. **Embrace Multiple Perspectives.** The introduction of multiple perspectives—different voices that will shed new light on your strategic challenge—helps you better understand and challenge your own assumptions while painting a bigger picture of an issue or idea. The result is an expansion of an organization's peripheral vision — you see new threats and opportunities that you otherwise might have missed.

Ultimately, the point of scenario thinking is to arrive at a deeper understanding of the world in which your church operates, and to continue to use that understanding to address your most critical challenges—from faith formation priorities,

programming strategy, and innovation to visioning and leadership. In every context, scenario thinking improves your ability to make better decisions today and in the future.

Although scenario planning is a highly imaginative and interactive exercise, the process is systematic with five distinct phases.

Scenario Planning Process



1. **Orient.** The goal of this phase is to clarify the issue at stake, and to use that issue as an orienting device throughout the remaining phases.
2. **Explore.** The second phase explores the many “driving forces” that could shape your focal question. Driving forces are the forces of change outside the organization or community that will shape future dynamics in predictable and unpredictable ways. They might include new technologies, political shifts, economic conditions or social dynamics. Driving forces can be either “predetermined elements”—forces that are highly likely to develop in a direction that is known and unchangeable; or “uncertainties”—forces that are important, but unpredictable in terms of how they may play out.
3. **Synthesize.** The next phase involves combining the identified driving forces to create a scenario framework. Usually frameworks are constructed from two of the most important, or “critical” uncertainties. Once a framework is in place, the next step is to develop the scenarios into narratives—stories that begin in the present, and end in the future.
4. **Act.** In this phase, scenarios are used to inform and inspire action. The test of a good set of scenarios is not whether in the end it portrays the

future accurately, but whether it enables an organization to learn, adapt and take effective action. After creating the scenarios, the next step is to deeply imagine living and working in each one. Individuals and organizations should ask themselves: What if this scenario is the future? What actions would I take today to prepare? Are there actions I could take to catalyze a desirable future, or to mitigate a negative one? The answers to your questions are scenario implications. The patterns and insights that emerge from the implications—across all possible scenarios—can form the building blocks of an organization’s strategic agenda—the set of priorities that will help you make progress on your long-term goals.

5. **Monitor.** The last phase involves creating mechanisms that will help your organization track shifts in the environment and adjust strategy accordingly.

Resources on Scenario Planning

- The Art of the Long View.* Peter Schwartz. New York: Currency Doubleday, 1996.
- Plotting Your Scenarios.* Jay Ogilvy and Peter Schwartz. Global Business Network. (www.gbn.com/consulting/article_details.php?id=24)
- What If: The Art of Scenario Planning for Nonprofits.* Diana Scarce, Katherine Fulton, and the Global Business Network Community. Global Business Network. (www.gbn.com/consulting/article_details.php?id=27)
- Why Scenarios?* Global Business Network. (www.gbn.com/about/scenario_planning.php)

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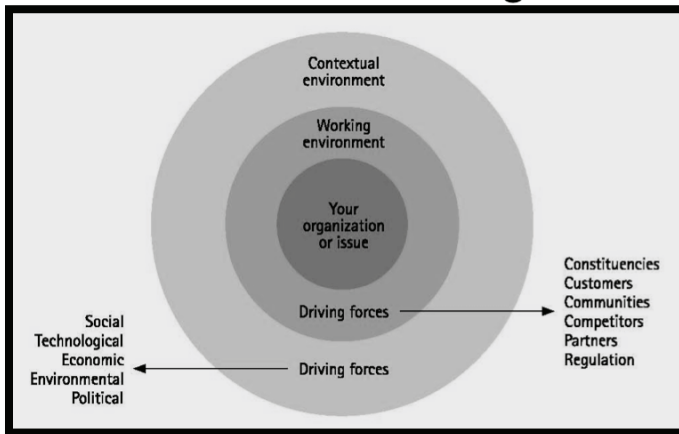
Part Two

Thirteen Trends and Forces Affecting the Future of Faith Formation in a Changing Church and World



We know that we are called to read the signs of the times, but so often these seem unclear or contradictory. We need a process and a framework to help us make sense of these seeming contradictions. To understand how our world is evolving, we need an *outside-in thinking process*. We need to explore the wider external world in considerable detail and with an open mind and spirit before coming to any firm conclusions.

Outside-In Thinking



We cannot know what the future will hold beforehand. But we can see forces and trends in the present, which, continuing on their current course, will impact our focus: *What will Christian faith formation look like in 2020?* What are the “driving forces” of change that will shape future dynamics in predictable and unpredictable ways. They might include new technologies, political shifts, economic conditions or social dynamics. Driving forces can be either “predetermined elements”—forces that are highly likely to develop in a direction that is known and unchangeable; or “uncertainties”—forces that are important, but unpredictable in terms of how they may play out. All scenarios begin by discussing and analyzing these forces and trends.

Christian churches are up against a number of significant social, cultural, technological, and economic forces that make faith formation for all ages and generations quite difficult. We have identified thirteen “driving” trends and forces because they seem to be having a significant impact on faith formation today and we project that they will continue to do so over the next decade. Each of these trends and forces is summarized below and then documented with research and analysis in **Part Four** of this report.

The key question to consider as you review the driving trends and forces is this: ***Will these forces and trends continue on their present course or change direction, and what impact they will have on the future direction of faith formation in the decade from 2010-2020?***

Trend 1. Declining Participation in Christian Churches

There has been a steady decline in the number of people attending worship and participating in church life. In 1990 about 20.6% of the U.S. population was in church on any given weekend, today only 17.3% are in worship. *If current trends continue, by 2020 the 17.3% figure will drop to 14.7 percent of Americans—meaning that more than 85% of Americans will be staying away from worshipping God at church.* Succeeding generations of Christians are less likely to be exposed to formation in the Christian faith because worship attendance is down, and therefore participation in church life, education, and activities is down. This means less exposure to the Christian tradition and teachings, reduced opportunities to experience the Christian way of life, and far less reinforcement of the Christian faith in church settings

Trend 2. Growth in No Religious Affiliation

The 2009 *American Religious Identification Survey* (ARIS) reported that *the number of Americans who claim no religious affiliation has nearly doubled since 1990, rising from 8% to 15%*. The number of American adults identified as Christians dropped 10% from 86% in 1990 to 76% in 2008. The Pew Research study, *Faith in Flux*, confirms this trend—finding that the number of people who say they are unaffiliated with any particular faith doubled to 16%. Among Americans ages 18-29, *one-in-four* say they are not currently affiliated with any particular religion. *The challenge to Christianity in the U.S. does not come from other religions but rather from a rejection of all forms of organized religion*. This growing non-religious minority reduces the traditional societal role of congregations and places of worship in family celebrations of life-cycle events. *Forestalling of religious rites of passage, such as marriage, and the lowering expectations on religious funeral services, could have long lasting consequences for religious institutions*.

Trend 3. Becoming More “Spiritual” and Less “Religious”

The vast majority of Americans—approximately 80 percent—describe themselves as both spiritual and religious. Still, a small but growing minority describe themselves as spiritual but not religious. If we define “spiritual but not religious” as people who say that they are at least moderately spiritual but not more than slightly religious, then 9 percent of respondents were spiritual but not religious in 1998, rising to 14 percent in 2008. *Today, 18 percent of 18-39 year olds say they are “spiritual but not religious,” compared to only 11 percent a decade ago*. What does the growth of this “spiritual but not religious” segment of the population mean for organized religion in the United States? If what people mean when they say they are spiritual but not religious is that they are generally concerned with spiritual matters (whatever that means) but they are not interested in organized religion, then this trend indicates a growing minority of the population whose spiritual inclinations do not lead them to become involved in churches, synagogues, or mosques.

Trend 4. Influence of Individualism on Christian Identity and Community Life

Individualism is a pre-eminent American cultural code. It touches virtually every aspect of American life. For many Americans, the ultimate criterion of identity and lifestyle validity is individual choice. Privatized religiosity—which easily accommodates the utilitarian and expressive individualism of American culture—makes it difficult to articulate and sustain religious commitments. Specifically, religious individualism has been linked with autonomy in the moral realm; with the diminution or rejection of ecclesial authority; with more direct access to the sacred; with a higher priority for personal spiritual fulfillment; and with a privatized spirituality only loosely connected with established traditions.

It is not simply that (excessive) religious individualism means that religious identity is more autonomous and deliberate today; it is that this individualism signals a loss of how religion is anchored in a sense of belonging. The issue is the decline in connectedness; a weakening or severing of the *social* basis of religion in family, marriage, ethnicity, and community; a decline in the perceived *necessity of communal or institutional structures as constituent of religious identity*. Religious identity today is not only less bounded by doctrine or creed; it is also less nurtured and reinforced by community.

Trend 5. Increasing Social, Cultural, and Religious Diversity in the U.S.

Americans are becoming more diverse in terms of race and ethnic origins, and as a result there has been a growth in the size of the minority population in terms of both numbers and percentage. The most significant change since 1990 both statistically and demographically has been the rapid growth of the Hispanic population and to a much lesser extent the Asian population.

2005 Profile	2050 Profile
White: 67%	White : 47%
Hispanic: 14%	Hispanic: 29%
Black: 13%	Black: 13%
Asian: 5%	Asian: 9%

There are fewer all white congregations in the United States today. More predominantly white

congregations have at least some Latino, Asian, or African American presence.

The U.S. is becoming more religiously diverse every year. The current religious make-up of Americans today is:

Protestant: 51.3%	Jewish: 1.7%
Catholic: 23.9%	Buddhist: 0.7%
Mormon: 1.7%	Muslim: 0.6%
Jehovah's Witness: 0.7%	Hindu: 0.4%
Orthodox: 0.6%	Other Religions: 0.3%

Trend 6. Growing Influence of Hispanic/Latino Religious Faith

Two defining characteristics—the prevalence of spirit-filled religious expressions and of ethnic-oriented worship—combined with the rapid growth of the Hispanic population demonstrate how Hispanics are transforming the nation's religious landscape today and will continue to do so in the coming decade. More than two-thirds of Hispanics (68%) identify themselves as Roman Catholics. The next largest category, at 15%, is made up of born-again or evangelical Protestants.

First, *renewalist Christianity*, which places special emphasis on God's ongoing, day-to-day intervention in human affairs through the person of the Holy Spirit, is having a major impact on Hispanic Christianity. Among Latino Protestants, renewalism is three times as prevalent as it is among their non-Latino counterparts. A majority (54%) of Hispanic Catholics describe themselves as charismatic Christians. Latino Catholics nevertheless remain very much Catholic. Indeed, renewalist practices seem to have been incorporated into Hispanic Catholicism without displacing Catholic identity. Similarly, the renewalist movement is a powerful presence among Latino Protestants.

Second, the houses of worship most frequented by Latinos have distinctly ethnic characteristics. Two-thirds of Latino worshipers attend churches with Latino clergy, services in Spanish and heavily Latino congregations. While most predominant among the foreign born and Spanish speakers, Hispanic-oriented worship is also prevalent among native-born and English-speaking Latinos. That strongly suggests that the phenomenon is not simply a product of immigration or language but that it involves a broader and more lasting form of ethnic

identification. Moreover, the growth of the Hispanic population is leading to the emergence of Latino-oriented churches across the country.

Trend 7. Identifying a New Stage of Life: "Emerging Adulthood"

There is a new and important stage in life in American culture—what scholars call "emerging adulthood," young adults aged 18-30 years old. Studies agree that the transition to adulthood today is more complex, disjointed, and confusing than it was in past decades. The steps through and to schooling, first real job, marriage, and parenthood are simply less well organized and coherent today than they were in generations past.

At the same time, these years are marked by an historically unparalleled freedom to roam, experiment, learn (or not), move on, and try again. For most American youth, there is very long stretch of time in which to have to figure out life between high school graduation day and the eventual settling down with spouse, career, kids, and house. For many, it is marked by immense autonomy, freedom of choice, lack of obligations, and focus on the self. It is also normally marked by high instability, experimentation, and uncertainty. For many, emotions run high and low, as hopes and exhilaration recurrently run up against confusion and frustration.

It is not clear how much emerging adults rely in this life stage on the religious faith and beliefs with which they were raised. In any case, this socially structured and culturally defined phase of life seems itself to foster an intense concern with what is new, different, exciting, alternative, possible, and hopeful. Commitments that would curtail the exploration of options are often avoided. Ties to the social institutions of civil society, including church, are often weak.

Trend 8. The Rise of a Distinctive Post-Boomer Faith and Spirituality

What is emerging among Post-Boomers, currently those in their 20s through mid 40s, is a distinctive style of faith and spirituality. Robert Wuthnow analyzes social and cultural trends and identifies "religious tinkering" as a guiding image for understanding Post-Boomer faith and spirituality. Richard Flory and Donald Miller analyze four emerging religious forms—Innovators,

Appropriators, Reclaimers, and Resisters—that exemplify the Post-Boomer spiritual quest, each a response to the challenges and opportunities they perceive to be represented in the larger cultural currents. From their analysis they identify a new form of spirituality, “expressive communalism,” which blends Post-Boomers’ desire and need for expressive/experiential activities with a close-knit, physical community.

“Religious Tinkering” (Robert Wuthnow)

The single word that best describes young adults’ approach to religion and spirituality—indeed life—is tinkering: putting together a life from whatever skills, ideas, and resources that are readily at hand. *Spiritual tinkering* is a reflection of the pluralistic religious society in which we live, the freedom we permit ourselves in making choices about faith, and the necessity of making those choices in the face of the uprootedness and change that most young adults experience. It involves piecing together ideas about spirituality from many sources, especially through conversations with one’s friends. Spiritual tinkering involves a large minority of young adults in church shopping and church hopping. It also takes the form of searching for answers to the perennial existential questions in venues that go beyond religious traditions, and in expressing spiritual interests through music and art as well as through prayer and devotional reading. Tinkering is evident among the large number of young adults who believe in God, life after death, and the divinity of Jesus, for instance, but who seldom attend religious services. Their beliefs blend continuity with the past—with the Bible stories they probably learned as children—and their behavior lets them adapt to the demands of the present. Tinkering is equally evident in the quest to update one’s beliefs about spirituality. The core holds steady, persuading one that the Bible is still a valuable source of moral insight, for example, but the core is amended almost continuously through conversations with friends, reflections about unusual experiences on vacation or at work, or from a popular song.

“Expressive Communalism” (Richard Flory and Donald E. Miller)

Post-Boomers have embedded their lives in spiritual communities in which their desire and need for both expressive/experiential activities,

whether through art, music, or service-oriented activities, and for a close-knit, physical community and communion with others are met. They are seeking to develop a balance for individualism and rational asceticism through religious experience and spiritual meaning in an embodied faith. The dominant characteristic across our types is a desire for a theologically grounded belief that makes sense cognitively, combined with nonrational expressive tendencies—they want a faith that makes cognitive sense to them and that is also an expressive, embodied spiritual experience. Young Christians are searching for a more holistic faith than what a purely cognitive and rational approach can offer. Although Post-Boomers certainly pursue individual religious and spiritual experiences, they have not neglected the various communities within which they are active. Rather, the dominant trend among the four types shows an intentional pursuit of artistic expressions of various sorts, seeking and forming communities, and engaging in different forms of community outreach and involvement. This is not to suggest that they have somehow removed themselves from the individualism that pervades American society, rather that their individual spiritual quest is mediated through the communities in which they are active and in which they seek membership and belonging.

Four Emerging Forms of the Post-Boomer Spiritual Quest: Innovators, Appropriators, Resisters, Reclaimers (Richard Flory and Donald E. Miller)

- **Innovators** are those who represent a constantly evolving, or innovating, approach to religious and spiritual beliefs and practices. Many of these are newer, less established groups that are affiliated with the “emerging church” movement, while others are established churches and ministries that are innovating within their own traditions. Innovators demonstrate a desire for embracing the emerging postmodern culture, and within that context are engaging in a spiritual quest that by definition is one that must change and adapt—innovate—to meet the changing culture currents.
- **Appropriators** refer to those churches and ministries that seek to provide a compelling and “relevant” experience for participants, both for those in the audience and for

those who are performing in the service or event. In this, both churches and independent ministries seek to create these experiences through imitating, or *appropriating*, trends found in the larger culture and ultimately popularizing these through their networks into a particular form of pop-Christianity primarily oriented toward an individual spiritual experience.

- **Resisters** refer to what are primarily Boomer-initiated efforts intended to appeal to Post-Boomers by focusing on the “recovery of reason” and resisting postmodern culture within Christianity. They hoping to reestablish the place of the written text and rational belief as the dominant source for Post-Boomer spirituality and practice.
- **Reclaimers** are seeking to renew their experiences of Christianity through the history, symbolism and practices of ancient forms of the faith, such as those still found in the liturgical traditions, thus reclaiming the ancient symbols, rituals and practices of these traditions for their own spiritual quest. Reclaimers demonstrate a quest that takes them on a journey to ancient Christian traditions in small, family-oriented congregations through which they pursue their desire for spiritual development.

Trend 9. Changing Structures and Patterns of Family Life in the United States

Delaying Marriage. The average age of first marriage for men today is 27 years old and for women it is 25 years old. Married couples in their twenties were a majority—i.e., were typical—of their peers in the 1970s, but were atypical in 2000. For people in their twenties, it has become the norm to remain unmarried. For people in their thirties and early forties, there is a much more sizable minority (a third) who are now single or divorced. Because many other aspects of young adult life are affected by marital status—including children and the timing of children, housing needs, jobs and economic demands, and relationships with parents and friends—the importance of this shift in marital patterns can hardly be overstated. *Religious practice is especially influence by marrying, settling down, having children and raising them. Since individuals who marry are more likely to attend religious*

services regularly than those who delay marriage, the postponement of marriage and childbearing has contributed to the decline in church attendance.

Having Fewer Children and Later in Life. With the increase in the average age of marriage, married couples are having fewer children and having them later. The average number of births per woman is about 2, and 19% of women end their childbearing years with no children. The median age at which mothers give birth to their first child is about 24.5 years old, with the birth rate increasing for women age 35 to 39 and 40 to 44. A century ago, women in these age groups might have been raising teenagers while giving birth to their fourth or fifth child. Currently, it is more likely that they are giving birth to their first or second child.

Decreasing Number of Children in Two-Parent Households. In 2006, 67% of children were living with two parents (18% decline since 1968). In 2006, 28% were living with one parent (16% increase since 1968). In 2005, 30% of all households included children under 18 (a 20% decline since 1960).

Increasing Number of Unmarried Couples Living Together. In 1960, less than ½ million heterosexual unmarried couples were living together. In 1980, it was over 1 million. In 2006, 5.4 million unmarried couples were living together—an increase of over 500% since 1980.

Increasing Time Caring for Children. Parents are busier than were in the past, yet the amount of focused time parents spend caring for their children has increased over the past 40 years: 1) fathers: 6.5 hours/week (153% increase), 2) married mothers: 12.9 hours/week (21% increase), and 3) single mothers: 11.8 hours/week (57% increase). The time devoted to childcare and family activities has been taken from other family activities: time alone as a married couple, housework, sleeping and eating, civic and social activities. More time is spent multitasking: around 40% of fathers and around 70% of mothers report they are “multitasking most of the time.” Parents report high levels of enjoyment and affection for children—with high percentages reporting that they daily praise, laugh with, and show affection like hugging and kissing their children. When

asked to rate their enjoyment of the tasks of parenting on a scale of 1 to 10, virtually no parents rated any task below an “8” and the majority rated as a “10” tasks like taking care of children, playing with children, talking with children, even taking children places.

Trend 10. Rediscovering the Impact of Parents and Families on Faith Practice

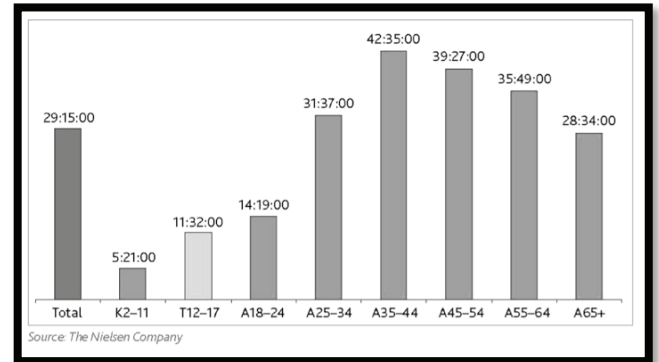
Parental Influence. Research from the National Study on Youth and Religion (as reported in *Soul Searching*) clearly shows that the single most important social influence on the religious and spiritual lives of adolescents is their parents. Grandparents and other relatives, mentors, and youth workers can be very influential as well, but normally, parents are most important in forming their children’s religious and spiritual lives. The best social predictor, although not a guarantee, of what the religious and spiritual lives of youth will look like is what the religious and spiritual lives of their parents *do* look like: “*We’ll get what we are.*” By normal processes of socialization, and unless other significant forces intervene, more than what parents might *say* they *want* as religious outcomes of their children, most parents most likely will end up getting religiously of their children what they themselves *are*. The best way to get most youth involved in and serious about their faith communities is to get their parents more involved in and serious about their faith communities.

Embedded Family Religious Practices. Despite the dramatic changes in family life, research consistently shows that effective religious socialization comes about through embedded family religious practices; that is, through specific, deliberate religious activities that are firmly intertwined with the daily habits of family routines, of eating and sleeping, of having conversations, of adorning spaces in which people live, of celebrating the holidays, and of being part of a community. The daily household routine is marked by rituals of prayer, by conversations about God, and by sacred objects. Holidays provided special occasions for experiencing the warmth of family, friends, and fellow congregants. Compared with these practices, the formal teachings of religious leaders often pale in significance. Yet when such practices are present, formal teachings also become more important.

Trend 11. Living in a Digital World

Internet Usage Continues to Increase.

Americans are online almost 30 hours per month. Teens averaged almost 25 hours per month using the Internet and applications in March 2009, but the 35-64 year olds averaged over 35 hours per month



Wireless and Mobile Usage Continues to Increase.

56% of Americans said they have at some point used wireless means for online access with laptop and mobile wireless access accounting for the vast majority of wireless usage. By April 2009, 32% of Americans said they had at some point used the internet on their mobile device. In 2009, 69% of all adult Americans said they had done at least one of the following ten different non-voice data activities on their cell phones: sending or receiving text messages, taking a picture, playing a game, checking email, accessing the internet, recording video, instant messaging, playing music, getting maps or directions, or watching video. In 2009, 44% of all adult Americans said they had done at least one of these non-voice data activities on a typical day.

Increase in Social Networking. In 2009, 35% of American adult internet users have a profile on an online social network site, four times as many as three years ago, but still much lower than the 65% of online American teens who use social networks. Among the adults, 75% of online adults 18-24 have a profile on a social network site. Online social network applications are mainly used for explaining and maintaining personal networks, and most adults, like teens, are using them to connect with people they already know.

Increase in Children (2-11) Online. Children aged 2-11 comprised nearly 16 million, or 9.5 percent, of the active online universe according to Nielsen Online. Time spent online among children aged 2-11 increased 63 percent in the last five years, from nearly 7 hours in May 2004 to more than 11 hours online in May 2009.

Growing Embrace of Technology by Churches. One tremendous change in congregational life in the last decade has been the widespread adoption of computer technology. The use of visual projection equipment more than doubled in the last decade. Website development more than doubled in the last decade, while the use of email almost tripled. These figures imply that in each year since 1998, some 10,000 congregations created a website.

Trend 12. Educating in New Ways

What kinds of education and teaching are likely to help people engage in meaningful learning that will allow them to manage the fast-changing, knowledge-based society of the twenty-first century? Here are eight key ideas influencing education today, and that will most likely strengthen in the coming decade:

1. Applying Howard Gardner's research on the eight *multiple intelligences* to education and providing a greater variety of ways to learn.
2. Applying research on *learning styles* to education by incorporating a diversity of learning activities and methods in a learning experience.
3. Engaging in *active, in-depth learning* through well-designed projects, problems, and design tasks that focus learner inquiry around central questions in the disciplines and engage learners in doing the work of writers, scientists, mathematicians, musicians, sculptors, and critics.
4. Incorporating *project-based learning* which involves completing complex tasks that typically result in a realistic product, event, or presentation.
5. Having learners engage in *collaborative learning*—working in small groups—to create, discuss, practice, and make presentations.
6. Engaging learners in *practicing and performing* what they are learning by incorporating real

life application activities into the learning experience.

7. Developing *visual literacy* in all learners: learning to “read” or interpret visual images and learning how to use visual images to communicate.
8. Utilizing *digital media* to exploit the potential of the learning opportunities available through online resources and networks. Digital media promotes engagement, self-directed learning, creativity, and empowerment by using the Internet, computers, cell phones, and many other digital tools to learn and communicate in ways that were not possible in previous generations. Digital media allows learners to be active creators and producers who use a wide range of digital tools to express themselves, interpret the world around them, and deepen their understanding of academic content. Their products include original music, animation, video, stories, graphics, presentations, and Web sites. They can become actively engaged in their learning processes rather than passive recipients of knowledge passed down from adults.

Trend 13. Increasing Numbers of Adults 65 and Older

Some 39 million Americans, or 13% of the U.S. population, are ages 65 and older. The increase in older adults has leveled off since 1990, but it will start rising again when the first wave of the nation's 76 million baby boomers turn 65 in 2011. By 2050, according to Pew Research projections, about one-in-five Americans will be over age 65, and about 5% will be ages 85 and older, up from 2% now. America is witnessing the emergence of a new stage of life between adult midlife and old age. This new stage of life spans several decades and is characterized by generally good health, relative financial stability, and an active, engaged lifestyle. These adults are seeking opportunities to explore options for the next stage of life, to retool skills, obtain new training, or pursue educational interests, to make meaningful connections with others their own age and in the community; and to find flexible work or service opportunities that use their skills and experience in meaningful ways.

Part Three

Envisioning the Future: Four Scenarios for the Future of Faith Formation in 2020 (Version 1.0)



Two Critical Uncertainties for Faith Formation 2010-2020

Scenarios are built around critical uncertainties about the external environment. That is, the stories are based on different outcomes of a few key uncertainties that are both most important to the future of faith formation in Christian churches *and* most uncertain in terms of future outcome. It is often useful to create a two-by-two scenario matrix based on two axes that represent the extreme possible outcomes of the two most critical uncertainties. After much discussion and consideration, the framework that we selected for the final set of scenarios is a matrix with two axes that represent two critical uncertainties in the external environment that will affect the future of faith formation from 2010-2020:

- **Will trends in U.S. culture lead people to become more *receptive* to organized religion, and in particular Christianity or will trends lead people to become more *resistant* to organized religion and Christianity?**
- **Will people's searching and hunger for God and the spiritual life *increase* over the next decade or will people's need for God and the spiritual life *decrease*.**

The "future of faith formation framework" was developed because the combination of *receptivity* to organized religion and Christianity, and *openness* or *hunger* for God and the spiritual life seemed to best express people's contemporary experience today and over the next decade.

At the same time that this matrix represents a map of today, it can also be seen as a moving image of future reality. That is, each of the four quadrants of this map also represents a dynamic story that is based

on a different future outcome of the two critical uncertainties. *Which of the scenarios will rise in ascendency over the next decade? Where are people in our churches and culture moving?*

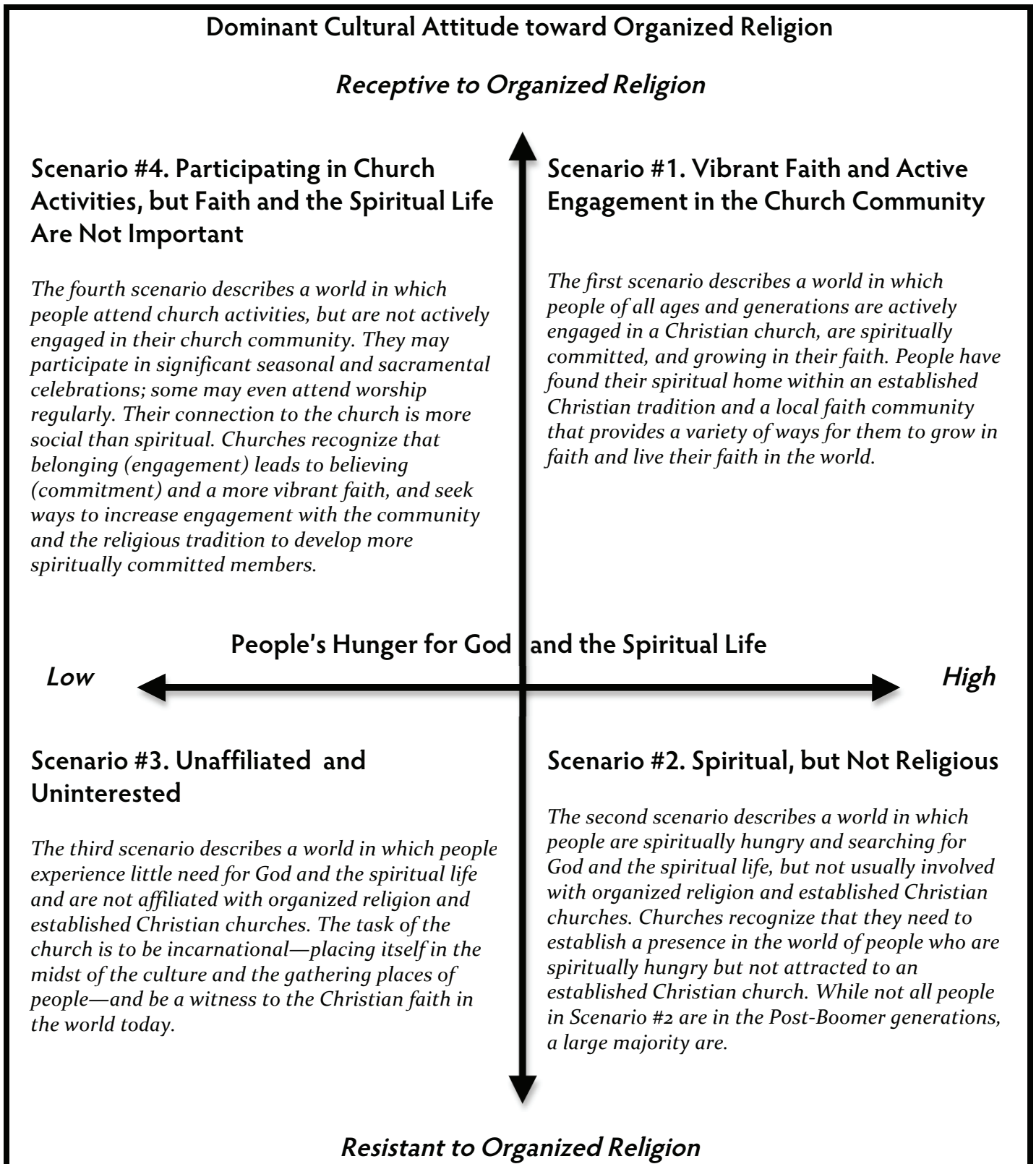
Once this framework was identified, four scenarios were created to express the range of possible futures facing congregational faith formation in the next decade: 2010-2020. Each scenario story explains why the "main story" of faith formation in 2020 will be framed by the response of Christian churches to the dominant culture's attitude toward organized religion (receptive or resistant) and to people's hunger for God and the spiritual life (high or low). The four scenario headlines are:

- Scenario #1. Vibrant Faith and Active Engagement in the Church Community
- Scenario #2. Spiritual, but Not Religious .
- Scenario #3. Unaffiliated and Uninterested
- Scenario #4. Participating in Church Activities, but Faith and the Spiritual Life Are Not Important

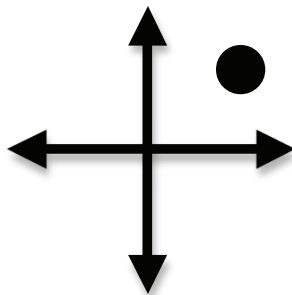
The four scenario narratives with their key features seek to provide insights on how churches might respond to these key trends and forces over the next decade. The focus of each scenario is viewed from the response of the local church: *What will congregational faith formation look like in 2020?* Every strategy and idea needs to be adapted to the size, geography, people, and culture of a particular church. Many of the features in Scenario 1 are used, with adjustments and adaptations, in the other three scenarios. Many of the features of Scenario 2 are also found in Scenario 3, as both scenarios share a common resistance to organized religion.

Go online to www.LifelongFaith.com to participate in the *Faith Formation 2020 Consultation Process*. Complete the online survey to give your feedback on the four scenarios and their features, and add your own ideas for the future of faith formation.

Scenario Matrix for Faith Formation 2020 (Version 1.0)



Scenario #1. Vibrant Faith and Active Engagement in the Church Community



- **Receptive to Organized Religion**
- **High Hunger for God and the Spiritual Life**

The first scenario describes a world in which people of all ages and generations are actively engaged in a Christian church, are spiritually committed, and growing in their faith. People have found their spiritual home within an established Christian tradition and a local faith community that provides a variety of ways for them to grow in faith and live their faith in the world.

Overview of Scenario #1

1. Faith formation 2020 creates a community of lifelong learners, utilizing the whole church as a community of formation and transformation for lifelong faith formation for all ages and generations.
2. Faith formation in 2020 offers people of all ages a compelling vision of a Christian way of life that is worth living and guides them in developing that way of life.
3. Faith formation in 2020 is intentionally intergenerational.
4. Faith formation in 2020 is personalized and customized.
5. Faith formation in 2020 is fashioned around the significant milestones and life transitions across the life span.
6. Faith formation in 2020 engages all ages in mission and service.
7. Faith formation in 2020 promotes spiritual formation and transformation throughout life.

8. Faith formation in 2020 is inclusive of a diversity of ethnic cultures and their religious traditions and expressions.
9. Faith formation in 2020 fosters the capacity for people to engage in the public arena as people of faith in constructive dialogue with a diversity of religious traditions, communities, and expressions.
10. Faith formation in 2020 provides learning that is experiential, image-rich, multi-sensory, interactive, engaging, and varied in learning style.
11. Faith formation in 2020 is making a massive investment of time, resources, and energy in family faith formation at home and at church.
12. Faith formation in 2020 is 24x7 through the dynamic use of new digital media technologies.
13. Faith formation in 2020 creates a multi-dimensional platform for faith formation with *face-to-face* interaction/experience at the core leading to continuing learning and faith growth or *virtual* interaction leading to face-to-face interactions and experiences.
14. Faith formation in 2020 engages the distinctive style of faith and spirituality of the Post-Boomer generations through innovative approaches and models.

Key Features of Faith Formation in 2020 for Scenario #1

1. ***Faith formation 2020 creates a community of lifelong learners, utilizing the whole church as a community of formation and transformation for lifelong faith formation for all ages and generations.***

In light of the increasing pressures from virtually every aspect of American life upon forming and sustaining Christian identity, churches are engaged in intensive, intentional Christian formation for all ages and generations throughout life so that people are being transformed by Christ into lifelong disciples who are actively engaged in living their Christian faith in the world. Lifelong faith formation is integrated into all aspects of the congregation and the lives of individuals, families, and friends who share a commitment to “grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ” (2 Peter 2:18). Lifelong faith formation encompasses a broad set of activities, for all ages and generations, from birth to death.

Faith formation in 2020 is guided by the principle: “Everything a community says and does converges to ‘make disciples.’” Faith formation responds to the demographic, social, cultural, and technological changes of the early 21st century by rediscovering the power of the whole church to form people in Christian faith and creating a “whole church” practice of faith formation.

Churches develop an intentional focus on promoting vibrant faith and active engagement of all members by nurturing a community where the Gospel of Jesus Christ is celebrated and preached, meditated on and taught, incarnated and renewed in such a way that deep formation in Christian faith and the spiritual life takes place both communally and individually. The congregation gathers around Word and sacrament to celebrate God’s redeeming claim and purpose for their lives, and then lives out that purpose in their community and world. Churches are dedicated to learning and teaching Scripture and tradition. Both communally and personally people are engaged in the formative practices of Christian faith: reading the Bible, prayer, stewardship, hospitality, forgiveness, service, social justice, and discernment. The community is engaged in discerning a vision of the reign of God and seeking to incarnate that reign in the common life of their church. In these churches there is both a mood of excitement and the serenity and calm that flow from deep trust in God. Even in the midst of continuing change and uncertainty, the community demonstrates a vitality that enlivens the church as the body of Christ and forms the spiritual lives of members. The congregation serves as a sign of the reign of God to the community around them and to the world. The community offers a foretaste of God’s reign to members and participants, who eat and drink and taste more deeply as they continue to participate. And they are active as instruments for bringing about the reign of God in members’ lives and in the world.

Faith formation in 2020 adopts and implements the ancient paradigm of “whole church” faith formation in which the community forms its members in and through *koinonia* (community and communion), *leiturgia* (prayer, liturgy, and worship), *kerygma* (preaching and proclaiming the Word of God), *diakonia* (service), and *didache*

(teaching). Faith formation recognizes that the “whole church” offers a myriad number of opportunities for promoting a vibrant faith in all members—young and old. People are being formed and transformed by Scripture, tradition, creed, prayer, and sacrament through worship or preaching; by the tradition when it is transmitted by the community, who are the tradition in their own persons; by the sacramental life when the community takes part in baptizing, in confirming, and in coming together to the Table. The “whole church” is educating and empowering the community to engage in ministry in the midst of the world. The whole community is, by its way of living together, speaking together, praying together, and worshipping together, causing people to recognize that they are being educated by and in this community to growth in Christian faith and to lives as disciples in the world today. And when what the community believes is reflected in how the community lives, their witness invites others to join.

Faith formation in 2020 shapes and is shaped by the understanding and practice of the congregation as a community of learning—learning that is social, relational, and communal. The whole church becomes a center for authentic Christian learning—learning that is viewed as a lifelong endeavor, that grows out of the life of the community, and which, in turn strengthens the community. The hallmark of a “congregation of learners” is a *culture of learning*, in which learning permeates every aspect of the congregation. Every activity is viewed as an opportunity for learning. The church, animated by the Holy Spirit, becomes the primary “teacher.” The local church’s embodiment of the Gospel is the master communicator of the Gospel. Faith formation becomes the process of transmitting the Gospel, as the Christian community has received it, understands it, celebrates it, lives it, and communicates it.

2. **Faith formation in 2020 offers people of all ages a compelling vision of a Christian way of life that is worth living and guides them in developing that way of life.**

Faith Formation mediates faith as an integral way of life to persons, communities, and cultures. The recovery of historic Christian practices—caring for

the body, discernment, dying well, forgiving, healing, hospitality, keeping Sabbath, managing household life, praying, reading the Bible, testimony and witness, transforming the world—reshape and refocus faith formation for all ages. These are practices in which Christian communities have engaged over the years and across many cultures. Christian practices have helped people to understand their continuity with the Christian tradition—an important matter during this time of change and in the midst of a culture infatuated with what is new. These Christian practices have endured over time and can help contemporary people to treasure their continuity with the past. Faith formation in Christian practices equips people to apply these practices to everyday life in our own time and place. Those who embrace Christian practices engage in them in the light of God’s presence and in response to God’s grace as it is known in Jesus Christ.

As churches become intentional about Christian faith practices, a renewed sense of identity and mission is fostered in the whole community. Engaging in Christian practices elevates the sense of intentionality throughout the congregation that leads to greater vitality and spiritual depth. The church becomes intentional about teaching practices by how it lives—teaching the practice of hospitality by how it welcomes the stranger, teaching about the place and significance of Scripture by how it is read in worship, treated in sermons, and held in the communal and personal lives of church members.

Faith formation in 2020, through all of its forms, programs, offerings and settings teaches people of all ages the basic practices of the Christian faith; draws people into participation in them; and guides them to live the practices with increasingly deepened understanding and skill, to extend them more broadly and fully in their own lives and into their world, and to correct them, strengthen them, and improve them. Christian practices have become incorporated into all of church life and faith formation through a holistic formation process of teaching the practice, listening to God’s Word and celebrating the practice at worship, experiencing the practice in the life of the church community, living/acting on the practice at home and in the world, and

reflecting upon the lived experience. Churches offer a wide variety of programs for all ages and generations to teach Christian practices, such as family and intergenerational programs, summer camps, workshops, courses, retreats, children’s Liturgy of the Word and discussions after Sunday worship, field trips, action projects, and small groups.

Faith formation in 2020 develops *Christian practice apprenticeships* where people of all ages can learn how live a practice from “Practice Mentors”—living embodiments of a Christian practice, such as service or hospitality or prayer. Churches structure learning opportunities around “Practice Mentors” in individualized and small group settings where mentors guide people in learning about the practice from Scripture and the tradition, doing the practice with them, and reflecting upon the lived experience of the practice.

3. ***Faith formation in 2020 is intentionally intergenerational.***

To overcome the age segregation in society and congregations, churches incorporate an intergenerational core into their faith formation, involving all ages and generations in learning together. They make their intergenerational character a defining feature of their community life, ministries, and programming. They make it a priority to foster intergenerational relationships, faith sharing, and storytelling; to incorporate all generations in worship; to develop service projects that involve all ages, and to engage all generations in learning together. Being intergenerational is a way of life. Churches create intergenerational learning programs that involve all generations in learning, relationship building, faith sharing, praying, serving, and celebrating. Churches make intergenerational learning a primary learning model, offering weekly or monthly programs for all ages and generations in large group or small group settings, supplemented by age-specific programs for children, teens, and adults throughout the year. Churches develop and conduct intergenerational service programs and retreat programs for the whole congregation.

4. ***Faith formation in 2020 is personalized and customized.***

The culture of the day is all about personalization and customization. To provide faith formation for the diversity of people, their life situations and their learning needs, churches offer a variety of learning models for all ages and generations. Each year, every family and individual in the church creates a “faith growth commitment plan” which helps them identify where they are on their spiritual journey, what they need, who else might share that need, and the resources that could help them meet that need.

Faith formation in 2020 offers programs varied in content, expectations, depth, involvement, and timing to meet the diversity of learning needs. Churches focus on personalized pathways of discipleship that meet individual and household needs, rather than one-size-fits-all programs for the masses. Program offerings include a mix of large group, small group, and individualized/independent learning. The use of the internet, online learning, and new media technologies assists churches in personalizing and customizing learning opportunities for individuals and families.

5. ***Faith formation in 2020 is fashioned around the significant milestones and life transitions across the life span.***

Churches develop a lifelong plan for faith formation around significant milestones and life transitions throughout life: baptism, welcoming young children to worship, first day of school, first communion, presentation of the Bible, confirmation, receiving a driver’s license, graduations (high school, college), leaving home, new career/job, first apartment/house, marriage, becoming a parent/grandparent, moments of sickness (personal, family, friends), retirement, death of a loved one, and so many more. For each milestone, churches provide faith formation that includes: 1) rituals and traditions; 2) intergenerational learning programs (building community, inviting conversation, encouraging storytelling, providing information, and modeling faith practices for individual and families); 3) a blessing of the individual and marking the occasion in a worship service and in the home;

and 4) a tangible, visible item that serves as a reminder or symbol of the occasion being marked, as well as a resource for the ongoing nurture of faith in daily life at home. Between milestone celebrations, the church provides life cycle-appropriate resources—in print, audio, video, and online formats—to continue faith growth at home focused on the foundational religious practices and the particular needs at that stage of life.

By addressing the needs of people in transition, churches provide important opportunities for faith formation, bringing a faith perspective to the transitions people experience. Many of these transitions are “moments of return” when people who have not been involved in church life may return to the church for a ritual experience, family celebration, religious perspective on life’s transitions, encouragement, and/or comfort and support. Churches seize the opportunity to nurture people’s faith *and* welcome them back into the life of the faith community.

6. ***Faith formation in 2020 engages all ages in mission and service.***

Faith formation puts engagement in mission and service at the center of all of its efforts. Tapping into the tremendous interest and passion in all generations, but especially the youngest, for service to the world, faith formation in 2020 educates and empowers families and individuals of all ages for the Christian mission to the community and world: serving the poor and vulnerable, working for justice to ensure the rights of all people, being a peacemaker, and caring for creation. Every member of the church is expected to engage in a local and global mission project every year. Mission activities are designed for families, intergenerational groups, and specific age groups. Each mission/service project includes a learning component that focuses on understanding the issue being addressed, exploring the teachings of Scripture and tradition, developing the skills for mission and service, and then, upon completion of the project, reflecting upon the involvement. An annual “mission involvement catalog” is created, in print and online, to provide descriptions of the diversity of projects.

Mission projects are “developmental” with projects geared to different levels of involvement and challenge including:

- local mission projects lasting anywhere from a few hours to one day in length.
- short-term mission trips lasting anywhere from two to five days and requiring an overnight stay on location
- weeklong mission trips within the United States as well as to foreign countries, designed for those who are ready to take the next big step in service.
- global expedition trips of 10 to 14 days that provide the opportunity to be immersed for a longer period in the targeted community and culture
- personalized small group mission trips, organized around the interests and time of the group

There are mission opportunities for parents and children to experience together: locally, regionally, nationally, and internationally. There are new mission projects for children and families throughout the year. Families can choose from different levels of commitment from beginner experiences to advanced projects.

7. **Faith formation in 2020 promotes spiritual formation and transformation throughout life.**

Faith formation is responding to the hunger of people of all ages for growing in relationship and intimacy with God and exploring more deeply the life of the Spirit by providing formation in spiritual disciplines and practices. Faith formation engages individuals and families in learning about and practicing historic Christian spiritual disciplines, and in developing a “rule of life” that allows for regular space for the practice of the spiritual disciplines. In a variety of settings and programs, faith formation is *teaching* the spiritual disciplines such as Sabbath, Lectio Divina, silence, contemplation, centering prayer, the Examen, meditation, praying with poetry/art/music, praying with Scripture, spiritual reading and study, fixed hour prayer, journaling, and discernment. Each year faith formation provides a variety of *retreat* and *spiritual formation*

experiences for families and people of all ages in diverse settings and lengths. Churches are developing *spiritual guides* who model discipleship and contemplation, and can serve as mentors for people of all ages on their spiritual journey, in one-on-one or in small group settings. Churches are setting aside a prayer room stocked with resources about prayer and spiritual practices and connecting their members to online spiritual formation and prayer resources, as well as to online communities that nurture spiritual formation.

8. **Faith formation in 2020 is inclusive of a diversity of ethnic cultures and their religious traditions and expressions.**

Americans are diverse in terms of race and ethnic origins. Almost every white congregation in 2020 has at least some Latino, Asian, or African American presence. Bicultural, multicultural, and ethnic churches are fairly common today in all Christian traditions. Cultural diversity is a normal part of congregational life in the United States. The culturally diverse church provides a healthy environment, hospitality and welcoming, and a sense of community so that people of all cultures feel inclusion and acceptance. The church encourages ethnic festivals, religious traditions, and feasts. Ethnic religious traditions are woven into a tapestry or mosaic of church life and faith formation. All ages and generations are exposed to cultural events where they can experience the various aspects of another culture and begin to experience its richness.

Faith formation in 2020 recognizes the uniquely lived experiences, needs, and aspirations of people from each cultural ethnic community in the church, and offers *culturally-specific* faith formation for the ethnic communities in the church. Culturally-specific faith formation inculcates the Gospel message and tradition so that it is proclaimed and taught in the language and culture of the people—it presents the teaching of the faith in a complete and authentic way in dialogue with the language, customs, and practices of those to whom the Gospel is presented.

Faith formation in 2020 offers *intercultural* faith formation that brings the whole church together

intergenerationally for learning, relationship building, faith sharing, praying, serving, and celebrating. An essential element of intercultural faith formation is listening to the stories, perspectives, and preferences of people from the different cultures and ethnicities present in the church. Also important is cultivating respect for and appreciation of the cultural heritage and religious traditions of people from the different cultures in the church. These intercultural opportunities between Christians of diverse cultures, including mainstream culture, are transforming opportunities that bear the fruits of Christian unity in the spirit of a new Pentecost. Churches bring people face to face with the contrasting realities of middle class/working class, post immigrant/new immigrant, citizen/foreigner, mainstream white/Black, Hispanic/Latino, Native American, Asian and Pacific Islander cultures. Bringing these very different realities together provides an opportunity for building the reign of God right at home.

Each ethnic group teaches the whole church about what it means to be a people of faith, and the church affirms these special gifts and welcomes them into the whole community. As an example, Hispanic/Latinos bring to the church religious practices that can enrich the everyone: blessings, promesas (prayer promises), the celebration of quinceanera, the altarcito (home altar), the celebration of Los Posadas in Advent, and Our Lady of Guadalupe to name a few. They also bring to the U.S. church small Christian communities (or CEBs), a model of church from Latin America, where people meet in homes to discuss the weekly Scriptures and how best to apply them to daily life. The small Christian communities also come together to pray, learn, respond to issues of social justice, and mutually support one another.

9. ***Faith formation in 2020 fosters the capacity for people to engage in the public arena as people of faith in constructive dialogue with a diversity of religious traditions, communities, and expressions.***

Faith formation strengthens the distinctive Christian identity of church members so that they know who they are and what they believe, and are able to honestly encounter religious differences,

understand people of other faiths, and explore areas of mutuality. Faith formation enables people to discern authentic religious life and practices in a broad spiritual marketplace. Faith formation teaches the practices of discernment and theological reflection. Faith formation encourages Christians to work together with others in a multi-faith world on projects and activities that advance the common good. Christian churches engage in ecumenical and interfaith dialogue, worship, and learning experiences that develop understanding of other faiths and traditions, and develop a new understanding and appreciation of one's own tradition and its gifts.

10. ***Faith formation in 2020 provides learning that is experiential, image-rich, multi-sensory, interactive, engaging, and varied in learning style.***

Faith formation in 2020 involves the holistic engagement of the learner's mind, body, emotions, and spirit. It is experiential, image-rich, multi-sensory, interactive, engaging, and varied in learning style. Faith formation utilizes the best research and understanding of holistic, engaging, and meaningful learning by incorporating learning methods such as:

- the eight *multiple intelligences*, for a greater variety of ways to learn
- the variety of *learning styles* among learners, by incorporating a diversity of learning activities and methods in a learning experience
- *active, in-depth learning*, through well-designed projects, problems, and design tasks that focus learner inquiry around central faith themes, questions, and issues
- *project-based learning*, involving completing complex tasks that typically result in a realistic product, event, or presentation
- *collaborative learning*—working in small groups—to create, discuss, practice, and make presentations
- *practice and performance*, by incorporating real-life application activities into the learning experience

- *visual literacy*, by learning to “read” or interpret visual images and how to use visual images to communicate
- *digital media* to exploit the potential of the learning opportunities available through online resources and networks, and promote engagement, self-directed learning, creativity, and empowerment by using the Internet, computers, cell phones, and other digital tools to learn, create, and communicate.

11. Faith formation in 2020 is making a massive investment of time, resources, and energy in family and parent faith formation at home and at church.

For the good of families and the whole Christian community, congregations are providing opportunities to equip homes as centers of faith formation at every stage of life. Congregations are making family faith formation a focus of everything they do as a church community. Faith formation is using an array of approaches and strategies to nurture faith at every stage of the family life cycle and in all the diverse forms and structures of the 2020 family.

Faith formation in 2020 is focusing its efforts on educating and enriching parents and the whole family to embed foundational religious practices—faith conversations, family devotions and prayer, Bible reading, service, and rituals and traditions—into the daily experience of family life. Faith formation is strengthening the partnership between home and congregation to focus on empowering, resourcing, and supporting the development of the family as the center of faith formation. In order to do this churches have adopted a diverse set of strategies to engage parents and the whole family including the following:

- *Starting early*: Churches are beginning family faith formation with new parents during pregnancy by nurturing the faith growth of the parents, preparing them for the vocation of parenting, understanding their new child, celebrating the baptism milestone, providing resources for nurturing family faith (continuing through the next several years), welcoming and engaging them in the Christian community as a new family.

Churches are establishing “pregnancy and early childhood advice centers” to support parents through the pregnancy and early years of childhood, and to connect them to other new parents and parent mentors.

- *Parent formation*: Churches are targeting milestones and critical transitions during childhood, adolescence, and young adulthood, to provide opportunities for parent faith formation and parent education, in-person and online. Churches are providing stand-alone parent programs, as well as incorporating parent faith formation and parent education into existing faith formation programs and support groups for parents, such as a mom’s group. Churches offer a progression of parent workshops through the life cycle:
 - preparing for parenting
 - parenting young children
 - parenting children
 - parenting teenagers
 - parent emerging adults (18-30)
 - parenting alone
- *Milestone faith formation*: Churches are fashioning family faith formation around the naturally-occurring milestones in family life. Milestones faith formation provides a natural opportunity to create a partnership between the congregation and the home. Between milestones celebration, the church is providing developmentally-appropriate resources—in print, audio, video, and online formats—to continue faith growth at home focused on the foundational religious practices. (See #5.)
- *Demonstration of family faith practices*: Churches are utilizing Sunday worship and church programs and activities to teach, model, and demonstrate family faith practices that families can incorporate into home life, and to provide the specific resources families need to live their faith at home. Weekly worship and church life is a significant opportunity for families to experience faith practices—conversations, devotions and prayer, Bible reading and reflection, service, and rituals and traditions—which can be extended into the home.

- *Family learning:* Churches engage families in structure learning programs as a family, providing opportunities to learn together and develop the knowledge and skills for sharing faith, celebrating traditions, and practicing the Christian faith. Churches utilize a variety of family learning formats such as: monthly family or intergenerational learning programs, family workshops through the year, family cluster or small group learning programs (at the church or in homes), family-centered lectionary-based Scripture reflection or Bible study, family-centered vacation Bible school, family retreats and camps, and family-centered sacramental preparation programs.
- *Family service:* Churches offer a variety of developmentally-appropriate family service projects where families can choose from different levels of commitment from beginner experiences to advanced projects that are local, regional, national, and international. (See #6.)
- *In-home resources:* Churches provide families with a variety of resources—print, audio, video, and online—to help families embed faith practices in family life at each stage of life, including resources for parents at each stage of life, for in-home celebration of church year feasts and seasons, for extending Sunday worship into the home, for celebrating milestones, for engaging in service, and so many more. Churches also use their websites and digital communication to resource and connect families, delivering timely faith formation resources to the home, providing social networking among families to share faith stories and practices, and providing support, for parents.

12. Faith formation in 2020 is 24x7 through the dynamic use of new digital media technologies.

Faith formation in 2020 occurs in physical places *and* in virtual spaces. Now fully immersed in the digital age, churches have new tools to invite potential members into their communities and to give committed Christians access to the resources they need to grow in faith. Churches create their own online presence (website) as the centerpiece of their online faith formation. They

deliver faith formation experiences and resources anytime and anywhere, reaching people wherever they go online (home, work, school, vacation, coffee house). They are also promoting continuing faith growth and practice by using their online presence and digital communication tools to extend relationships and faith formation initiated in a face-to-face learning settings. Churches use a variety of online digital media strategies for faith formation including:

- A virtual chapel sharing not only audio and video clips of some of the sermons and other worship experiences but also extending it through the daily posting of images, songs, meditations, inspirational stories, prayers of the people, and online worship exercises.
- A calendar of events with locations, times, and descriptions, with Web-streamed audio and video recordings of select offerings.
- Themed “gathering spaces” for synchronous and asynchronous interaction, including live text-based chat and live audio/video conferences, threaded discussions, collected blog links, self-paced tutorials on a range of topics, etc.
- A community directory that includes “home pages” with pictures, contact information, and other self-determined personal information. Each individual can include more of his or her personal dreams, goals, and activities through statements or interactive blogs.
- A library pod with access to e-journals, e-books, archived streaming video of speakers and events, a clearinghouse-type collection of links to resources, and other Internet-mediated resources.
- A mission/service opportunity clearinghouse for local, national, and international internships, volunteer opportunities, and jobs.
- A learning center with courses and webinars on topics such as faith themes, Bible studies, life issues, and Christian practices, self-paced and facilitated by church staff and church members at scheduled times.
- Small group gatherings online for faith sharing, Bible study, and book discussions
- A resource center with daily, weekly and seasonal resources for the family, including

faith conversation activities, family devotions and prayer, Bible reading activities, service projects, and rituals and traditions

- A parenting center with “how to” parenting articles and videos, faith enrichment resources, a “gathering space” for parents to interact, a blog staffed by parent mentors, parent-generated ideas and activities, links to highly rated parent and family websites

13. Faith formation in 2020 creates a multi-dimensional platform for faith formation with face-to-face interaction/experience at the core leading to continuing learning and faith growth and virtual interaction leading to face-to-face interactions and experiences.

Faith formation in 2020 connects each face-to-face program or activity with online experiences, communities, and resources to extend and deepen the learning and faith growth. These online features include audio podcasts, video, print resources, an online learning community, links to relevant websites, etc. One online feature allows people to generate content specific to the topic. Likewise, online faith formation connects to church programs, activities and events, so that the virtual world is a gateway to the physical church community.



14. Faith formation in 2020 engages the distinctive style of faith and spirituality of the Post-Boomer generations through innovative approaches and models.

Many Post-Boomers reflect an “expressive communalism”—an emphasis on embodiment and community: using one’s body in worship, in living out, or embodying, Christian teachings, in service, and in a desire for life in a particular faith community where they can be both personally fulfilled and serve others. They desire a theologically grounded belief that makes cognitive sense to them and that is also an expressive, embodied spiritual experience. Post-Boomers are seeking both a deep spiritual experience and a community experience, each of which provides them with meaning in their lives, and each of which is meaningless without the other. Post-Boomers have embedded their lives in spiritual communities in which their desire and need for both expressive/experiential activities, whether through art, music, or service-oriented activities, and for a close-knit, physical community and communion with others, are met.

Faith formation in 2020 responds to this distinctive style of faith and spirituality by bringing this perspective to all of the other elements of faith formation described in this scenario. It provides targeted faith formation for Post-Boomers that 1) offers community and spirituality in the context of a clearly defined faith tradition; 2) responds to their felt needs for empowerment, leadership opportunities, responsibility, and accountability, as well as authenticity and accessibility; and 3) strengthens their distinctive Christian identity so that they know who they are and what they believe, and are able to honestly encounter religious differences, understand people of other faiths, and explore areas of mutuality.

Faith formation in 2020 offers multiple points of entry and numerous arenas for young adults to reflect upon and articulate their own religious identities, and seek religious relevance in their daily lives. Churches offer opportunities specifically designed for Post-Boomers to:

- study the Bible and Christian tradition, then apply it to life in an environment that

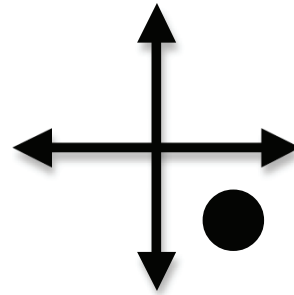
promotes relationship building and encourages questioning

- learn about increasing their practice of tradition and rituals
- deepen their relationship with God
- study modern socio-historical texts or the religious canon
- serve those in need and effect social change with a group of people who share their values
- have a space for creative religious expression through music, art, writing, and dance
- organize or join an affinity groups so that they can find like-minded peers
- think critically and analytically about religious tradition and articulate similarities and differences among traditions, so that they deepen a sense of self as a member of their own faith tradition
- facilitate interfaith and interdenominational exchange, sharing, and discussion

Faith formation in 2020 addresses the diversity of young adults and their learning needs by offering a variety of learning models, including independent learning, small group learning, and large group learning, in physical face-to-face settings and in virtual online settings. Churches use small group learning formats, probably the most popular young adult learning process, to address a diversity of learning needs and interests at a variety of times and locations. Groups meet at times and places that best fit their lives, such as weekly breakfast at a local restaurant, coffee at a local coffee shop, a group member's apartment or house, or at the church.

Faith formation in 2020 makes wide use of the internet and digital media in the faith formation of Post-Boomers. Many are "digital natives" engaged in creating religious content for a church's online presence (website). Churches are utilizing Post-Boomers to deliver faith formation experiences and resources anytime and anywhere, reaching people wherever they go online.

Scenario #2. Spiritual, but Not Religious



- **Resistant to Organized Religion**
- **High Hunger for God and the Spiritual Life**

The second scenario describes a world in which people are spiritually hungry and searching for God and the spiritual life, but not usually involved with organized religion and established Christian churches. Churches recognize that they need to establish a presence in the world of people who are spiritually hungry but not attracted to an established Christian church. While not all people in Scenario #2 are in the Post-Boomer generations, a large majority are.

Overview of Scenario #2

1. Faith formation in 2020 establishes a "Third Place" gathering space, planted in the midst of the community, that offers hospitality, builds relationships, provides a variety of programs and activities, and nourishes the spiritual life of people.
2. Faith formation in 2020 offers a guided process for spiritually hungry people to become spiritually committed and actively engaged in the church community.
3. Faith formation in 2020 offers an apprenticeship process for spiritually hungry people to experience the transformative power of God and the Gospel.
4. Faith formation in 2020 assists and supports spiritually-hungry people in establishing "House Churches" for spiritual growth, faith formation, worship and prayer, and service to the community.
5. Faith formation in 2020 creates a virtual spiritual formation center where people can diagnose their spiritual health and find online classes and

resources for developing their relationship with Christ.

6. Faith formation in 2020 establishes a virtual “church campus” to connect with the everyday life of spiritually hungry people, offer them online ways to gather and grow in faith, and support face-to-face programs and activities.
7. Faith formation in 2020 sponsors local and global “transforming the world” projects—serving the poor and vulnerable, working for justice and peace, and caring for creation—to engage people in action projects with the church and in the wider community in action projects.
8. Faith formation in 2020 offers people of all ages a variety of Christian practice immersion experiences that give people a firsthand experience of a Christian practice, and guide them in living the practice in their daily lives.
9. Faith formation in 2020 offers a variety of spiritual formation experiences in diverse settings, focusing on spiritual disciplines and practices.

Key Features of Faith Formation in 2020 for Scenario #2

1. ***Faith formation in 2020* establishes a “Third Place” gathering space, planted in the midst of the community, that offers hospitality, builds relationships, provides a variety of programs and activities, and nourishes the spiritual life of people.**

Churches are establishing Third Places, distinctive informal gatherings that make people feel at home, nourish relationships, promote companionship and help create a sense of place and community. Large bookstores with a café, spaces for reading, guest speakers and programs, and reading groups are serving as Third Places in society. Churches are strategizing in ways to reach a group of people who are not churchgoers, but who are attracted to a nonreligious venue for coffee, lunch, play dates, workouts or concerts—where followers of Jesus are also hanging out. Some churches locate their Third Place facility in the “marketplace”—as a coffee shop, a café or a store in a mall, while other churches re-design space within their existing church facilities, transforming an old fellowship hall into a café where people can meet through the day and night and an indoor play area where children can play

while parents gather. Churches are building their Third Places with a café (coffee and food), bookstore, play space, and rooms for small group gatherings; and equipping their Third Places with Wi-Fi, flat screen TVs, computers, and couches.

Churches offer a variety of programs and activities, varying in purpose, scope and depth, including spiritual growth and faith formation programs. A regular schedule of programs and activities is hosted (by outside people and groups) and sponsored (by the church), including events such as an after-school program for children, an art gallery for local artists and art classes, a “faith and film” series, music concerts by local musicians, children’s storytelling hour, book reading groups, guest speakers, and so on. A church’s Third Place serves as a venue for faith formation programming and an entry point for those who are not engaged in church life. Program offerings can include spiritual formation programs (see ideas below), life-centered clinics and workshops (e.g., marriage enrichment, parenting, divorce and separation, bereavement, life and career planning, financial planning, recovery programs, dealing with depression), and the “introduction to the Christian faith course” (see #2 below).

A Third Place is the ideal setting for a diversity of groups to gather, each with their own focus. Some groups emphasize studying the Bible and deepening knowledge of the faith, others emphasize expressive and artistic activities (making music, creating art or writing poetry), others are organized around a lifestyle or common interest. Some are on a contemplative path (gathering for evening prayers or spiritual exercises), while others are on an active path (working at soup kitchens, tutoring kids, building houses).

2. ***Faith formation in 2020* offers a guided process for spiritually hungry people to become spiritually committed and actively engaged in the church community.**

The “meaning of life” introduction to the Christian faith is an opportunity for all people to investigate the claims of the Christian faith in an informal, no pressure, non-judgmental, and friendly environment. The emphasis is upon

exploration and discovery in a relaxed and informal setting. The program does not assume any background knowledge or belief in Christianity. The content of the program is a series of presentations looking at topics such as: “Who is Jesus?; Why did Jesus die?; How can we have faith?; Why and how do I pray?; Why and how should I read the Bible?; How does God guide us?; How can I resist evil?; Why and how should we tell others?; Does God heal today?; What about the Church?; Who is the Holy Spirit?; and How can I make the most of the rest of my life? Each gathering includes supper, a presentation, and discussion in small groups. The program includes a day or weekend away. ***Faith formation in 2020*** sponsors the program in many settings including churches, homes, workplaces, military bases, colleges, schools, and prisons. Courses vary in size, from one small group meeting in a home, to hundreds of people in a larger venue. Some courses are held over morning coffee or during a lunch hour, though most are evening courses, typically lasting 2 hours.

At the conclusion of the program people are invited to an Orientation Dinner where people can learn about the church community—its mission and ministries—from several members of the pastoral staff and other church members. This introduction gives the church leaders an opportunity to meet people personally and to share the story of their church community, its mission and what church leaders and members are passionate about, and new members can participate in the life of the church if that is something they choose to do.

3. ***Faith formation in 2020 offers an apprenticeship process for spiritually hungry people to experience the transformative power of God and the Gospel.***

Faith formation in 2020 offers an “apprenticeship” process—small group sharing, personal study, prayer, and retreat experiences—to help people who are hungry for God develop a robust discipleship by helping them understand who God is, what it means to be a Christian, and what it means to live in community as part of God’s kingdom. The apprenticeship process fosters transformation by contrasting the God Jesus revealed with commonly-held beliefs about God;

explores how beliefs about God, self, and the world shape people’s lives; encourages soul-training, spiritual practices to help people experience God’s love; and nurtures accountability in a small group setting. Through the apprenticeship process people’s understanding of God is strengthened and healed through spiritual practices, helping people more naturally live the life Jesus described in the Sermon on the Mount.

4. ***Faith formation in 2020 assists and supports spiritually-hungry people in establishing “House Churches” for spiritual growth, faith formation, worship and prayer, and service to the community.***

Faith formation in 2020 assists spiritually hungry people to organize “house churches” where people can gather in small communities, grow spiritually, worship and pray, explore and apply the Gospel, and serve those in need. These small faith communities, formed in neighborhoods and apartment complexes, seek to build community by bringing God’s love, compassion, justice, and service to the world around them. People connect with one another and delve deeper into the concept of community at weekly table experiences, where they share a meal together, study Scripture, and pray together, and then practice service to those in need as a group. The program content is often delivered online through the virtual church campus including the weekly sermon, Bible study, prayer experiences, faith formation activities, and service projects. Home groups gather in actual houses, but also in other kinds of spaces—some groups meet in coffeehouses, others in pubs and some in parks or at the beach. The spaces vary, but the purpose is the same: small cells of people gathering weekly or every other week to share life, tell stories, eat meals, pray, serve and grow together in Jesus Christ. House churches can be organized for particular age groupings, ethnic cultures, and language groups.

5. ***Faith formation in 2020* creates a virtual spiritual formation center where people can diagnose their spiritual health and find online classes and resources for developing their relationship with Christ.**

Faith formation 2020 uses a needs-based discipleship process by engaging people in an online spiritual health assessment that helps them focus on developing their personal relationship with Christ, and discovering how that impacts their life, family, and community. People can choose from a variety of online classes they want to take based on the results of their spiritual health assessments, and then integrate what they learn through one-on-one conversations with a mentor.

6. ***Faith formation in 2020* establishes a virtual “church campus” to connect with the everyday life of spiritually hungry people, offer them online ways to gather and grow in faith, and support face-to-face programs and activities.**

Faith formation in 2020 creates a virtual “church campus” that supports the house churches, offers online extensions for third place activities, builds relationships and connections among people, provides next steps in people’s faith journey after their introductory program, and offers spiritual growth courses in the virtual spiritual formation center. The virtual church campus also includes video podcasts of sermon messages, worship services via streaming live video or cable TV broadcast, and live interactive features like a lobby chat room, message notes, communication cards, and prayer intentions that are streamed to computers and mobile phones. The virtual campus also streams daily prayer reflections, Bible reflections, high quality video presentations, Bible studies, and faith formation programming. It also offers online courses, a prayer center, and a meeting place for online spiritual communities. (For additional online ideas see Scenario 1, #12 and #13.)

7. ***Faith formation in 2020* sponsors local and global “transforming the world” projects—serving the poor and vulnerable, working for justice and peace, and caring for creation—to engage people in the church and in the wider community in action projects.**

Churches sponsor a variety of local community and global projects that provide a public presence of the church in the community—from local efforts to feed the hungry, house the homeless, and improve education by adopting a public school to global projects that build schools, care for AIDS victims, and provide wells for water. The church partners with other churches and agencies to establish a serving presence in the community where people who are passionate about transforming the world, but not involved in church, can work side-by-side with church members. The church’s stance of transforming the world demonstrates the Gospel in action and through its presence and service can draw people into a relationship with Jesus Christ and the church community.

8. ***Faith formation in 2020* offers people of all ages a variety of Christian practice immersion experiences that give people a firsthand experience of a Christian practice, and guide them in living the practice in their daily lives.**

Churches are developing immersion experiences for people of all ages around the community’s lived experience of the Christian practices—hospitality, discernment, healing, contemplative devotional practices, testimony, justice and service, worship, theological reflection, forming community, stewardship, embracing diversity, finding God in everyday life, and reading the Bible. Each immersion experience begins with a direct experience of the practice—within the church or in the community/world—followed by reflection on the experience, education about the practice, and resources for living the practice in daily life at home and in the world. Churches offer a variety of immersion experiences throughout the year in various program formats and timeframes. (For more information on Christian practices see Scenario 1, #2.)

9. ***Faith formation in 2020* offers a variety of spiritual formation experiences in diverse settings, focusing on spiritual disciplines and practices.**

Faith formation in 2020 is *teaching* the spiritual disciplines such as Sabbath, Lectio Divina, silence, contemplation, centering prayer, the Examen, meditation, praying with poetry/art/music,

praying with Scripture, spiritual reading and study, fixed hour prayer, journaling, and discernment. Spiritual formation is offered in a variety of settings—coffee houses, churches, monasteries, parks—and in a variety of formats—retreats, small group, one-on-one, and online. Churches are developing *spiritual guides* who model discipleship and contemplation, and can serve as mentors for people of all ages on their spiritual journey, in one-on-one or in small group settings. Churches and third place spaces are setting aside a prayer room stocked with resources about prayer and spiritual practices *and* connecting their people to online spiritual formation and prayer resources, as well as to online communities that nurture spiritual formation.

Features from Scenario 1

The following features from Scenario 1 can be utilized to meet the challenges of Scenario 2. (For easy reference, the features are numbered as they appear in Scenario 1.)

- #6. ***Faith formation in 2020 engages all ages in mission and service.***
- #7. ***Faith formation in 2020 promotes spiritual formation and transformation throughout life.***
- #8. ***Faith formation in 2020 is inclusive of a diversity of ethnic cultures and their religious traditions and expressions.***
- #12. ***Faith formation in 2020 is 24x7 through the dynamic use of new digital media technologies.***
- #13. ***Faith formation in 2020 creates a multi-dimensional platform for faith formation with *face-to-face* interaction/experience at the core leading to continuing learning and faith growth or *virtual* interaction leading to face-to-face interactions and experiences.***
- #14. ***Faith formation in 2020 engages the distinctive style of faith and spirituality of the Post-Boomer generations through innovative approaches and models.***

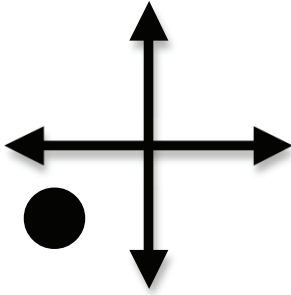
Features from Scenario 4

The following features from Scenario 4 can be utilized to meet the challenges of Scenario 2. (For easy reference, the features are numbered as they appear in Scenario 4.)

- #4. ***Faith formation in 2020 utilizes the naturally-occurring milestones and life transitions in people's lives to deepen their faith, engagement in church life, and family faith practices.***
- #5. ***Faith formation in 2020 begins faith formation early in life.***
- #7. ***Faith formation in 2020 is inclusive of a people from a diversity of ethnic cultures providing a hospitable and welcoming community, and programs and resources that are culturally appropriate and in the language of the people.***



Scenario #3. Unaffiliated and Uninterested



- **Resistant to Organized Religion**
- **Low Need or Interest in God and the Spiritual Life**

The third scenario describes a world in which people experience little need for God and the spiritual life and are not affiliated with organized religion and established Christian churches. The task of the church is to be incarnational—placing itself in the midst of the culture and the gathering places of people—and be a witness to the Christian faith in the world today.

Key Features of Faith Formation in 2020 for Scenario #3

The focus of Scenario 3 is establishing the presence of the church and faith formation in the world of people who are unaffiliated with a church and uninterested in God and the spirituality life. The church needs to adopt an incarnational approach—placing itself in the midst of the culture and the gathering places of people—and serving as a witness to the Christian faith in the world today. Since so many of the features of Scenario 2 apply equally well to Scenario 3, we have described their relevance for Scenario #3. We have also added several new features.

1. **Faith formation in 2020 establishes a “Third Place” gathering space, planted in the midst of the community, that offers hospitality, builds relationships, provides a variety of programs and activities, and nourishes the spiritual life of people.** (Scenario 3, #1)

Third Places offer the uninterested and unaffiliated an informal gathering place to feel at home, nourish relationships, promote

companionship and help create a sense of place and community. In this neutral setting, faith formation can offer a variety of programs and activities, varying in purpose, scope and depth, providing a pathway for people to discover their hunger for God and the need for community. A Third Place can offer life-centered clinics and workshops (e.g., marriage enrichment, parenting, divorce and separation, bereavement, life and career planning, financial planning, recovery programs, dealing with depression), spiritual life programs, and an “introduction to the Christian faith course” (see #2 below). A Third Place provides the venue for group meetings, such as a mothers group (while children play), an art gallery for local artists and art classes, a “faith and film” series, music concerts by local musicians, children’s storytelling hour, book reading groups, guest speakers, and so on.

2. **Faith formation in 2020 offers a guided process for spiritually hungry people to become spiritually committed and actively engaged in the church community.** (Scenario 3, #2)

The “introduction to the Christian faith” program is an opportunity for all people to investigate the claims of the Christian faith in an informal, no pressure, non-judgmental, and friendly environment. The emphasis is upon exploration and discovery in a relaxed and informal setting. The program does not assume any background knowledge or belief in Christianity. The program is offered in a variety of settings and formats. (See Scenario 3, #2 for details.)

3. **Faith formation in 2020 offers an apprenticeship process for those who are interested in an experience of the transformative power of God and the Gospel.** (Scenario 3, #3)

An “apprenticeship” process—small group sharing, personal study, prayer, and retreat experiences—helps people who have identified a hunger for God develop a robust discipleship by helping them understand who God is, what it means to be a Christian, and what it means to live in community as part of God’s kingdom. The apprenticeship process fosters transformation by contrasting the God Jesus revealed with

commonly-held beliefs about God; explores how beliefs about God, self, and the world shape people's lives; encourages soul-training, spiritual practices to help people experience God's love; and nurtures accountability in a small group setting. Through the apprenticeship process people's understanding of God is strengthened and healed through spiritual practices, helping people more naturally live the life Jesus described in the Sermon on the Mount.

4. ***Faith formation in 2020* establishes an online presence by being actively engaged in social networking sites and in working with websites that reach the unaffiliated and uninterested.**

Faith formation in 2020 "plants" itself in the midst of digital culture, setting up "homes" on the various social networking sites and connecting people to the church's website. Churches also provide content through articles, audio podcasts, and video on websites where people are already connected (e.g., YouTube). Online faith formation efforts connect people back to church programs, activities and events, so that the virtual world is a gateway to the physical church community.

5. ***Faith formation in 2020* establishes a virtual "church campus" to connect with the everyday life of spiritually hungry people, offer them online ways to gather and grow in faith, and support face-to-face programs and activities.** (Scenario 3, #6)

- *Faith formation in 2020* is 24x7 through the dynamic use of new digital media technologies. (Scenario 1, #12)
- *Faith formation in 2020* creates a multi-dimensional platform for faith formation with *face-to-face* interaction/experience at the core leading to continuing learning and faith growth or *virtual* interaction leading to face-to-face interactions and experiences. (Scenario 1, #13)

Faith formation in 2020 creates a virtual "church campus" that offers online extensions for third place activities, builds relationships and connections among people, and provides next steps in people's faith journey after their introductory program. The virtual church campus

also includes video podcasts of sermon messages, worship services via streaming live video or cable TV broadcast, and live interactive features like a lobby chat room, message notes, communication cards, and prayer intentions that are streamed to computers and mobile phones. The virtual campus also streams daily prayer reflections, Bible reflections, high quality video presentations, Bible studies, and faith formation programming.

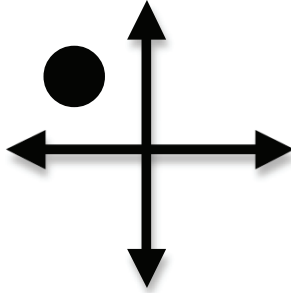
6. ***Faith formation in 2020* sponsors local and global "transforming the world" projects—serving the poor and vulnerable, working for justice and peace, and caring for creation—to engage people in the church and in the wider community in action projects.** (Scenario 3, #7)

Churches sponsor a variety of local community and global projects that provide a public presence of the church in the community—from local efforts to feed the hungry, house the homeless, and improve education by adopting a public school to global projects that build schools, care for AIDS victims, and provide wells for water. The church partners with other churches and agencies to establish a serving presence in the community where people who are passionate about transforming the world, but not involved in church, can work side-by-side with church members. The church's stance of transforming the world demonstrates the Gospel in action and through its presence and service can draw people into a relationship with Jesus Christ and the church community.

7. ***Faith formation in 2020* sponsors festivals, conferences, and events with a spiritual/faith perspective for the whole community.**

Faith formation in 2020 organizes community-wide programs that bring a faith perspective into the public arena by sponsoring programs for the whole community: art exhibitions, music concerts, film festivals, family programs, conferences and clinics. Faith formation in 2020 conducts courses, workshops, and clinics in community settings, such as a course on the "Bible as Literature" or "Spiritual Traditions." through continuing education programs in the community.

Scenario #4. Participating in Church Activities, but Faith and the Spiritual Life Are Not Significant



- **Receptive to Organized Religion**
- **Low Need or Interest in God and the Spiritual Life**

The fourth scenario describes a world in which people attend church activities, but are not actively engaged in their church community. They may participate in significant church events such as Christmas and Easter and sacramental celebrations involving their families. Some may even attend worship regularly. But they do not have a strong connection to the congregation; their connections are more social than spiritual. Faith and the spiritual life are not a significant part of their life. Many are looking for an opportunity to become engaged and to develop their spiritual lives. Churches recognize that belonging (engagement) leads to believing (commitment) and a more vibrant faith, and seek ways to increase engagement with the community and the religious tradition to develop more spiritually committed members.

Overview of Scenario #4

1. Faith formation in 2020 increases active engagement by connecting faith formation programming to participation in church life.
2. Faith formation in 2020 creates expectations for family participation in learning and church life by providing a yearly faith growth plan with a variety of options for experiencing the Christian faith through community life.
3. Faith formation in 2020 offers people of all ages a variety of Christian practices immersion experiences that give people a firsthand

- experience of a Christian practice and guides them in living the practice in their daily lives.
4. Faith formation in 2020 utilizes the naturally-occurring milestones and life transitions in people's lives to deepen their faith, engagement in church life, and family faith practices.
 5. Faith formation in 2020 begins faith formation early in life.
 6. Faith formation in 2020 utilizes the new digital media technologies to deliver faith formation opportunities and experiences in virtual spaces that connect people to church even if their participation in church life and faith formation programming is occasional.
 7. Faith formation in 2020 is inclusive of a people from a diversity of ethnic cultures providing a hospitable and welcoming community, and programs and resources that are culturally appropriate and in the language of the people.
 8. Faith formation in 2020 guides people in renewing their faith as a foundation for deeper growth in faith.

Key Features of Faith Formation in 2020 for Scenario #4

1. **Faith formation in 2020 increases active engagement by connecting faith formation programming to participation in church life.**

Churches are designing their faith formation programming to prepare people for participation in the life, ministry, and activities of the church according to their abilities. Churches involve people of all ages, but especially children and adolescents, in learning settings that provide them with resources—language, practices, rituals, habits—that enable them to participate meaningfully in the life of the community: in worship, prayer, service, leadership, sacraments, church year feasts and seasons, and other activities and events of church life. This restores the connection between learning and practice, as well as overcoming age segregation through intergenerational experiences in community. *The key is that what people are learning in their programs is aligned with hands-on participation in congregational life.* For example, many churches utilize a lectionary-based model of faith formation in which the content of the learning program is the Sunday Scripture readings. Here the

connection is direct: what is learned in an educational program is experienced at Sunday worship. Connecting learning programs and congregational life takes many forms: liturgical seasons, Sunday lectionary readings, preparation for a congregation-wide service projects, etc.

The formation of a distinctive Christian identity is shaped by participation in the mission and practices of the faith community. Through their participation, people of all ages come to be recognized and accepted as full members of the congregation. People are not only shaped by the practices in which they participate. They also ‘act back’ on the community of practice, with new insights, ideas, and actions that can contribute to the transformation of those practices, and therefore, of the community.

2. Faith formation in 2020 creates expectations for family participation in learning and church life by providing a yearly faith growth plan with a variety options for experiencing the Christian faith through community life.

Churches are promoting growth in Christian faith by engaging families more consciously, actively, and experientially in church life through a multi-dimensional growth plan, and by extending their learning into family faith practice. Rather than having children and adolescents studying *about* the Bible and Christian tradition, worship and prayer, discipleship and service, and what makes a Christian community, families will experience it all together and be a part of building their own small faith community. The annual plan is a blend of whole family activities and individual parent-child activities. Families are organized into groupings to prepare for the activities and to reflect upon their experience of the activities. Each grouping of families has a leader who facilitates participation and meets with the family grouping on monthly basis. Expectations for the annual growth plan can include; 1) participating in Sunday worship (regularly, but at least twice monthly); 2) participating in important church year feasts and celebrations, such as Advent, Christmas, Lent, Holy Week; 3) participating in monthly family learning programs on topics related to their participation; 4) participating in at least six missional/service projects during the year, 5) participating in an annual spiritual

formation retreat experience, and 6) engaging in family home practices correlated with church participation activities, such as reading the Bible, celebrating rituals and traditions, and praying.

3. Faith formation in 2020 offers people of all ages a variety of Christian practice immersion experiences that give people a firsthand experience of a Christian practice, and guides them in living the practice in their daily lives.

Churches are developing immersion experiences for people of all ages around the community’s lived experience of the Christian practices—hospitality, discernment, healing, contemplative devotional practices, testimony, justice and service, worship, theological reflection, forming community, stewardship, embracing diversity, finding God in everyday life, and reading the Bible. Each immersion experience begins with a direct experience of the practice—within the church or in the community/world, followed by reflection on the experience, education about the practice, and resources for living the practice in daily life at home and in the world. Churches offer a variety of immersion experiences throughout the year in various program formats and timeframes. (For more information on Christian practices see #2 in Scenario 1.)

4. Faith formation in 2020 utilizes the naturally-occurring milestones and life transitions in people’s lives to deepen their faith, engagement in church life, and family faith practices.

Churches are investing time, energy, and creativity in utilizing milestones and life transitions to provide faith formation for individuals, couples, and families, and to engage them more fully in church life by celebrating the milestone with the whole church community. At each stage of life, significant milestones and life transitions provide churches with “moments of return” when people who have not been involved in church life can return to the church for a ritual experience, family celebration, religious perspective on life’s transitions, encouragement, and/or comfort and support. By maximizing these opportunities churches are nurturing people’s faith *and* welcoming them back into the life of the faith community. They are fashioning faith

formation around the predictable milestones in life, such as marriage, baptism, first communion, confirmation, graduations, and retirement *and* around the unpredictable transitions, such as leaving home, a new career/job, first apartment/house, moments of sickness (personal, family, friends), death of a loved one, etc. Churches provide outreach and assistance to help people ritualize life transitions and milestones as these events unfold in their lives.

Adulthood is especially filled with transitions: geographic relocations, family formation and reformation, career changes, empty nests, unanticipated illness, divorce, and the loss of loved ones. In times of transition, most people experience feelings of disorientation and tend to question personal priorities; they may seek to “finish unfinished business” or develop new dimensions of their lives. Churches are discovering that these adult transitions provide important moments for adult faith formation, offering learning opportunities that can help adults find meaning in their lives.

For each milestone, churches provide faith formation that includes: 1) a ritual celebration, 2) a learning program, 3) a blessing of the individual and marking the occasion in a worship service, and 4) a tangible, visible reminder or symbol of the occasion being marked. Following a milestone celebration, the church provides life cycle-appropriate resources—in print, audio, video, and online formats—to continue to nurture faith growth and practice. (For more information on milestones see #5 in Scenario 1.)

5. Faith formation in 2020 begins faith formation early in life.

Churches are beginning family faith formation with new parents during pregnancy by nurturing the faith growth of the parents, preparing them for the vocation of parenting, understanding their new child, celebrating the baptism milestone, providing resources for nurturing family faith (continuing through the next several years), welcoming and engaging them in the Christian community as a new family. Parent education and formation begins before the birth of the child and continues throughout life, providing the setting for teaching, modeling, and demonstrating family

faith practices that can be incorporated into home life. Churches provide small groups for parents and mentor parents to encourage, support, and resource parents. The church’s online presence provides another setting for resourcing and social networking among parents. (For additional ideas for family faith formation see #11 in Scenario 1.)

6. Faith formation in 2020 utilizes the new digital media technologies to deliver faith formation opportunities and experiences in virtual spaces that connect people to church even if their participation in church life and faith formation programming is occasional.

Churches are using an array of digital media tools to invite people into deeper participation in church life and give them access to the resources they need to grow in faith. Churches create their own online presence (website) as the centerpiece of their online faith formation. They deliver faith formation experiences and resources anytime and anywhere, reaching people wherever they go online (home, work, school, vacation, coffee house). They are using their online presence and digital communication tools to extend relationships and learning initiated in church events and gathered faith formation programs, and to support the key features and ideas suggested in Scenario 4 such as:

- an online *parenting center* with “how to” parenting articles and videos, faith enrichment resources, a “gathering space” for parents to interact, a blog staffed by parent mentors, parent-generated ideas and activities, and links to highly rated parent and family websites.
- an online *family resource center* with daily, weekly, and seasonal resources for the family, including faith conversation activities, family devotions and prayer, Bible reading activities, service projects, and rituals and traditions
- an online *milestones and life transitions center* with sections for each milestone/transition that include rituals, blessings, commentaries, personal stories, a “gathering space” for sharing stories and ideas

(For additional ideas see #12 in Scenario 1.)

7. ***Faith formation in 2020* is inclusive of people from a diversity of ethnic cultures, providing a hospitable and welcoming community and programs and resources that are culturally appropriate and in the language of people.**

Churches are overcoming the barriers to participation so often experienced by ethnic communities by creating healthy environments, hospitality and welcoming, and a sense of community so that people of all cultures feel inclusion and acceptance. People of all cultural heritages feel that their culture is respected and that there is appreciation of the differences and commonalities among the cultures in the church. The church encourages ethnic festivals, religious traditions, and feasts. ***Faith formation in 2020*** recognizes the uniquely lived experiences, needs, and aspirations of people from each cultural ethnic community in the church, and offers *culturally-specific* faith formation—in a variety of settings and grouping—for the ethnic communities in the church. Culturally-specific faith formation inculcates the Gospel message and tradition so that it is proclaimed and taught in the language and culture of the people—it presents the teaching of the faith in a complete and authentic way in dialogue with the language, customs, and practices of those to whom the Gospel is presented. (For more information on diversity see #8 in Scenario 1.)

8. ***Faith formation in 2020* offers people of all ages a variety of ways to engage in the mission of the church and grow in faith by serving the poor and vulnerable, working for justice, being a peacemaker, and caring for creation.**

Churches provide a variety of missional and service activities that engage people in the church and provide an opportunity for faith formation. Each mission/service project immerses people in action and then guides them in reflecting on the issue and the teachings of Scripture and tradition. Mission projects are geared to different levels of involvement and challenge from a few hours or a day of local service to longer mission trips in the U.S. and around the world. Churches offer mission/service projects for the whole family to experience together: locally, regionally, nationally, or internationally. (For more information on mission see #6 in Scenario 1.)

9. ***Faith formation in 2020* guides people in renewing their faith as a foundation for deeper growth in faith.**

Faith formation in 2020 provides a process that gradually deepens people's relationship with Jesus Christ, their engagement in church life, and their practice of the Christian faith. Faith formation helps people identify where they are on their spiritual journey, what they need, who else might share that need, and then provides resources (people, programs, materials) that could help them meet that need. Churches focus on personalized pathways of discipleship that meet individual and household needs. Face-to-face small group and individualized faith formation opportunities are supported by online learning and new media technologies to personalize and customize spiritual formation and learning opportunities for individuals and families.

One way churches respond to this need is by offering a "Basic Training" course as a introduction or refresher for adults who want to learn how to build and deepen their relationship with Christ, learn the basics of the Christian faith such as reading and studying the Bible and learning how to pray. The "Following Jesus" course teaches people the key hallmarks of the Christian life according to Scripture and how to more effectively live out a relationship with Christ both personally and through service to others. These programs serve as a foundation for ever deeper learning and spiritual growth and engagement in church life.

Another approach offers a yearlong process, modeled on the catechumenate and Christian initiation process, to guide small groups of people in exploring, nurturing, and renewing their commitment to Jesus Christ and living as a disciple of Christ. In the autumn the journey begins by exploring Scripture, worship, prayer, and sacraments. In the winter months people continue to explore the presence of God in the world and in daily life. Throughout the weeks of Lent, participants "dig deeper" into the Biblical stories that prepare for an affirmation of Baptism at the Easter Vigil. After Easter, the focus turns toward the practice of living the Christian life by exploring faithful responses to care for the earth, for humankind, relationships and daily work.

Part Four

Descriptions of the Thirteen Trends and Forces Influencing the Future of Faith Formation in a Changing Church and World



Trend 1. Declining Participation in Christian Churches

Source:

The American Church in Crisis. David T. Olson. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2008.

For twenty years, the American Research Project (TACRP) has been accumulating church statistical data and compiling the yearly attendance average of more than 200,000 churches. As reported in *The American Church in Crisis*, research shows that from 1990 to 2006 attendance at Christian churches has remained constant, with about 52 million people attending church services on any given weekend. During those 16 years, however, the population of the United States has grown by an equivalent number, 52 million people. Church attendance has not come anywhere close to keeping up with population growth. This means that while in 1990 about 20.6% of the U.S. population was in church on any given weekend, today only 17.3% are in worship. This number was matched by a report in the *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* by C. Kirk Hathaway and Penny Long Marler, in which their research shows that 52 million people worship each week.

What if Present Trends Continue: The World of 2020

1. *If current trends continue, by 2020 that 17.3% of Americans attending worship today will drop to 14.7 percent of Americans—meaning that more*

than 85% of Americans will be staying away from worshipping God at church.

2. Approximately 55,000 churches will close between 2005 and 2020, while 60,000 new churches will open, producing a net gain of 4,500 churches. However to keep pace with population growth, a net gain of 48,000 churches will be needed. In those 15 years, the American church will fall short of this mark by almost 43,500 congregations.
3. The evangelical church will not keep up with population growth between 2005 and 2020. The weekend attendance percentage at evangelical churches will fall below 9% of the population by 2010 and will be at 8.5% in 2020
4. All mainline denominations are projected to continue to decline, continuing a downward slide that started in 1965. Established churches in mainline denominations are declining at a rate of 2% per year, meaning that they will shrink by almost 30% in attendance from 2005 to 2020. Since mainline denominations do not start many new churches, there will be few replacements for the churches that close. Mainline denominations are also facing several financial challenges.
5. The Roman Catholic Church will grow in membership because of immigration, but Mass attendance will continue to decline. The drop-off in attendance will continue to be most pronounced in the Northeast and the Midwest. Mass attendance will decline from 7.1% of the US population attending a Roman Catholic parish each weekend in 1990 to 4% in 2020. The growing priest shortage is already causing consolidation and retrenchment in many parishes, and this will escalate. The current financial stress on dioceses will continue unabated, reducing the number of new parishes they can start.

A Case Study

The following case study presents demographic information about trends in the Catholic Church, the largest denomination in the United States. While the Catholic population in the U.S. increased by almost 3 million from 2001-2008, all of the major indicators of participation in church life declined. Research shows that many of these same trends are present in Protestant denominations as well.

Participation Trends in the U.S. Catholic Church 2001-2008

(Using figures from the *Official Catholic Directory*)

	2001	2008
Catholic population	65.3 million	68.1 million
Parishes	19,496	18,674
Marriages	257,000	192,000
Infant Baptisms	1 million	887,000
Adult Baptisms (and entrance into full communion)	162,000	124,000
Confirmations	629,000	622,000
First Communions	893,000	822,000
Children (grades 1-8) (parish religious ed.)	3.5 million	3.1 million
Adolescents (parish religious ed.)	767,000	722,000
Catholic elementary school students	2 million	1.6 million
Catholic high school students	682,000	674,380

Research Note

Gallup and Barna Research report about 40% of people in the US attend worship in any given week. They rely on self-reported church attendance, while the American Research Project collects the head counts that churches do of the actual number of people in weekend worship. However, when you dig a little deeper the actual numbers may be closer than it initially appears. Using Gallup Research, CARA analyzed Catholic Mass attendance figures: 23% of adult Catholics say they attend Mass *every* week (once or more often). Given that those who attend less often have some probability of attending Mass in *any* given week, CARA estimates that 31.4% of Catholic adults attend Mass in *any* given week or 16.1 million weekly adult Mass attendees as of April 2008. TACRP projects that 15.7 million attend Mass weekly.

Trend 2. Changing Patterns of Religious Identification and Affiliation in the U.S.

Sources:

American Religious Identification Survey (ARIS 2008)
March 2009. Barry A. Kosmin and Ariela Keysar. Program on Public Values. Hartford, CT: Trinity College, 2009. (www.americanreligionsurvey-aris.org/reports/ARIS_Report_2008.pdf)

Faith in Flux: Changes in Religious Affiliation in the U.S.
April 27, 2009. Pew Research Center
(<http://pewresearch.org/pubs/1204/religion-changes-affiliations-survey>)

The Rise in No Religious Affiliation

The 2009 *American Religious Identification Survey* (ARIS) reported that the number of Americans who claim no religious affiliation has nearly doubled since 1990, rising from 8% to 15%. The Pew Research study, *Faith in Flux*, confirms this trend—finding that the number of people who say they are unaffiliated with any particular faith doubled to 16%. The Pew study found that the number of people who say they are unaffiliated with any particular faith today (16.1%) is more than double the number who say they were not affiliated with any particular religion as children. Among Americans ages 18-29, one-in-four say they are not currently affiliated with any particular religion.

The *American Religious Identification Survey* also reported that:

- The number of American adults identified as Christians dropped 10% from 86% in 1990 to 76% in 2008.
- The historic Mainline churches and denominations have experienced the steepest declines while the non-denominational Christian identity has been trending upward particularly since 2001.
- The U. S. population continues to show signs of becoming less religious, with one out of every five Americans failing to indicate a religious identity in 2008.

The challenge to Christianity in the U.S. does not come from other religions but rather from a rejection of all forms of organized religion. The two studies confirm that Americans are slowly becoming less Christian and that in recent decades

the challenge to Christianity in American society does not come from other world religions or new religious movements but rather from a rejection of all organized religions. This growing non-religious minority reduces the traditional societal role of congregations and places of worship in family celebrations of life-cycle events. *Forestalling of religious rites of passage, such as marriage, and the lowering expectations on religious funeral services, could have long lasting consequences for religious institutions.*

Changing Religious Affiliation

Americans change religious affiliation early and often. In total, about half of American adults have changed religious affiliation at least once during their lives. Most people who change their religion leave their childhood faith before age 24, and many of those who change religion do so more than once.

- More than one-quarter of American adults (28%) have left the faith in which they were raised in favor of another religion—or no religion at all.
- If change in affiliation from one type of Protestantism to another is included, roughly 44% of adults have either switched religious affiliation, moved from being unaffiliated with any religion to being affiliated with a particular faith, or dropped any connection to a specific religious tradition altogether.

The reasons people give for changing their religion—or leaving religion altogether—differ widely depending on the origin and destination of the convert. The group that has grown the most in recent years due to religious change is the unaffiliated population.

- Two-thirds of former Catholics who have become unaffiliated and half of former Protestants who have become unaffiliated say they left their childhood faith because they stopped believing in its teachings, and roughly four-in-ten say they became unaffiliated because they do not believe in God or the teachings of most religions.
- Among both groups, roughly four-in-ten say they departed their former faith because their spiritual needs were not being met.
- Many people who left a religion to become unaffiliated say they did so in part because they think of religious people as hypocritical or judgmental, because religious organizations

focus too much on rules, or because religious leaders are too focused on power and money.

In summary, among the top reasons for leaving one's childhood religion were:

1. Just gradually drifted from the religion
2. Spiritual needs not being met
3. Stopped believing in the religion's teachings
4. Found a religion they liked more
5. Unhappy with teachings about the Bible
6. Dissatisfied with atmosphere at worship services
7. Dissatisfied with clergy at congregation

Trend 3. Becoming More Spiritual, Less Religious

Sources:

American Congregations at the Beginning of the 21st Century: The National Congregations Study 2008. Mark Chaves, Shawna Anderson, and Jason Byasse (www.soc.duke.edu/natcong)

"We're even more spiritual; even less religious." Mark Chaves. Faith and Leadership Blog. July 2, 2009 (www.faithandleadership.com/blog/07-02-2009/mark-chaves-were-even-more-spiritual-even-less-religious)

The vast majority of Americans—approximately 80 percent—describe themselves as both spiritual and religious. Still, a small but growing minority describe themselves as spiritual but not religious. Three times since 1998, the General Social Survey, a survey of a nationally representative sample of American adults, has asked respondents, "To what extent do you consider yourself a religious person? Are you very religious, moderately religious, slightly religious, or not religious at all?" And: "To what extent do you consider yourself a spiritual person? Are you . . ."

If we define "spiritual but not religious" as people who say that they are at least moderately spiritual but not more than slightly religious, then 9 percent of respondents were spiritual but not religious in 1998, rising to 14 percent in 2008. More younger than older people describe themselves in this way and, as the graph shows, the increase in "spiritual but not religious" is more pronounced among the young.

Today, 18 percent of 18-39 year olds say they are "spiritual but not religious," compared to only 11 percent a decade ago.

Interestingly, there are more “spiritual but not religious” people today because nonreligious people are more likely to say they are spiritual, not because people are less likely to say they are religious. In 1998, 24 percent of those low on the self-described “religious” scale said they were spiritual; that increased to 35 percent in 2008. A generic, diffuse type of spirituality seems to be on the rise, perhaps also indicated by small but noticeable recent increases in belief in miracles and in life after death.

What does the growth of this “spiritual but not religious” segment of the population mean for organized religion in the United States? If what people mean when they say they are spiritual but not religious is that they are generally concerned with spiritual matters (whatever that means) but they are not interested in organized religion, then this trend indicates a growing minority of the population whose spiritual inclinations do not lead them to become involved in churches, synagogues, or mosques. This kind of generic, diffuse, and unorganized “spirituality” may provide a growing market for certain kinds of religious products, such as self-help books with spiritual themes, but, even if it continues to rise, it is difficult to see it becoming a solid foundation for new kinds of religious institutions or new forms of religious collective action.

Trend 4. Influence of Individualism on Christian Identity and Community Life

1. Excessive Religious Individualism

Sources:

“Faith, Hope, and (Excessive) Individualism.” William D. Dinges. *Handing on the Faith*. Edited by Robert Embelli. New York: Crossroad Publishing, 2006.

“The American Cultural Context for Adolescent Catechesis.” William D. Dinges. *Source Book on Adolescent Catechesis: Volume 1*. Washington, DC: NIAC, 2008. (www.adolescentcatechesis.org)

Individualism is a pre-eminent American cultural code. It touches virtually every aspect of American life. For many Americans, the ultimate criterion of identity and lifestyle validity is individual choice. As

the sociologist Christian Smith has observed, it is by choosing a product, a mate, a lifestyle, an identity—and a religion—that one makes it one’s very own: personal, special, and meaningful. Such a dynamic stands in contrast to what is “merely” inherited, assumed, or passed on as part of a collective identity.

Privatized religiosity—which easily accommodates the utilitarian and expressive individualism of American culture—makes it difficult to articulate and sustain religious commitments. Specifically, religious individualism has been linked with autonomy in the moral realm; with the diminution or rejection of ecclesial authority; with more direct access to the sacred; with a higher priority for personal spiritual fulfillment; and with a privatized spirituality only loosely connected with established traditions. In short, with what Robert Wuthnow calls “me-first religion.”

It is not simply that (excessive) religious individualism means that religious identity is more autonomous and deliberate today; it is that this individualism signals a loss of how religion is anchored in a sense of belonging. The issue is the decline in connectedness; a weakening or severing of the *social* basis of religion in family, marriage, ethnicity, and community; a decline in the perceived *necessity of communal or institutional structures as constituent of religious identity*. Outside of the more fundamentalist-like enclaves, religious identity today is not only less bounded by doctrine or creed; it is also less nurtured and reinforced by community.

The increasing influence of individualism has serious implications:

- Religious identities and practices in contemporary American culture are increasingly viewed as individual projects. They express the preeminent norm of “choice.”
- The number of Americans wholly uninvolved with a church has gradually increased as religious institutions have lost much of their monopoly over the quest for the sacred.
- There has been a steady decline in the legitimacy of institutional authority *of any kind*—contributing to what Robert Wuthnow has described as a society of “loose connections.” The loss of legitimacy by religious institutions is part of the broader problem of widespread alienation from all authoritative institutions that has occurred in American society.

- An increasing number of Americans report their religious identity as a “personal religion” or “none.”
- A highly significant marker of the de-institutionalization of religion is its uncoupling from “spirituality.” Significant numbers of Americans see little necessary connection between being spiritual and being part of a historic tradition, or part of a disciplined community of faith. This is reinforced by the mass media’s not-so-subtle message that you don’t need a religious community to engage “God issues.”

As the level of individualism has risen, many in the religious mainstream have come to believe that church going and church authority are optional. Nominal membership increasingly replaces active involvement, a development paralleling national civic trends. Fewer Americans are spending time in church-related endeavors. Religion is less perceived as an inherited phenomenon, or as a binding community of discipleship and obligation. Religious leaders and institutions, which traditionally provided the framework within which religious meaning was constructed, have become increasingly peripheral to the spirituality and “lived religion” of private personal enterprise.

Although new forms of community are emerging (e.g., small faith communities), the prevailing trend is toward weakened communal and institutional arrangements and lower levels of commitment and participation. The tradition for many Christians today is not so much a binding community of discipleship and obligation as a toolkit of sacred wares for selectively constructing a personal spiritual identity.

The task is a profoundly sociological one. It means addressing the atrophy of communal participation and the need for a socially embedded Christianity. It includes the creative (re)construction and intensification of the Christian faith as a *communal* reality of habit, prayer, reflection, dialogue, and debate. It necessitates the (re)creation of more cohesive social bonds, shared memories, mutual responsibilities, permanent relationships, and other experiences of connectedness. The problem today is not only that the young have not had passed on to them a good synthesis of the Christian faith so that they might do a discerning engagement of the culture. It is that they (and many others) see less connection between “faith” and church or community.

2. The Rise of a Culture of Therapeutic Individualism

Sources:

Soul Searching: The Religious and Spiritual Lives of American Teenagers Christian Smith with Melinda Lindquist Denton. New York: Oxford University Press, 2005. (National Study on Youth and Religion: www.youthandreligion.org)

“Is Moralistic Therapeutic Deism the New Religion of American Youth.” Christian Smith. *Passing on the Faith*. Edited by James Heft. New York: Fordham University Press, 2006.

The cultural ocean in which American adolescents (and to a large extent all Americans) swim saturates them in the ethos of therapeutic individualism. Therapeutic individualism is not so much a consciously and intentionally held ideology, but rather a taken-for-granted set of assumptions and commitments about the human self, society, and life’s purpose that powerfully defines everyday moral and relational codes and boundaries in the contemporary United States. Therapeutic individualism is having a significant influence in shaping American youth’s religious and spiritual practices and experiences.

Therapeutic individualism defines the individual self as the source and standard of authentic moral knowledge and authority, and individual self-fulfillment as the preoccupying purpose of life. Subjective, personal experience is the touchstone of all that is authentic, right and true. By contrast, this ethos views the “external” traditions, obligations, and institutions of society as inauthentic and often illegitimate constraints on morality and behavior from which individuals must be emancipated.

Therapeutic individualism is, for better or worse, now pervasive in American culture and society, both in many people’s personal lives and increasingly in public institutions themselves. Its assumptions and commitments infuse every level of the educational system; practices of courtship, marriage, family life, and divorce; some public social programs; key cultural elements of the economy, such as the advertising industry and mass media, entertainment, and recreation; the health care sector and public health system; very many elements of religion; and increasingly, the justice system and the government itself. Most youth will receive very heavy and consistent doses of socialization into its assumptions, precepts, and ethos, even as its social pervasiveness

renders it natural, intuitive, and invisible to most people being inducted into its worldview. Therapeutic individualism thus seems to be the obvious way things are.

All of this appears to have had important influences on the character of the religious and spiritual lives of American adolescents. As therapeutic individualism has institutionalized itself as a natural dominant framework not only for much of social life around religion, but in American religion itself, we expect youth's assumptions about religious teachings, faith, church, and spiritual development and experiences to be transformed. Religion as an external authority or tradition that people encounter and that makes authoritative claims to form their believing, thinking, feeling, desires, and living becomes increasingly inconceivable. Therapeutic individualists instead seek out religious and spiritual practices, feelings, and experiences that satisfy their own subjectively defined needs and wants. Faith and spirituality become centered less around a God believed in and God's claims on lives, and more around the believing (or perhaps even unbelieving) self and its personal realization and happiness.

Instrumentalist View of Religious Faith

Many Americans, including teenagers, appear to hold a primarily instrumentalist view of religious faith. Most teens instinctively assume that religion exists to help individuals be and do what they want, and not as an external tradition or authority or divinity that makes compelling claims and demands on their lives, especially to change or grow in ways that they may not immediately want to. For most U.S. teenagers, religion is something to personally believe in, which makes one feel good and resolves one's problems. For most, it is not an entire way of life, or a disciplined practice that makes hard demands of or changes people. Stated differently, for many U.S. teenagers, God is treated as something like a cosmic therapist or counselor, a ready and competent helper who responds in times of trouble but who does not particularly ask for devotion or obedience.

What we heard most from teens (in our research) is essentially that religion makes them feel good, that it helps them make good choices, that it helps resolve problems and troubles, that it serves their felt needs. What most teens appear to believe is that religion is about God responding to the authoritative desires and feelings of people, not the reverse. In simple terms, for many religion is a tool for people to use to get

what they want—as determined not by their religion but by their individual feelings and desires.

As a consequence, the cultural terrain on which communities of faith have to engage youth in their work of religious education and socialization makes the task that much more difficult. Essentially it sets up a consumerist mentality about religious faith that wants primarily to know “what can it do for me?” not “what does it require of me?” Given such instrumentalist assumptions about religious faith, youth ministers are ever obliged to be entertaining, religious youth activities always need to be great fun. Sunday-school teachers must be interesting and “relevant” in ways that do not always comport well with the actual interests and priorities of religious traditions, etc. In short, religious educators inevitably hit a big, hard wall of contradiction around the fact that serious induction into a religious tradition requires the inductee to be formed and reformed in new and perhaps demanding ways according to the teaching of the faith, whereas the instrumentalist mentality about faith presumes that religion exists to serve the existing felt wants and needs of the religious consumer. It is difficult to have it both ways. So it proves quite difficult to religiously educate the next generation in this context.

Trend 5. Increasing Social, Cultural, and Religious Diversity in the United States

The U.S. Census now considers the Bronx (NY) the country's most diverse community because if you choose any two residents at random, there's an 89.7% chance that they'll be of different races or ethnicities.

Ethnic Diversity

Americans are becoming more diverse in terms of race and ethnic origins and as a result there has been a growth in the size of the minority population in terms of both numbers and percentage. The most significant change since 1990 both statistically and demographically has been the rapid growth of the

Hispanic population and to a much lesser extent the Asian population. Hispanics have replaced African-Americans as the nation's largest minority.

<i>According to the U.S. Census Bureau, in 2005 the racial/ethnic makeup of the United States was distributed as follows:</i>	<i>The U.S. Census Bureau predicts that if trends continue, the 2050 racial/ethnic makeup of the United States will be:</i>
White Non-Hispanic: 67%	White Non-Hispanic: 47%
Hispanic: 14%	Hispanic: 29%
Black: 13%	Black: 13%
Asian: 5%	Asian: 9%

Religious Diversity

Major Religious Traditions in the U.S. 2008 (Pew Research)

Christian	Jewish: 1.7%
Protestant: 51.3%	Buddhist: 0.7%
Evangelical churches: 26.3%	Muslim: 0.6%
Mainline churches: 18.1%	Hindu: 0.4%
Historic black churches: 6.9%	Other Religions: 0.3%
Catholic: 23.9%	Other Faiths: 1.2% (Unitarians New Age, Native American)
Mormon: 1.7%	
Jehovah's Witness 0.7%	
Orthodox: 0.6%	
Other Christian: 0.3%	

Religious Affiliation of Young Generations (Pew Research)

	1987-1988		2006	
	18-25	26+	18-25	26+
Protestant	52%	60%	44%	55%
Catholic	29%	25%	25%	25%
Jewish	2%	2%	2%	2%
Other	6%	5%	7%	5%
No religion	11%	8%	20%	11%

Congregations and Diversity

Source:

American Congregations at the Beginning of the 21st Century: The National Congregations Study 2008. Mark Chaves, Shawna Anderson, and Jason Byasse (www.soc.duke.edu/natcong)

There are fewer all white congregations in the United States today. More predominantly white

congregations have at least some Latino, Asian, or African American presence. Bicultural, multicultural, and ethnic churches are fairly common today, and they are likely to become even more common in the foreseeable future. In the period between 1998 and 2006-07:

- The percent of congregations with more than 80% white participation dropped from 72 to 63%.
- The percent of people who attend congregations in which more than 80% of participants are white and non-Hispanic dropped from 72 to 66%.
- The percent of attendees in predominantly white congregations with at least some Hispanic participants increased from 57 to 64%.
- The percent of attendees in predominantly white congregations with at least some recent immigrants bumped up from 39 to 51%.
- The percent of attendees in predominantly white congregations with at least some Asian participants increased from 41 to 50%.

Trend 6. Growing Influence of Hispanic/ Latino Religious Faith on U.S. Christianity

Source:

Changing Faiths: Latinos and the Transformation of American Religion. Pew Hispanic Center and Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life. April 25, 2007. (<http://pewforum.org/surveys/hispanic/>)

Hispanics are transforming the nation's religious landscape, especially the Catholic Church, because of their growing numbers and because they are practicing a distinctive form of Christianity.

Growing Numbers

More than two-thirds of Hispanics (68%) identify themselves as Roman Catholics. The next largest category, at 15%, is made up of born-again or evangelical Protestants. Nearly one-in-ten (8%) Latinos do not identify with any religion. The rest, about 10% of the total, are mostly spread among

various Protestant and other Christian denominations.

Among Latinos, differences in religious identification coincide with important differences in demographic characteristics, beginning with nativity. In the Hispanic foreign-born population, for example, 74% of adults identify as Catholic, compared with 58% of the native born. Hence, the demographic composition of religious congregations also differs. While about two-thirds (68%) of Hispanic Catholics are foreign born, just a bit more than half (55%) of Latino evangelicals are immigrants. Given the differences in nativity, it is not surprising that Latino Catholics are less likely to speak English and tend to be less educated and poorer than Hispanics of other religious traditions.

Over the last quarter century, the overall religious makeup of the U.S. Hispanic population has been broadly shaped by two contemporaneous processes. First, the number of Catholic Latinos has steadily grown through the arrival of new immigrants, especially those from Mexico, and through relatively high fertility rates among immigrants. Second, some Latinos leave the Catholic Church as they choose to practice another religion or stop practicing a religious faith altogether. Nearly one-fifth (18%) of all Latinos say they have either converted from one religion to another or to no religion at all. Conversions are a key ingredient in the development of evangelicalism among Hispanics. Half of Hispanic evangelicals (51%) are converts, and more than four-fifths of those (43% of Hispanic evangelicals overall) are former Catholics. By an overwhelming majority (82%), Hispanics cite the desire for a more direct, personal experience with God as the main reason for adopting a new faith. Among those who have become evangelicals, nine-in-ten (90%) say it was this spiritual search that drove their conversion. A majority of evangelical converts (61%) say the typical Catholic Mass is not lively or exciting, although only about one-in-three (36%) cite that as a reason for their conversion.

Assuming that the rate of conversion (from Catholicism to another religion) over the past 25 years holds constant for the next 25 years, the share of Latinos who are Catholic would decline from 68% in 2006 to 61% in 2030. Meanwhile, the proportion of U.S. Catholics who are Hispanic would increase over that period from 33% to 41%. Conversions would continue to erode the share of Latinos who are Catholics, although Catholicism would clearly remain the dominant faith among Hispanics. Latino population growth through immigration and fertility

combined with the demographic decline of the non-Hispanic population would ensure that Latinos become an ever greater share of U.S. Catholics overall.

An alternative scenario shows that Latinos will remain a predominantly Catholic population even if the rate of conversions to secularism and other religious faiths increases by 50% over the next 25 years. In that case, 57% of Hispanics would be Catholics in 2030. And, even with increasing conversions, Hispanics would still comprise a sizeable share of the U.S. Catholic population, reaching 40% of total Catholics in 2030, compared with 33% in 2006.

Distinctive Form of Christianity

Religious expressions associated with the pentecostal and charismatic movements are a key attribute of worship for Hispanics in all the major religious traditions — far more so than among non-Latinos. Moreover, the growth of the Hispanic population is leading to the emergence of Latino-oriented churches across the country.

Renewalist Christianity, which places special emphasis on God's ongoing, day-to-day intervention in human affairs through the person of the Holy Spirit, is having a major impact on Hispanic Christianity. Among Latino Protestants, renewalism is three times as prevalent as it is among their non-Latino counterparts. A majority (54%) of Hispanic Catholics describe themselves as charismatic Christians, making them more than four times as likely as non-Latino Catholics to identify with *renewalist Christianity*. The implications of this are particularly important for the Catholic Church, given that the rapidly growing Latino flock is practicing a distinctive form of Catholicism. Latino Catholics nevertheless remain very much Catholic. Indeed, renewalist practices seem to have been incorporated into Hispanic Catholicism without displacing Catholic identity. Similarly, the renewalist movement is a powerful presence among Latino Protestants. More than half of Hispanics in this category identify with spirit-filled religion, compared with about a fifth of non-Hispanic Protestants.

The practice of religion is not only often renewalist in character, but for most Latinos across all the major religious traditions it is also distinctively ethnic. The houses of worship most frequented by Latinos have distinctly ethnic characteristics. Two-thirds of Latino worshipers attend churches with Latino clergy, services in Spanish and heavily Latino congregations. While most predominant among the

foreign born and Spanish speakers—77% saying they attend churches with those characteristics, Hispanic-oriented worship is also prevalent among native-born and English-speaking Latinos with 48% saying they attend ethnic churches. That strongly suggests that the phenomenon is not simply a product of immigration or language but that it involves a broader and more lasting form of ethnic identification.

These two defining characteristics—the prevalence of spirit-filled religious expressions and of ethnic-oriented worship—combined with the rapid growth of the Hispanic population demonstrate how Hispanics are transforming the nation’s religious landscape today and will in the coming decade.

Trend 7. Identifying a New Stage of Life: “Emerging Adulthood”

Source:

“Getting a Life: The Challenge of Emerging Adulthood.”
Christian Smith. *Christianity Today*. November 1, 2007.
(www.christianitytoday.com/bc/2007/novdec/2.10.html)

There is a new and important stage in life in American culture—what scholars call “emerging adulthood”—and it is not entirely clear that the Christian church understands or particularly knows what to do with it. This is the time of life between ages 18 and 30, roughly, a phase which in recent decades has morphed into quite a new experience for many. Researchers in sociology, psychology, and human development have been investigating the contours of this new life stage.

To grasp the significance of emerging adulthood, it is necessary first to realize that life stages are not naturally given as immutable phases of existence. Rather, they are cultural constructions that interact with biology and material production, and are profoundly shaped by the social and institutional conditions that generate and sustain them. So, “teenager” and “adolescence” as representing a distinct stage of life were very much 20th-century inventions, brought into being by changes in mass education, child labor laws, urbanization and suburbanization, mass consumerism, and the media. Similarly, a new, distinct, and important stage in life, situated between the teenage years and full-fledged

adulthood, has emerged in our culture in recent decades—reshaping the meaning of self, youth, relationships, and life commitments as well as a variety of behaviors and dispositions among the young.

What are the social forces that have given rise to this emerging adulthood? Four are particularly important.

1. *First is the growth of higher education.* The GI Bill, changes in the American economy, and government subsidizing of community colleges and state universities led in the second half of the last century to a dramatic rise in the number of high school graduates going on to college and university. More recently, many feel pressured—in pursuit of the American dream—to add years of graduate school education on top of their bachelor’s degree. As a result, a huge proportion of American youth are no longer stopping school and beginning stable careers at age 18 but are extending their formal schooling well into their twenties. And those who are aiming to join America’s professional and knowledge classes—those who most powerfully shape our culture and society—are continuing in graduate and professional school programs often up until their thirties.
2. *A second and related social change crucial to the rise of emerging adulthood is the delay of marriage by American youth over the last decades.* Between 1950 and 2000, the median age of first marriage for women rose from 20 to 25 years old. For men during that same time the median age rose from 22 to 27 years old. The sharpest increase for both took place after 1970. Half a century ago, many young people were anxious to get out of high school, marry, settle down, have children, and start a long-term career. But many youth today, especially but not exclusively men, face almost a decade between high school graduation and marriage to spend exploring life’s many options in unprecedented freedom.
3. *A third major social transformation contributing to the rise of emerging adulthood as a distinct life phase concerns changes in the American and global economy that undermine stable, lifelong careers and replace them instead with careers of lower security, more frequent job changes, and an ongoing need for*

new training and education. Most young people today know they need to approach their careers with a variety of skills, maximum flexibility, and readiness to re-tool as needed. That itself pushes youth toward extended schooling, delay of marriage, and, arguably, a general psychological orientation of maximizing options and postponing commitments. Far from being happy to graduate from high school and take the factory job their father or uncle arranged for them (which probably doesn't exist in any case), many youth today spend five to ten years experimenting with different job and career options before finally deciding on a long-term career direction.

4. *Finally, and in part as a response to all of the above, parents of today's youth, aware of the resources often required to succeed, seem increasingly willing to extend financial and other support to their children, well into their twenties and even into their early thirties.*

According to best estimates, American parents spend on their children an average of \$38,340 per child in total material assistance (cash, housing, educational expenses, food, etc.) over the 17-year period between ages 18 and 34. These resources help to subsidize the freedom that emerging adults enjoy, and allow them to take a good, long time before settling down into full adulthood, as culturally defined by the end of schooling, financial independence, and new family formation.

These four social transformations together have helped to dramatically alter the experience of American life between the ages of 18 and 30. Studies agree that the transition to adulthood today is more complex, disjointed, and confusing than it was in past decades. The steps to and through schooling, first real job, marriage, and parenthood are simply less well organized and coherent today than they were in generations past. At the same time, these years are marked by an historically unparalleled freedom to roam, experiment, learn (or not), move on, and try again.

How might we summarize the general situation? For most American youth, the period between high school graduation day and the eventual settling down with spouse, career, kids, and house offers them a very long stretch of time in which they have to figure out life. For many, it is marked by immense autonomy, freedom of choice, lack of obligations, and

focus on the self. It is also normally marked by high instability, experimentation, and uncertainty. For many, emotions run high and low, as hopes and exhilaration recurrently run up against confusion and frustration. It is not clear how much emerging adults rely in this life stage on the religious faith and beliefs with which they were raised. In any case, this socially structured and culturally defined phase of life seems itself to foster an intense concern with what is new, different, exciting, alternative, possible, and hopeful. Commitments that would curtail the exploration of options are often avoided. Ties to the social institutions of civil society, including church, are often weak.

Trend 8. The Rise of a Distinctive Post-Boomer Faith & Spirituality

What is emerging among Post-Boomer young adults, currently in their 20s through mid 40s, is a distinctive style of faith and spirituality. Robert Wuthnow analyzes social and cultural trends and identifies "religious tinkering" as a guiding image for understanding Post-Boomer faith and spirituality. Richard Flory and Donald Miller analyze four emerging forms—Innovators, Appropriators, Reclaimers, and Resisters—that exemplify the Post-Boomer spiritual quest, each a response to the challenges and opportunities they perceive to be represented in the larger cultural currents. From their analysis they identify a new form of spirituality, "expressive communalism," which blends Post-Boomers' desire and need for expressive/ experiential activities with a close-knit, physical community.

1. A Generation of Tinkerers

Source:

After the Baby Boomers: How Twenty- and Thirty-Somethings Are Shaping the Future of American Religion. Robert Wuthnow. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007.

The single word that best describes the Post-Boomer young adults' approach to religion and spirituality—indeed life—is tinkering. A tinkerer puts together a life from whatever skills, ideas, and resources that are

readily at hand. In a culture like ours, where higher education and professional training are valued, tinkering may have negative connotations. But it should not. Tinkerers are the most resourceful people in any era. If specialized skills are required, they have them. When they need help from experts, they seek it. But they do not rely on only one way of doing things. Their approach to life is practical. They get things done, and usually this happens by improvising, by piecing together an idea from here, a skill from there, and a contact from somewhere else.

The key to understanding the life of the bricoleur or tinkerer is uncertainty. The tinkerer's life is sufficiently uncertain that it is impossible to solve problems through predefined solutions. A tinkerer does not go to the store and look for exactly the right part that will fix his plow. Instead, he muses about the problem, talks with the neighbors to see if they have ever faced the same difficulty, goes out to the junk pile and finds an old piece of angle-iron and a tin can to cut up, and uses his skills as a craftsman to piece together a makeshift solution.

Our world is filled with the kinds of uncertainty that make tinkering a necessity. Prepackaging and standardization notwithstanding, we constantly face situations that require us to improvise. The path by which each individual seeks a life partner is different from the path anyone else has taken. Marriage counselors and online dating services may help, but the information processed and the decisions made will be unique. Within the same occupation or industry, no two career paths are alike. Making ends meet is less a matter of following some recipe for success and more one of juggling time and work demands, personal interests, and payments. Dealings with friends and family are also a matter of tinkering. Each person is shaped by the unique mix of people with whom he or she comes in contact and in turn makes an ongoing succession of choices about which people to associate with and how much to be influenced by them.

So it is with religion and spirituality. We piece together our thoughts about religion and our interests in spirituality from the materials at hand. Ordinary people are not religious professionals who approach spirituality the way an engineer might construct a building. They are amateurs who make do with what they can. Hardly anybody comes up with a truly innovative approach to life's enduring spiritual questions, but hardly anybody simply mimics the path someone else has taken either. Religion, we might suppose, is fundamentally a hedge against

uncertainty. It offers meaning, as Clifford Geertz has observed, where there was no meaning. Yet its meanings are seldom final. They depend on faith, and faith implies the possibility of new insights, surprises, and growth. A centuries-old creed may be a succinct statement of what a person of faith should believe. Making sense of the implications of that creed, though, is an act of tinkering.

Spiritual tinkering is a reflection of the pluralistic religious society in which we live, the freedom we permit ourselves in making choices about faith, and the necessity of making those choices in the face of uprootedness and change that most young adults experience. It involves piecing together ideas about spirituality from many sources, especially through conversations with one's friends. Spiritual tinkering involves a large minority of young adults in church shopping and church hopping. It also takes the form of searching for answers to the perennial existential questions in venues that go beyond religious traditions, and in expressing spiritual interests through music and art as well as through prayer and devotional reading.

Tinkering is evident among the large number of young adults who believe in God, life after death, and the divinity of Jesus, for instance, but who seldom attend religious services. Their beliefs lend continuity with the past—with the Bible stories they probably learned as children—and their behavior lets them adapt to the demands of the present. Spending a weekend with friends, buying groceries and doing the laundry, or getting ready for a hectic week at work takes precedence over spending yet another Sunday morning at worship. Tinkering is equally evident in the quest to update one's beliefs about spirituality. The core holds steady, persuading one that the Bible is still a valuable source of moral insight, for example, but the core is amended almost continuously through conversations with friends, reflections about unusual experiences on vacation or at work, or from a popular song.

2. Four Emerging Forms of the Post-Boomer Spiritual Quest: Innovators, Appropriators, Resisters, and Reclaimers

Source:

Finding Faith: The Spiritual Quest of the Post-Boomer Generation. Richard Flory and Donald E. Miller. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2008.

The more Flory and Miller studied the postmodern generation, the more they concluded its members are spiritual beings who seek aesthetically rich, experiential forms to give definition to their lives—and the more they sought to develop a typology for understanding their spiritual lives. They developed a typology of four emerging forms that exemplify the Post-Boomer spiritual quest, each a form of response to the challenges and opportunities they perceive to be represented in the larger cultural currents. The different forms, or types, that they describe present a more complex relationship between religious groups and their socio-cultural environment that they think is best expressed as a new typology of religious action.

Innovators

The first type, “Innovators,” are those who represent a constantly evolving, or *innovating*, approach to religious and spiritual beliefs and practices. Many of these are newer, less established groups that are affiliated with the “emerging church” movement, while others are established churches and ministries that are innovating within their own traditions. These groups, whether emerging or more established churches, organize their approach (in contrast to what they see as overly institutionalized and inwardly-focused approaches), so as to focus on building community within the religious group and to engage in various ways with the larger culture. These churches innovate by introducing various forms of ritual and symbol into their worship services and by introducing new forms of religious and community life that emphasize commitment and belonging, as well as service, within the religious congregation and to their host city.

Innovators demonstrate a desire for embracing the emerging postmodern culture, and within that context are engaging in a spiritual quest that by definition is one that must change and adapt—innovate—to meet the changing culture currents.

- Their worship is primarily visual and experiential.
- They are interested in situating themselves as individuals and their churches/ministries as serving their surrounding community. They are, in the words of some Innovators, more interested in “bringing the church to the community” than in bringing the community to the church.
- They are committed to smaller, more intimate religious communities rather than seeking to grow and develop into larger institutional structures; and they exhibit a realization that the communities they create may have their own life span, including when they may cease to exist.
- They work to create inventive uses of the history, traditions, and rituals of different Christian traditions, in some cases even going outside Christian traditions for a more physically and visually oriented practice. They are encouraging the development of ancient spiritual disciplines, such as silence and contemplation.

Appropriators

The second type, “Appropriators,” refers to those churches and ministries that seek to provide a compelling and “relevant” experience for participants, both those in the audience and for those who are performing in the service or event. In this, both churches and independent ministries seek to create these experiences through imitating, or *appropriating*, trends found in the larger culture and ultimately popularizing these through their networks into a particular form of pop-Christianity primarily oriented toward an individual spiritual experience.

Appropriators tend to be situated within the mega/seeker church ideology, whether actually part of a mega-church or not. In many ways, each of the other three types they propose are at least in part responding to the form of Christianity represented by the mega/seeker model—a bureaucratized and consumption-oriented, franchised form of Christian expression and belief. Thus the mega/seeker church is the primary source, although Appropriators are found beyond those particular locations, and include Christian musical groups, consumer-oriented enterprises sponsored by and at churches, as well as retail stores and para-church ministries. But it is the desire for relevance and producing a culturally acceptable product mirroring the trends in the larger

culture drives this form of religious response to culture.

Appropriators are savvy cultural observers, one might even say marketers, who are able to see what is appealing to current and potential Christian believers in both the larger culture and with the church, and then put their resources to work to appropriate these forms and development them into the different types of program/ministry/worship/consumption offerings they provide. This results in a multitude of programs oriented toward attracting seemingly any segment of the public. In one sense, these churches are truly postmodern organizations. Their identity is based on appropriating the experiences, consumption patterns, and the need for belonging, as found in both the large culture and in the Christian culture, and then marketing these back to their members, with the intent to provide a place for them to find individual fulfillment and shelter from life's difficulties.

Resisters

The third part of the typology is made up of "Resisters," referring to what are primarily Boomer-initiated efforts intended to appeal to Post-Boomers by focusing on the "recovery of reason" and thus resist postmodern culture within Christianity, hoping to reestablish the place of the written text and rational belief as the dominant source for Post-Boomer spirituality and practice. Resisters evidence interrelated patterns within their perspective that represents different fronts in their continual efforts to identity and resist the various incursions of the larger culture that threaten the integrity of what they understand as historic Christianity. Each of these should be understood as both defensive and offensive patterns of response to the perceived threats, intended to provide resources for believers to defend against bad or improper beliefs in one's personal life, as well as more broadly within the church, and as strategies to fight for a particular religious and ideological perspective in the larger culture.

- They emphasize an understanding of Christianity that prioritizes the cognitive as the essential element of Christianity, reducing it almost completely to being composed of what one thinks and believes, and emphasizing the unique rationality of Christianity and Christian belief.
- They oppose postmodernism because from their perspective it is irrational and illogical, it promotes relativism in beliefs and behavior, and lacks an established and appropriate

authority structure and place for any form of belief.

- They are intent on "reestablishing" a "Christian worldview" as the reigning/dominant perspective on governing American culture and society.

Reclaimers

The final type are the "Reclaimers," individuals who are all, in one way or another, seeking to renew their experiences of Christianity through the history, symbolism and practices of ancient forms of the faith, such as those still found in the liturgical traditions, particularly Episcopal, Orthodox and Catholic churches, thus reclaiming the ancient symbols, rituals and practices of these traditions for their own spiritual quest. These are converts, either from non-liturgical forms of Christianity or from nonexistent or lapsed faith commitments. In this, the particular attractiveness of these traditions are the symbols, rituals, practices and even smells of these churches, as well as the small congregational communities of believers they represent, the connection to a larger historical tradition within Christianity and the perceived authenticity these traditions provide.

Reclaimers evidence a quest that takes them on a journey to ancient Christian traditions in small, family-oriented congregations through which they pursue their desire for spiritual development.

- They are drawn to the visual and the ritualistic elements of the liturgical traditions such as the icons and the taking of Eucharist
- The ritualistic elements of the liturgical traditions require them to engage not only intellectually with the symbolism inherent in the rituals, but also physically in performing rituals (kneeling, standing, etc.).
- They articulate a desire to know and become a part of the larger/longer Christian history and tradition. They are now part of a long line of believers who have gone before and who have participated in the same traditions and rituals in which they are now participating.
- They show a desire for developing a strict spiritual regimen that includes spiritual mentorship and confessing of sins to the priest. There is in this a need to be accountable to another person.
- They demonstrate a desire for religious absolutes and set structures that dictate belief, roles, and behavior, including both theological

teachings and traditional structures that give them a sense of social and cultural order in what is an otherwise disordered and egalitarian world.

3. A New Post-Boomer Spirituality: “Expressive Communalism”

Source:

Finding Faith: The Spiritual Quest of the Post-Boomer Generation. Richard Flory and Donald E. Miller. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2008.

The emphasis on embodiment and community, whether using one’s body in worship or in living out, or embodying, Christian teachings, suggests that there are many who are seeking a new form of spirituality that goes beyond the individualistic questing that characterizes much of the sociological literature. The groups that Flory and Miller have been describing, whether embracing or resisting these trends, have shown that there is a new, or perhaps renewed, emphasis on an embodied worship and service, and a desire for seeking, creating, and committing to a particular faith community. It is in the context of these faith communities where one can be both personally fulfilled, and where one can serve others.

The dominant characteristic across the four types—Resisters notwithstanding—is a desire for a theologically grounded belief that makes sense cognitively combined with nonrational expressive tendencies—they want a faith that makes cognitive sense to them and that is also an expressive, embodied spiritual experience. Young Christians are searching for a more holistic faith than what a purely cognitive and rational approach can offer.

Although Post-Boomers certainly pursue individual religious and spiritual experiences, they have not neglected the various communities within which they are active. Rather, the dominant trend of the four types shows an intentional pursuit of artistic expressions of various sorts, seeking and forming communities, and engaging in different forms of community outreach and involvement. This is not to suggest that they have somehow removed themselves from the individualism that pervades American society, rather that their individual spiritual quest is mediated through the communities in which they are active and in which they seek membership and belonging.

Post-Boomers are seeking both a deep spiritual experience and a community experience, each of which provides them with meaning in their lives, and each of which is meaningless without the other.

We are witnessing the emergence of a new form of spirituality, what Flory and Miller are calling “Expressive Communalism.” Post-Boomers have embedded their lives in spiritual communities in which their desire and need for both expressive/experiential activities, whether through art, music, or service-oriented activities, and for a close-knit, physical community and communion with others are met. These young people are seeking out different forms of spirituality in response to the shortcomings they see as inherent in these other forms. They are seeking to develop a balance for individualism and rational asceticism through religious experience and spiritual meaning in an embodied faith.

Trend 9. Changing Patterns of Family Life in the United States

1. Delaying Marriage

(Source: *After the Baby Boomers*)

The average age of first marriage for men today is 27 years old and for women it is 25 years old. Among men in their early 20s, only 12% are married, and among women in their early twenties, only 22% are married. By their late twenties, 38% of men and 48% of women are married. These proportions increase to 56 and 63 percent, respectively, among men and women in their early thirties. They increase again to 65% and 66%, respectively, among men and women in their late thirties. At that point, the proportions have nearly reached their peak. They rise only to 67% and 68%, respectively, among men and women in their early forties.

Married couples in their twenties were a majority—i.e., were typical—of their peers in the 1970s, but were atypical in 2000. For people in their twenties, it has become the norm to remain unmarried. And for people in their thirties and early forties, the change means that a much more sizable minority (a third) are now single or divorced, whereas that proportion had been no more than a fifth of their age group in 1970. Because many other aspects of

young adult life are affected by marital status—including children and the timing of children, housing needs, jobs and economic demands, and relationships with parents and friends—the importance of this shift in marital patterns can hardly be overstated.

Religious practice is especially influenced by marrying, settling down, having children and raising them. Since individuals who marry are more likely to attend religious services regularly than those who delay marriage, the postponement of marriage and childbearing has contributed to the decline in church attendance.

2. Having Fewer Children and Later in Life

(Source: *After the Baby Boomers*)

With the increase in the average age of marriage, married couples are having fewer children and having them later. After World War II, families had 3.7 children. By the mid-1970s, the average number of births per woman had fallen to about 2, and it has remained at roughly that level since then. In 1976, only 10% of women ended their childbearing years with no children. By 2000, that proportion had risen to 19%. Over the same period, the proportion with four or more children declined from 36% to 11% in 2000.

Women are waiting longer to have children. As recently as 1959, the median age at which mothers gave birth to their first child was 21.6 years old. By 1999, the number had risen by at 3 years to 24.5 years old. Both for women age 35 to 39 and for women age 40 to 44, the birth rate has risen since the late 1970s (from about 20 births per 1,000 women to approximately 40 among the 35-39 age group, and from about 4 to 8 among the 40-44 age group). A century ago, women in these age groups might have raising teenagers while giving birth to their fourth or fifth child. Currently, it is more likely that they are giving birth to their first or second child.

3. Decreasing Number of Children in Two-Parent Households

(U.S. Census Bureau)

- In 1968, 85% of children were living with two parents. In 2006, 67% were living with two parents.

- In 1968, 12% of children were living with one parent. In 2006, 28% were living with one parent.
- In 1960 50% of all household in the U.S. included children under 18 years old. In 2005, 30% of all households included children under 18.

4. Increasing Number of Unmarried Couples Living Together

(U.S. Census Bureau)

- In 1960, less than ½ million heterosexual unmarried couples were living together.
- In 1980, it was over 1 million.
- In 2006, 5.4 million unmarried couples were living together—over a 500% increase since 1980.

5. Increasing Time Caring for Children: Changing Patterns of Family Time Use

Sources:

Changing Rhythms of Family Life. Suzanne Bianchi, John Robinson, and Melissa Milkie. New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 2006

“Changing Rhythms of Family Life” Presentation. Suzanne M. Bianchi. Department of Sociology and Maryland, Population Research Center University of Maryland (www.sprc.unsw.edu.au/Time%20Use%20and%20Gender%20Seminar/Bianchi.pdf)

Using time diary data from surveys of American parents over the last four decades, *Changing Rhythms of American Family Life* finds that—despite increased workloads outside of the home—mothers today spend at least as much time interacting with their children as mothers did decades ago—and perhaps even more. Unexpectedly, the research finds mothers’ time at work has not resulted in an overall decline in sleep or leisure time. Rather, mothers have made time for both work and family by sacrificing time spent doing housework and by increased “multitasking.” *Changing Rhythms of American Family Life* finds that the total workload (in and out of the home) for employed parents is high for both sexes, with employed mothers averaging five hours more per week than employed fathers and almost nineteen hours more per week than homemaker mothers. Comparing average workloads of fathers with all mothers—both those in the paid workforce and homemakers—the authors find that there is gender equality in total workloads,

as there has been since 1965. Overall, it appears that Americans have adapted to changing circumstances to ensure that they preserve their family time and provide adequately for their children.

Parents are busier than were in the past, yet the amount of time parents spend caring for their children has increased over the past 40 years:

- Fathers: 6.5 hours/week (153% increase)
- Married mothers: 12.9 hours/week (21% increase)
- Single mothers: 11.8 hours/week (57% increase)

Parents report high levels of enjoyment and affection for children—with high percentages reporting that they daily praise, laugh with, and show affection like hugging and kissing their children. Parents rate their enjoyment of the tasks of parenting on a scale of 1 to 10, virtually no parents rated any task below an 8 and the majority rated as a 10 tasks like taking care of children, playing with children, talking with children, even taking children places. Single mothers (lone mothers) tended to rate these activities most highly, followed by married mothers, with married fathers the least likely to rate activities a ‘10’ on enjoyment (though still more than 50 percent rated each activity a ‘10’).

Keeping Childcare Time High

Parents seem heavily invested in childrearing. At the same time, families have added more hours of market work to their weekly schedules. So how do they manage to keep investments of time in childrearing high? The U.S. diary suggests there is more multitasking of childrearing today than in the past. Parents have children with them during leisure activities, more so than in the past, for example. Reports of doing child care and nothing else were much more common in 1975 than today. For example, in 1975, the 49 percent of the time that a married mother reported doing childcare, that was all she reported doing. Today that is down to 27 percent of the comparable mother’s childcare time—a decline of 22 percentage points. In the U.S. data, the big increase is in the combination of childcare with a free time activity. Again, between 1975 and 2000, the percentage of childcare time done in conjunction with a free time activity increased from 22 percent to 43 percent of a married mother’s childcare time. Either children are increasingly included in adult leisure or discretionary activities or parents are reorienting their leisure towards activities that are more ‘child friendly’.

Reducing Other Activities

What gives way in the busy lives of today’s families to meet work and family demands? For married couples, we see a decline in the time reported being with a spouse—either with others present or alone with a spouse—between 1975 and 2000. Couple time may be being sacrificed to the demands of paid work and childrearing in the U.S. Relatively high levels of married parents—58 percent of married fathers and 66 percent of married mothers—report that they have “too little time” with their spouse.

One last indicator of time pressure is that employed mothers seem especially prone to “giving up” some of the activities that are perhaps most necessary for one’s sense of well-being. In two-parent families with employed mothers, both parents read less to children and have dinner together one less night per week. Not only do mothers do less housework in these households but mothers get a little less sleep and have significantly fewer hours of free time per week. Mothers in dual-earner households are also quite a bit more likely to report that they are always rushed and are multitasking most of the time. Interestingly, these subjective assessments of time pressure do not differ for fathers in sole breadwinner and dual-earner households, even though we might have expected fathers to feel more time pressed when their wives were employed. However, fathers’ own work hours are quite similar in these two types of households—most fathers work full time whether or not their wife is employed.

The time devoted to childcare and family activities has been taken from other family activities:

- Less time alone as married couple
- Less time on housework
- Less time spent sleeping and eating
- More time multitasking (The percentage who report they are “multitasking most of the time” is around 40% for fathers and around 70% for mothers.)
- Less time for civic and social activities

Feeling Pressure

Life has changed dramatically over the last four decades as more women entered and remained in the paid workforce during their childrearing years. Yet women did not abandon parenting, nor did they hand over their children to nannies and family day care centers for extremely long hours each day. Rather,

many of them worked part time outside the home. They made valiant attempts to add market hours and to still maintain a high level of involvement in children's lives. What went by the wayside was that which was easiest to drop, namely housework.

Neither is it clear that nothing has been lost when so many more parents report multi-tasking, and so many feel inadequate about the time they spend with family members and on themselves. From the subjective point of view of the parents themselves, their efforts to 'deepen' time, to do more in a given hour than before seems to be less than successful. It is perhaps not surprising there is so much attention in our society on "how to simplify" or "how to take back your life."

What is also not clear is how much of this is new and how much the fatigue and relentless pressure of parenting is a constant. Clearly there are technological developments that add to the sense of time pressure—paid work can interrupt family life and vice versa with great ease, given the availability of e-mail, cell phones, and the Internet, particularly among the middle class. There are also technological developments that may curtail the time needed for household tasks (microwave ovens being a case in point) yet also increase the likelihood of multitasking. The growth in services, readily available at all hours of the night and day, loosens the constraints on time but also may add to the pressure to do more per unit of one's time. Moreover, many workers who staff round the clock stores and businesses are parents struggling with their odd hours.

Why do parents feel such relentless pressure? To some extent it is inevitable. In addition to the cultural pressures surrounding involved fathering and intensive mothering, parenting and paid work are structurally incompatible to some degree. Both are demanding of full attention and thus often at odds—especially when children are young and need intensive supervision, get sick often, or have school holidays and summer vacations. The patterns of childhood do not mesh neatly with the demands of the workplace. Accommodations are made to deal with conflicts between children's needs and work schedules, but they are never perfect. Moreover, children's needs change constantly as they age. Family routines get established, only to shortly thereafter need to be re-established around a new set of schedules and constraints.

Yet rearing children remains one of the most meaningful and rewarding investments of time that most adults feel they make in life. Thus, as people

have fewer children, the commitment to their children intensifies. The stakes become very high, as the pressure to rear the 'perfect child' grows.

Trend 10. Rediscovering the Impact of Parents and Families on Faith Practice

1. Parental Influence

Source:

Soul Searching: The Religious and Spiritual Lives of American Teenagers Christian Smith with Melinda Lindquist Denton. New York: Oxford University Press, 2005. (National Study on Youth and Religion: www.youthandreligion.org)

Contrary to popular misguided cultural stereotypes and frequent parental misconceptions, *the evidence clearly shows that the single most important social influence on the religious and spiritual lives of adolescents is their parents*. Grandparents and other relatives, mentors, and youth workers can be very influential as well, but normally, parents are most important in forming their children's religious and spiritual lives. The best social predictor, although not a guarantee, of what the religious and spiritual lives of youth will look like is what the religious and spiritual lives of their parents *do* look like. Parents and other adults most likely "will get what they are." This recognition may be empowering to parents, or alarming, or both. But it is a fact worth taking seriously in any case.

Parents for whom religious faith is quite important are thus likely to be raising teenagers for whom faith is quite important, while parents whose faith is not important are likely to be raising teenagers for whom faith is also not important. The fit is not perfect. But the overall positive association is clear.

- Of parents who report that their faith is *extremely* important in their daily lives, 67 percent of their teens report that faith is extremely or very important in their daily lives; only 8 percent of those parents' teens report that faith is not very or not important in their lives.
- Of parents for whom faith is *somewhat important* in their daily lives, 61 percent of

their teens also report that faith is somewhat or not at all important in their daily lives; only 8 percent of those parents' teens report that faith is extremely important in their lives.

- Of parents for whom faith is *not at all important*, 47 percent of their teens also report that religious faith is not at all important or not very important in their lives; only 2 percent report that faith is extremely important in their lives.

In sum, therefore, we think that the best general rule of thumb is this: “*We’ll get what we are.*” By normal processes of socialization, and unless other significant forces intervene, more than what parents might say they *want* as religious outcomes of their children, most parents most likely will end up getting religiously of their children what they themselves *are*.

The best way to get most youth involved in and serious about their faith communities is to get their parents more involved in and serious about their faith communities. For decades in many religious traditions, the prevailing model of youth ministry has relied on pulling teens away from their parents. There is no doubt a time and place for unique teen settings and activities. Still, our findings suggest that overall youth ministry would probably best be pursued in a larger context of family ministry, that parents should be viewed as indispensable partners in the religious formation of youth. More broadly, one of the most important things that adults who are concerned about how teenagers’ religious and spiritual lives are going to turn out can do is to focus attention on strengthening their own and other adults’—especially parents’—religious and spiritual lives.

2. Embedded Family Religious Practices

Sources:

Growing Up Religious. Robert Wuthnow. Boston: Beacon Press, 1999

“Religious Upbringing: Does It Matter and, If So, What Matters?” Robert Wuthnow. Princeton Theological Seminary Presentation, 1996

“How Highly Religious Families Strive to Fulfill Sacred Purposes.” David Dollahite and Loren Marks. *Sourcebook on Family Theories and Methods*. Edited by V. Bengston, D. Klein, A. Acock, K. Allen, and P. Dilworth-Anderson. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2005

“The Strengths, Stresses, and Faith Practices of Congregational Families: A Research Report.” Diana R.

Garland and Pamela A. Yankeelov *Family Ministry*. Volume 15, No. 3, Fall 2001.

“Family Life of Baptists.” Diana R. Garland and Jo A. Edmonds. *Family and Community Ministries*. Volume 21.1, Summer 2007

Robert Wuthnow in *Growing Up Religious* found that effective religious socialization comes about through embedded practices; that is, through specific, deliberate religious activities that are firmly intertwined with the daily habits of family routines, of eating and sleeping, of having conversations, of adorning spaces in which people live, of celebrating the holidays, and of being part of a community. Compared with these practices, the formal teachings of religious leaders often pale in significance. Yet when such practices are present, formal teachings also become more important.

The prime source of faith for self-described “religious” people was the way faith permeated the daily life of their families. The daily household routine was marked by rituals of prayer, by conversations about God, and by sacred objects. Holidays provided special occasions for experiencing the warmth of family, friends, and fellow congregants. And going to services became the focal point of arduous preparations and one’s public identity with the assembly of God’s people. Common in-home family activities included:

- eating together, especially the power of Sunday meals and holidays
- praying: bedtime rituals and prayer, grace before meals, family Seder
- having family conversations
- displaying sacred objects and religious images, especially the Bible
- celebrating holidays
- providing moral instruction
- engaging in family devotions and reading the Bible

Spiritual practices were woven into the very fiber of people’s being; it was a total immersion. Being religious was a way of life. The daily round of family activities must somehow be brought into the presence of God. Parents praying, families eating together, conversations focusing on what is proper and improper, and sacred artifacts are all important ways in which family space is sacralized.

David Dollahite and Loren Marks have developed a research-based conceptual model that focuses on the processes at work in highly religious families as they strive to fulfill the sacred purposes suggested by their faith. Their model is based on an analysis of

research studies and on their own ongoing research with 60 highly religious Jewish, Christian, and Muslim families. They discovered eight processes that families engage in as they seek to fulfill their sacred purposes:

1. Turning to God for support, guidance and strength.
2. Sanctifying the family by living religion at home.
3. Resolving conflict with prayer, repentance, and forgiveness.
4. Serving others in the family and faith community.
5. Overcoming challenges and trials through shared faith.
6. Abstaining from proscribed activities and substances.
7. Sacrificing time, money, comfort, and convenience for religious reasons.
8. Nurturing spiritual growth through parental example, teaching, and discussion, and encouraging spiritual development by teaching religious values. Research shows that parent teaching, example, and dialogue about religious matters are important predictors of whether children come to endorse the faith of their parents, a major sacred objective for most highly religious parents.

Diana R. Garland and Pamela A. Yankeelov conducted a research study on the family life of active Protestant church attenders by surveying 1,977 people in 32 congregations in four denominations: National Baptists, Presbyterians (USA), Southern Baptists (SBC), and United Methodists. One part of the study examined faith practices, both individual and family. These church-attending families indicated that the worship and study experiences provided by the congregation and through private devotional lives are more central to their faith life than such experiences in the family. Nevertheless, three family activities ranked in the top seven as practices significant to the faith life of these respondents: “caring for nature with my family,” “daily routines and chores of family life,” and “caring with my family for persons in need.” These families appear to be saying that the daily activities of family life are the canvas for experiencing and sharing their faith life with one another, and that activities that call them as a family beyond their own boundaries are also significant—the care of nature and care of others in need.

Using the Church Census questionnaire, Diana R. Garland and Jo A. Edmonds surveyed 15 Baptist congregations with 3,393 attenders participating in

the surveys and identified several key findings about family practice.

- The four most common activities engaged in on a *daily* basis with family were: 1) eat (74%), 2) prayer (54%), 3) forgive others (42%), and 4) encourage others (41%).
- The four most common activities engaged in on a *weekly* basis for families were: 1) worship (78%), 2) give money to church or charity (48%), 3) observe the Sabbath (56%), 4) do chores (31%), and 5) talk and listen to one another about deepest thoughts (32%).
- The four activities that families are most likely *never* to do together are: 1) study Christian doctrine (48%), 2) share the Christian story (29%), 3) study the Bible (26%), and 4) confess sins (24%).

4. Shifts Congregations Make When Adopting a Family Perspective

Source:

“Family Perspectives.” J. Bradley Wigger. Resources for American Christianity. (<http://www.resourcingchristianity.org>)

Diana Garland and J. Bradley Wigger noticed the following shifts in congregations when home and family life were given more attention. Taken as a whole, they suggest something of a portrait of the directions congregations can look for when engaged in family ministries or adopting a family perspective in ministry.

1. **Religious formation and practice in homes.** Rather than relying solely upon congregational experiences (Sunday school, worship, youth groups) for religious education and formation, home life enters the imagination. Families themselves, particularly parents, are understood to be crucial to their own children’s religious formation, and preparing parents for this role becomes an important task for congregations. Homes become important places for practicing faith, integrating activities such as prayer, devotional reading, or sacred rituals into the patterns of everyday family life.
2. **Families and congregations caring together.** Congregations are well served by the strengths and vitality of families even

while they care for those who have been hurt by or are experiencing family crisis. A family perspective often intensifies awareness of family brokenness, and both congregations and their families have many resources to help address such challenges. In addition, such concern can heighten awareness of and care for those who do not fit neatly into the stereotypical understanding of families.

3. **Intergenerational concern.** A family perspective in a congregation often leads to a deeper appreciation for inter-generational activities in the life of the congregation. Traditional activities such as worship and education can be restructured so that adults and children alike can participate meaningfully. In a culture increasingly segregated by ages, stages, generations, or developmental tasks, congregational gatherings may be some of the few or only opportunities for the generations to be with and learn from one another.
4. **Time together.** Families themselves are struggling for more time together. This awareness invites congregations to reconsider their own patterns of governance and activity. Rather than equating ministry with programming, for example, a congregation may actually have less programming, or at least a different type of programming for the sake of families having more time together. Instead of adding more activities, congregational leadership can become attentive to the ways in which the entire life of the Church affects or involves families.
5. **Relationships.** Family concern can lead to an appreciation of the power of relationships generally. From families and friendships to places and attachments—all are valued more deeply and given theological significance, counterbalancing spiritualities that emphasize detachment and individual practice. Families and relationships are viewed as potentially generative sources of identity, maturity, wisdom, ethical formation, and the religious life in general.
6. **Community values.** Just as family relationships demand commitment, service, cooperation, tolerance, and stability to do well, such values are seen as crucial to society

also. A family perspective in ministry helps provides a check upon a general cultural emphasis upon choice, consumption, hyper-autonomy, and developmental segregation—all plaguing congregations as well.

7. **Larger vision.** As congregations pay attention to families, vision expands beyond the walls of the church. To attend to families has the effect of focusing concern upon such realms as households, neighborhoods, public life, and the culture itself. Rather than narrowing vision, attention to families can actually intensify concern for the larger societal context of families, especially as the society affects children and youth.

Trend 11. Living in a Digital World

1. Continuing Rise in Internet Usage

Source:

“Generations Online in 2009.” Pew Internet & American Life Project. January 2009. (www.pewinternet.org/Reports/2009/Generations-Online-in-2009.aspx)
 How Teens Use Media: A Nielsen Report on the Myths and Realities of Teen Media Trends.” The Nielsen Company. June 2009. (http://blog.nielsen.com/nielsenwire/reports/nielsen_howteensusemedia_june09.pdf)

Percentage of Americans Online by Age

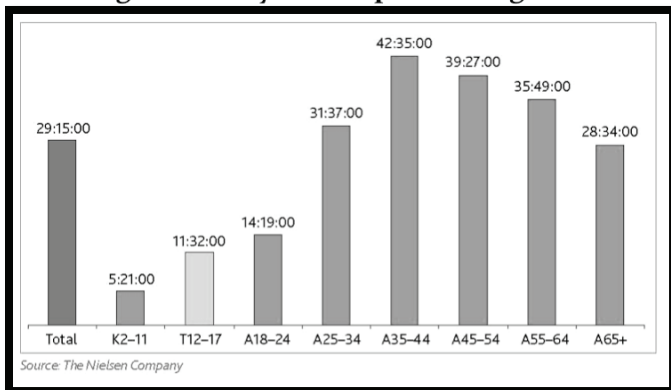
12-17: 93%	50-54: 78%
18-24: 89%	55-59: 71%
25-29: 85%	60-64: 72%
30-34: 87%	65-69: 56%
35-39: 80%	70-75: 45%
40-44: 83%	76+: 27%
45-49: 80%	

The biggest increase in internet usage since 2005 can be seen in the 70-75 year-old age group (from 26% to 45% of that age group). Much as we watch demographic and age groups move up in “degrees of access” on our “thermometers,” we can probably expect to see these bars become more level as time goes on. For now, though, young people dominate the online population.

Instant messaging, social networking, and blogging have gained ground as communications tools, but email remains the most popular online activity, particularly among older internet users. Fully 74% of internet users age 64 and older send and receive email, making email the most popular online activity for this age group. At the same time, email has lost some ground among teens; whereas 89% of teens claimed to use email in 2004, just 73% currently say they use email.

- Teens and Generation Y (internet users age 18-32) are the most likely groups to use the internet for entertainment and for communicating with friends and family (social networks).
- Older generations use the internet less for socializing and entertainment and more as a tool for research (information searches), emailing, banking and shopping.
- Video downloads, online travel reservations, and work-related research are now being done more equally across all generations under 73 years old.

Average Monthly Time Spent Using Internet



Many consider the teens of today to be the Internet generation: Born roughly between 1990 and 1996, today's teens grew up with a mouse in their hands. They are portrayed as Digital Natives, perpetually connected, guided by both the opportunities and constraints of worldwide connectivity. Indeed, some 90% of U.S. teens have access to the Internet at home and 73% have access on a school PC. Among teens with Internet access at home, 55% of teens with Internet say they have a wireless connection at home.

Even with this high degree of access and much-vaunted digital acumen, teens actually spend less time on computers and the Internet than others. The typical U.S. teenager spends 11 hours and 32 minutes a

month on the Web, less than half the U.S. average of 29 hours and 15 minutes per month. As with online video, this is due largely to the fact that teens are less likely than working adults to spend their day with broadband connections and have more time constraints in their day than we often imagine.

When you add in the time spent on applications that use the Internet, though, teen PC time spent increases. *Overall, U.S. teens averaged 24 hours and 54 minutes per month using the Internet and applications in March 2009.*

2. Increase in Wireless Internet Use

Source:

"Wireless Internet Use." Pew Internet & American Life Project. July 2009. (<http://pewinternet.org/Reports/2009/12-Wireless-Internet-Use.aspx>)

Accessing the internet is for many Americans now a multi-platform affair. Just a few years ago, desktop or laptop computers were typical onramps to the internet for the tech-oriented crowd. The digerati, already accustomed to lugging their laptops around in search of ports for their Ethernet cables, rushed to equip them with wireless cards so they could take advantage of WiFi links to the net.

Today, the wireless router at home is the center of an untethered online access experience for many Americans, revolving around a range of devices that connect to the internet. The laptop, gaming console, or handheld device may all be connected and in use at once. That's only the tip of the iceberg for wireless access. Wherever Americans can find a wireless network, whether it is WiFi or one provided by a cell phone carrier, many are apt to take advantage of it for a tweet, text, or information nugget.

Altogether, 56% of Americans said they have at some point used wireless means for online access.

- 39% of all Americans have used a laptop computer to go online wirelessly, making this the most prevalent means of wireless access.
- 32% of all Americans have gotten online with a mobile device – meaning they have used a cell phone or other handheld device to check email, access the internet for information, or send instant messages.

Together, laptop and mobile wireless access account for the vast majority of wireless access, as 51% of Americans have gotten online using either of these two methods. Some people (19% of Americans) opt for

both means of wireless access – portable laptops on fast WiFi networks or handheld access on slower networks from cell carriers.

Mobile Devices

Use of the internet on mobile devices has grown sharply from the end of 2007 to the beginning of 2009.

- In December 2007, 24% of Americans said they had at some point used the internet on their mobile device. By April 2009, 32% of Americans said they had at some point used the internet on their mobile device.
- In December 2007, 11% of Americans said they had yesterday accessed the internet on their mobile. By April 2009, 19% of Americans said they had yesterday accessed the internet on their mobile device.

African Americans are the most active users of the mobile internet—and their use of it is also growing the fastest. This means the digital divide between African Americans and white Americans diminishes when mobile use is taken into account.

- 48% of African Americans have at one time used their mobile device to access the internet for information, emailing, or instant-messaging, half again the national average of 32%.
- 29% of African Americans use the internet on their handheld on an average day, also about half again the national average of 19%.
- Compared with 2007, when 12% of African Americans used the internet on their mobile on the average day, use of the mobile internet is up by 141%.

The high level of activity among African Americans on mobile devices helps offset lower levels of access tools that have been traditional onramps to the internet, namely desktop computers, laptops, and home broadband connections.

Broader measures of use of mobile digital resources also show fast growth from the end of 2007 to the beginning of 2009. In 2007 and 2009, respondents were asked about ten different non-voice data activities they might do on their cell phones: sending or receiving text messages, taking a picture, playing a game, checking email, accessing the internet, recording video, instant messaging, playing music, getting maps or directions, or watching video. Although several activities involve using the internet

on the mobile device, many (such as taking a picture) do not.

- In 2009, 69% of all adult Americans said they had at some time done at least one of the ten activities versus 58% who said this in late 2007.
- In 2009, 44% of all adult Americans said they had done at least one of the non-voice data activities on the typical day, up from 32% in 2007.

Other access devices—iPods, game consoles, or e-books—for now play a small role in people’s wireless online habits.

When mobile users are away from home or the office, they like mobile access to stay in touch with others, but also to access information on the go.

- 50% say it is very important to them to have mobile access in order to stay in touch with other people.
- 46% say that mobile access is very important for getting online information on the go.
- 17% say mobile access is very important to them so they can share or post online content while away from home or work.

3. Increase in Social Networking

Source:

“Adults and Social Network Websites.” Pew Internet & American Life Project. January 2009.
(www.pewinternet.org/Reports/2009/Adults-and-Social-Network-Websites.aspx)

One third (35%) of American adult internet users have a profile on an online social network site, four times as many as three years ago, but still much lower than the 65% of online American teens who use social networks. Despite comparatively lower levels of social network use, usage of social network sites by adults has increased markedly over the past four years.

The share of adult internet users who have a profile on an online social network site has more than quadrupled in the past four years—from 8% in 2005 to 35% in December 2008. Adults still make up the bulk of the users of social networking websites. Adults make up a larger portion of the US population than teens, which is why the 35% number represents a larger number of users than the 65% of online teens who also use online social networks.

Young people are much more likely than older adults to use social networks.

- 75% of online adults 18-24 have a profile on a social network site
- 57% of online adults 25-34 have a profile on a social network
- 19% of online 45 to 54 year olds have a profile
- 10% of online 55 to 64 year olds have a profile
- 7% of online adults 65 and older have a profile

Overall, personal use of social networks seems to be more prevalent than professional use of networks, both in the orientation of the networks that adults choose to use as well as the reasons they give for using the applications.

- 50% of adult social network users have a profile on MySpace
- 22% have a profile on Facebook
- 6% have a profile on LinkedIn

Online social network applications are mainly used for explaining and maintaining personal networks, and most adults, like teens, are using them to connect with people they already know.

- 89% use their online profiles to keep up with friends
- 57% use their profile to make plans with friends
- 49% use them to make new friends
- Other uses: organize with others for an event, issue or cause; flirt with someone; promote themselves or their work; make new business contacts

4. Growing Up Online: Growth Rate of Children Online Outpaces Overall Internet Population

Source:

“Growing Up, and Growing Fast: Kids 2-11 Spending More Time Online.” Nielsen Online Research. May 2009. (http://blog.nielsen.com/nielsenwire/online_mobile/growing-up-and-growing-fast-kids-2-11-spending-more-time-online/)

Children aged 2-11 comprised nearly 16 million, or 9.5 percent, of the active online universe according to Nielsen Online. Since 2004, the number of kids online has increased 18 percent, as compared to 10 percent for the total active universe, with a fairly even split between boys and girls. The growth of children online outpaces the overall growth of children in the U.S., where kids under 14 are projected to decrease by 1 percent from 2004 to 2010 (according to the U.S. Census Bureau, from 7/04 - 7/10 projection).

- Time spent online among children aged 2-11 increased 63 percent in the last five years, from nearly 7 hours in May 2004 to more than 11 hours online in May 2009.
- Time spent among kids outpaced the increase for the overall population, which grew 36 percent in the last five years.
- Boys spent 7 percent more time online than girls; while girls viewed 9 percent more Web pages than boys did in May 2009.

5. Growing Embrace of Technology by Churches

Source:

American Congregations at the Beginning of the 21st Century: The National Congregations Study 2008. Mark Chaves, Shawna Anderson, and Jason Byasse (www.soc.duke.edu/natcong)

One tremendous change in congregational life in the last decade has been the widespread adoption of computer technology. This is no great surprise, but we must ask what it means for faith communities when they embrace technology so wholeheartedly.

The use of visual projection equipment more than doubled in the last decade.

- In 1998, 15% of people attended congregations that used visual projection equipment; by 2006-07, that number rose to 32%.
- Only 12% of congregations used visual projection equipment in 1998; that number also doubled by 2006-07, reaching 27%.

Website development more than doubled in the last decade, while the use of email almost tripled.

- Fewer than half of all congregations, 44%, have a website, but 74% of all attendees are in those congregations. In 1998, those numbers were only 17% and 29%, respectively.
- In 2006-07, 59% of congregations used email to communicate with regular participants, but 79% of attendees were in those congregations. In 1998, those numbers were only 21% and 31%, respectively.

These figures imply that in each year since 1998, some 10,000 congregations created a website. Nothing else increased so dramatically.

Congregations from across the social and religious spectrum embrace these technologies, but at different rates. Synagogues and more liberal Protestant congregations lead the way in using email and

starting websites, while African American Protestant congregations lag behind. There is a digital divide even within the religious world.

New technologies also make new congregational forms possible. The multi-site congregation is one example; here congregations gather to listen to or watch a sermon given from a different location. These other sites have their own local community life—a worship service, announcements, baptisms, some music—but the sermon arrives digitally. Are groups connected in this way a single congregation or multiple congregations? What is gained and lost in this arrangement?

These trends suggest implications for many aspects of congregational life. How do congregations manage and pay for new technologies? How does it affect where people decide to attend? How do congregations decide what to emphasize about themselves on their websites? Since websites make congregations more visible to each other, will clergy and other congregational leaders monitor and influence each other more than before? Will there be even faster and more widespread mimicking of successful congregations? Will congregations find creative uses for social networking websites like Facebook and MySpace? Will they conduct Bible studies online? Provide pastoral care? Maintain friendships? Already some people claim to be members of virtual congregations. They claim to use new technology the way early Protestants used the printing press—the message remains the same only the medium has changed. Will congregations' use of email create or exacerbate digital divides, since some members still do not have access to email? How will these members stay in the loop when congregations turn to electronic forms of communication?

Congregations will continue to adopt new technologies. These numbers will climb higher in the coming years, probably reaching the saturation point before too long. And new technologies always produce unintended social effects. This was true of innovations like the printing press and the telephone long before it was true of the microchip. Some worried that written texts would have deleterious consequences for memory and oral debate. The printing press made Bibles available to the average person, but it also made books less valuable as objects. The important questions about congregations' use of computer technologies are not why they do it or whether the trend will continue. The important questions concern the consequences for congregations.

Will technology make congregations more efficient and innovative, or will it impose new costs without providing clear benefits? Will there be qualitative change in how congregations operate in ways that we do not yet anticipate? Will digital divides be created or exacerbated across and within congregations? These are the things to watch in the coming years.

Trend 12. Educating in New Ways

Sources:

Powerful Learning: What We Know About Teaching for Understanding. Linda Darling-Hammond. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2008.

Website for educational innovation: www.edutopia.org.

Living and Learning with New Media: Summary of Findings from the Digital Youth Project. Mizuko Ito, Heather Horst, Matteo Bittanti, danah boyd, Becky Herr-Stephenson, Patricia G. Lange, C.J. Pascoe, and Laura Robinson. November 2008. The John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation Reports on Digital Media and Learning. (<http://digitalyouth.ischool.berkeley.edu/files/report/digitalyouth-WhitePaper.pdf>)

The dramatic changes in our culture and new research into learning are changing our understanding of how we learn. What kinds of education and teaching are likely to help people engage in the meaningful learning that will allow them to manage the fast-changing, knowledge-based society of the twenty-first century? Here are seven key ideas influencing education today, and that will most likely strengthen in the coming decade.

1. Applying Howard Gardner's research on the eight **multiple intelligences** to education and providing a greater variety of ways to learn: verbal-linguistic (word smart, book smart), logical-mathematical (number smart, logic smart), visual-spatial (art smart, picture smart), bodily-kinesthetic (body smart, movement smart), musical-rhythmic (music smart, sound smart), naturalist (nature smart, environment smart), interpersonal (people smart, group smart), and intrapersonal (self smart, introspection smart).
2. Applying research on **learning styles** to education by incorporating a diversity of learning

activities and methods in a learning experience, recognizing that some people learn best through direct, hands-on, concrete experiences, some through reflective observation, some through an exploration and analysis of knowledge, theories, and concepts, and others through active experimentation with the new knowledge and practices.

3. Engaging in **active, in-depth learning** through well-designed projects, problems, and design tasks that focus learner inquiry around central questions in the disciplines and engage learners in *doing* the work of writers, scientists, mathematicians, musicians, sculptors, and critics.
4. Incorporating **project-based learning** which involves completing complex tasks that typically result in a realistic product, event, or presentation. Project-based learning is 1) organized around driving questions that lead the learners to encounter central concepts or principles of a discipline; 2) focused on a constructive investigation that involves inquiry and knowledge building; 3) learner-driven, in that the learners are responsible for making choices and for designing and managing their work; 4) authentic, by posing problems that occur in the real world and that people care about.
5. Having learners engage in **collaborative learning**—working in small, non-competitive groups—where they can discuss and process together what they are learning, work together on projects and activities, and practice and present what they are learning. Learning spaces are organized for learners’ participation in a “learning community”—recognizing that learning takes place in a social context and relies on communication and interaction with others.
6. Engaging learners in **practicing** and **performing** what they are learning by incorporating real life application activities into the learning experience. Practice is a part of the learning process, not the result of it.
7. Developing **visual literacy** in all learners: learning to “read” or interpret visual images and learning how to use visual images to communicate. The need to learn visual literacy arises because images were relatively rare until recently. The rise of electricity made movies, television, and the digital era possible. Visual literacy includes: 1) interpreting, understanding,

and appreciating the meaning of visual images, 2) communicating more effectively by applying the basic principles and concepts of visual design, 3) producing visual images using computers and other technologies, and 4) using visual thinking to conceptualize solutions to problems.

8. Utilizing **digital media** to exploit the potential of the learning opportunities available through online resources and networks. Children are born digital—born into a media-rich, networked world of infinite possibilities. Digital media promotes engagement, self-directed learning, creativity, and empowerment by using the Internet, computers, cell phones, and many other digital tools to learn and communicate in ways that were not possible in previous generations. Today’s children smoothly and seamlessly dive into new Web 2.0 communication technologies. With a flick of the cell phone, they share more texts, photos, music, and video than any other demographic group on Earth. Just think about the variety of new sites and tools that have become common in just the last five years: YouTube, MySpace, Facebook, and the iPod among them.

Digital media allows learners to be active creators and producers who use a wide range of digital tools to express themselves, interpret the world around them, and deepen their understanding of academic content. Their products include original music, animation, video, stories, graphics, presentations, and Web sites. They can become actively engaged in their learning processes rather than passive recipients of knowledge passed down from adults. They can actively collaborate in many new ways in the digital, virtual world, an environment parallel to the traditional one of face-to-face interaction. And as they collaborate in a hyperconnected world, young people are becoming very fluent in online communication, the use of digital media, posting, linking, forwarding, remixing media. This is just what they pick up being a participant in peer culture. Given their fluency with digital tools, today’s youth become teachers for younger and older generations. They maintain content-rich Web sites, share favorite resources, lead online workshops and classes, and develop multimedia products designed to share their knowledge with others. This teaching role enables young people to gain confidence and reinforce their own learning, because the best way to learn something is to teach it.

Trend 13. Increasing Number of Adults 65 and Older

Source:

“Growing Old in America: Expectations vs. Reality.” June 29, 2009. Pew Research Center.

(<http://pewresearch.org/pubs/1269/aging-survey-expectations-versus-reality>)

Encore: *Finding Work that Matters in the Second Half of Life*. Marc Freedman. New York: Public Affairs, 2007. (www.encore.org)

Civic Ventures Website: *Helping Society Achieve the Greatest Return on Experience* (www.civicventures.org)

In the United States today Americans over 65 now outnumber teenagers by nearly two to one. What used to be referred to as the “graying of America” is now understood to be a social revolution. In the past century, the number of people in the U.S. under the age of 65 has tripled; however, the number of people over age 65 has increased by more than a factor of 12. Nearly every industry in society, from health care to entertainment, is scrambling to respond to this age wave that is crashing on our shores.

The Pew Research Center reports that older adults account for record shares of the populations of the United States. Some 39 million Americans, or 13% of the U.S. population, are ages 65 and older—up from 4% in 1900. The century-long expansion in the share of the population that is 65 and older is the product of dramatic advances in medical science and public health as well as steep declines in fertility rates. In this country, the increase has leveled off since 1990, but it will start rising again when the first wave of the nation’s 76 million baby boomers turn 65 in 2011. By 2050, according to Pew Research projections, about one-in-five Americans will be over age 65, and about 5% will be ages 85 and older, up from 2% now.

Benefits of Old Age. When asked about a wide range of potential benefits of old age, seven-in-ten respondents ages 65 and older say they are enjoying more time with their family. About two-thirds cite more time for hobbies, more financial security and not having to work. About six-in-ten say they get more respect and feel less stress than when they were younger. Just over half cite more time to travel and to do volunteer work. By far the best thing about getting older, according to older adults, is being able to spend more time with family members. In response to an open-ended question, 28% of those ages 65 and older

say that what they value most about being older is the chance to spend more time with family, and an additional 25% say that above all, they value time with their grandchildren. A distant third on this list is having more financial security, which was cited by 14% of older adults as what they value most about getting older.

Daily Activities of Older Americans. Among all adults ages 65 and older, nine-in-ten talk with family or friends every day. About eight-in-ten read a book, newspaper or magazine; three-quarters watch more than a hour of television; about the same share prays daily. Less than half spend time on a hobby. Roughly one-in-four use the internet.

Retirement. Retirement is a place without clear borders. Fully 83% of adults ages 65 and older describe themselves as retired, but the word means different things to different people. Just three-quarters of adults (76%) 65 and older fit the classic stereotype of the retiree who has completely left the working world behind. An additional 8% say they are retired but are working part time, while 2% say they are retired but working full time and 3% say they are retired but looking for work. The remaining 11% of the 65-and-older population describe themselves as still in the labor force, though not all of them have jobs. One trend is crystal clear from government data : After falling steadily for decades, the labor force participation rate of older adults began to trend back upward about 10 years ago. In the Pew Research survey, the average retiree is 75 years old and retired at age 62.

Religion. Two-thirds of adults ages 65 and older say religion is very important to them, compared with just over half of those ages 30 to 49 and just 44% of those ages 18 to 29. Moreover, among adults ages 65 and above, a third (34%) say religion has grown more important to them over the course of their lives, while just 4% say it has become less important and the majority (60%) say it has stayed the same. Among those who are over 65 and report having an illness or feeling sad, the share who say that religion has become more important to them rises to 43%.

A Demographic Revolution, A New Stage of Life

America is in the midst of a demographic revolution, but this revolution is about much more than longevity. It’s about the changing perspective of the baby boomers as they reach what was traditionally

viewed as a time to enjoy the golden years. It's about Americans who have already retired, but are still seeking purpose and productivity. We are witnessing the emergence of a new stage of life between adult midlife—typically focused on career and child-rearing—and old age, traditionally marked by increasing frailty and decline. This new stage of life spans several decades and is characterized by generally good health, relative financial stability, and an active, engaged lifestyle.

With the oldest baby boomers about turning 60, tens of millions of Americans will soon enter this stage of life. But because awareness of this stage is new and its contours largely unknown, there is a lot of uncertainty about how to prepare for and get the most out of it. We lack vocabulary to describe this new stage, and few institutions serve this population. There are few role models to provide encouragement. In her book *My Time: Making the Most of the Rest of Your Life*, author Abigail Trafford sums up the problem: “A whole new stage in the life cycle—a period of personal renaissance inserted somewhere after middle age, but before old age— [is emerging]. No longer an isolated experience for a hardy few, this Indian Summer phase of life is becoming a global

phenomenon. But what are people to do with these bonus decades?”

From research and discussions with adults 55 and older, Civic Ventures has identified four major needs and desires among older Americans that cut across all income categories, educational levels, and races or ethnicities. People are seeking:

- Opportunities to explore options for the next stage of life.
- Opportunities to retool skills, obtain new training, or pursue educational interests.
- Flexible work or service opportunities that use their skills and experience in meaningful ways.
- Opportunities to make meaningful connections with others their own age and throughout the community.

Civic Ventures believes that this changing notion of aging in America offers the prospect of an “experience dividend” of staggering proportions. In other words, the growing, knowledgeable older population can offer a tremendous return to our society. Never before have so many Americans had so much experience—with so much time and interest in using it.

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