Adult Faith Formation

Cover Art: "Rivers of Living Water" by Michael O'Neill McGrath, OSFS
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About the Artist: Brother Mickey O'Neill McGrath, OSFS is an artist, writer, and speaker who loves to explore the relationship between art and faith. Mickey's books include *Women of Mercy* (with Kathy Coffey) published by Orbis Press; *Blessed Art Thou* and *At the Name of Jesus* (both with Richard Fragomeni) published by World Library Publications; and *Jesus A to Z*, a book for children. His newest book is *This Little Light: Lessons in Living from Sister Thea Bowman* (Orbis Books). His web site is: www.beestill.org.

LifelongFaith Associates

Adult Faith Formation

Lifelong Faith

From the Editor

Welcome to the Fall 2009 issue of *Lifelong Faith* with the theme of "Adult Faith Formation." This issue blends research, theory, and pastoral/educational practice to help you and your church enhance and expand your adult faith formation efforts.

The lead article in this issue, "Ecumenical Study of Lifelong Faith Formation," by **Joan Weber** of the Center for Ministry Development (www.cmdnet.org), reports on the results of the Center's lifelong faith formation study funded by the Louisville Institute. The study, conducted in mainline Christian, Orthodox, and Catholic congregations, was designed to discover effective practices, new insights and key challenges in lifelong faith formation across denominations. Joan's article reports the key findings of the study and emerging findings for the future of lifelong faith formation.

"Reading the Future of Adult Learning: Seven Hopeful Predictions" by **Richard J. Rothwell**, professor of Workforce Education and Development at Penn State, presents seven predictions for the future of adult learning. Included among his predictions are an increasing focus on informal learning and incidental learning, increasing interest in the special needs of older adult learners, more sensitivity to diversity among trainers and adult educators, continued impact of technology on learning experiences, more attention on learning how to learn, and more focus on the context in which learning occurs and how context affects learning.

"Drink for the Thirsty: Planning for Adult Faith Formation" by **Pam Coster** presents a guide for developing faith formation that seeks to enliven the whole culture of the church. She writes "Vibrant churches provide activities, resources and a mission-driven culture which help adults more fully understand and live their faith. Helping adults grow spiritually, giving them opportunities for renewal, faith sharing and learning is not only essential for the health of a faith community, it is a work of mercy – giving *living waters* to those thirsting for God."

In "Faith Formation for Every Adult in Your Church—It's Possible Today!" I offer four principles and a process for developing an "Adult Faith Formation Learning Resource System" as a way to provide faith formation for every adult in a church. I believe every church can addresses the wide diversity of interests, religious and spiritual needs, and life tasks and situations of today's adults by utilizing the life of the church community; the variety of excellent print, audio, and visual resources; the variety of learning models; and the new digital and online technologies.

Consider purchasing multiple copies of this issue for your Adult Faith Formation Team. Go to www.LifelongFaith.com to order your copies.

I hope you find this issue enriching and helpful!

John Roberto
Editor

Special Research Report:
Ecumenical Study of Lifelong Faith Formation

Joan Weber

I n the early Christian community, people of all ages came together to learn about their faith, and did so throughout their lives. Twenty centuries later, congregations are re-discovering the power and potential of having the whole community learn and grow in faith understanding and practice. What is the experience of these communities? What factors contribute to effectiveness? What helps and what hinders the learning process?

Seeking the answers to these questions carries a special urgency in the twenty-first century. Many parishes and congregations offer little or no faith formation for adults. Some only focus on children. But the most vibrant faith communities realize that faith formation is a lifelong task, not something which ends with the reception of a particular sacrament or graduation from grade school or high school. They understand that conversion is a journey more than it is a moment. As more and more congregations embrace lifelong faith formation, the need to identify and share effective practices from congregations which already offer rich faith experiences and learning for all ages becomes increasingly important.

To explore lifelong faith formation in mainline Christian, Orthodox, and Catholic congregations, the Center for Ministry Development received a grant from the Louisville Institute. *The Ecumenical Study of Lifelong Faith Formation* project was designed to discover effective practices, new insights and key challenges in lifelong faith formation across denominations. To research these goals, the research team utilized a qualitative research method. In their book, *Beginning Qualitative Research*, the consultants for this project, Pam Maykut and Richard Morehouse, describe qualitative research as a "research model that is primarily exploratory and descriptive, and for which people's words and actions are the main sources of data."

Joan Weber is project coordinator of young adult ministry services and project coordinator for the Institute in Lifelong Faith Formation at the Center for Ministry Development. She is co-author and editor of *Young Adult Works* (CMD) and co-author of two intergenerational programs: *Celebrating Sacraments* and *Responding in Prayer* (Harcourt Religion Publishers). She holds a Master's Degree in Pastoral Ministry from Creighton University and teaches courses in youth ministry, young adult ministry and lifelong faith formation. Joan served as Project Coordinator for the "Ecumenical Study of Lifelong Faith Formation" funded by a grant from the Louisville Institute.

To accomplish the aims of the project, the research was focused upon faith formation across the lifespan in Christian congregations and parishes. The three goals of the project were to:

1. Understand more about the experiences and needs of congregations which are implementing specific efforts aimed at forming faith across the lifespan in order to identify the common elements of effective Christian education.
2. Learn about what congregations are doing to provide Christian education in the intergenerational or whole community setting, the age-specific setting, and the family setting.
3. Review effective models for lifelong faith formation which are being implemented in parishes and congregations.

To listen to lifelong practices in congregations and parishes, the research team conducted fifteen online surveys, three conference calls with national or regional leaders in lifelong faith formation, and five on-site interviews. Within each site, we interviewed the congregation's pastor and key leaders in faith formation. Denominations represented in the study included Evangelical Covenant, Greek Orthodox, Lutheran (ELCA), Non-Denominational Christian, Presbyterian, Roman Catholic, United Church of Christ, and United Methodist.

Key Findings

The following findings were strongly identified by all three groups in the study: 1) national and regional leaders in lifelong faith formation; 2) church practitioners; and 3) pastors and church staffs. The first seven, the Primary Findings, were specifically named in the key findings for each group. The last three were key findings which emerged from our conference calls with the national and regional leaders and with the pastoral staffs during our on-site interviews. Although they were not identified as key findings in the online survey of congregational practitioners, we included them as Secondary Findings because of the significant number of examples of each which were shared in the surveys.

Primary Findings

1. A shared, compelling vision for lifelong faith formation is essential for long-term effectiveness and sustainability.

The churches that "get it" are finding that they and their people are being transformed by the vision of lifelong faith formation. (national leader)

Without a shared belief that this is necessary and good, and a commitment to stick it out, we never would have lasted these five years. (congregational leader)

Participants in the project echoed over and over how vital it is for congregations to have a vision for lifelong faith formation. It is the "big picture," as one person stated. The religious education goals must be defined and always up front—in the minds of leaders as they plan faith formation, in the hearts of the people in the pew as they experience it. And the goals must be lofty enough—nothing short of discipleship in Jesus Christ—to capture the spiritual imaginations of the learners. When the vision grabs the people, amazing results follow. One leader shared that a key to success is when people are excited about the formation program in the congregation and keep asking, "What's our next topic?"

Participants also noted the importance of the vision being shared and then owned—by the pastor, the staff, the volunteer leaders, and the people in the pews. Without a vision for faith formation which is owned by all, the long-term outlook is weakened. Then, if things get tough, people are likely to give up or go on to the next fad on the faith formation scene. So it is vital, as one local congregational leader put it, that *"Lifelong learning is an integral part of the life of the parish… not peripheral."*

Communicating the vision to everyone is particularly critical in congregations seeking to evolve from limited faith formation (e.g., just for children or for children and adolescents) to a vision which says that faith formation is lifelong—and consequently for all ages. And the communication needs to be frequent. One national leader put it this way: *"It's going to have to be preached. The ones who are coming to church are going to have to hear it over and over. Not hit-you-over-the-head frontal assault, necessarily. But the value of lifelong formation is going to have to be imbued somehow over time in the preaching and other ways that they experience it at Sunday Mass."*

Many of the people interviewed talked about having everyone—from the pastor to the janitor—understanding and embracing the faith community's vision. Leaders also addressed the importance of helping people understand that conversion itself is a lifelong process. Not only must the vision be communicated well, but it must also permeate all of the congregation or parish. As a local Church leader reported, *"It goes throughout the generations and so it quickly became the language and focus of the whole church and not just one area of ministry or specific to one age group."*

Participants noted that part of the vision is bringing people out of their old way of thinking of "religious education" or "catechesis" or "Sunday school" alone to embracing a philosophy of education which says learning happens everywhere—not just in the classroom. Leaders recognize how vital it is for their members to see God's presence and providence in everyday life. Effective faith formation helps them make those connections. But leaders were quick to add that the faith formation efforts of the congregation must be *intentional*, particularly in today's world where Church competes with so many other activities in people's lives.

One other key to holding up and sustaining a vision shared by leaders was the role of Christian practices in living out the vision for faith formation. The practices are seen as the place where the "rubber hits the road," where the vision becomes tangible and real. Leaders stated that Christian practices help connect faith with life. They bridge the gap that religious education alone could not. Helping people of today become skilled in the traditional practices of our faith (e.g., examen, lectio divina, hospitality) puts them in touch with their faith in new and vibrant ways. The more we form and inform our people in the practices of Christianity, the more the vision becomes a living, breathing reality in their lives. As one national leader put it, *"How do we shift the mindset so that it* (ongoing faith formation) *does become a way of life? Practices point us toward a way of life that has integrity and that people, I think, are yearning for."*

2. Having the right leadership in place is critical to developing and sustaining lifelong faith formation in a faith community.

I would say it has to be absolutely something that the pastor of the parish is sold on. He understands that a parish is, in addition to being a worshipping community, a community of concern, et cetera, that it needs to be a learning community. Some are more active than others, some have the gifts and talents to actually lead things, and others just allow it to happen in their midst because they are in a sense believers in the reality that we're all learning and growing together, and that's critical. (national leader)

You're just seeing people come forward who are feeling called by God to share in different ministries. (congregational leader)

Different factors entered into leaders' descriptions of the right leadership, but there was consensus on the importance of having the "right people on the bus." Among the key ingredients which participants described were seeking a diversity of ages and gifts and seeking passionate, committed people (who were in it for the long haul) to be on the leadership team. One pastor spoke of seeking out those who had gifts which she didn't possess in order to fully minister to her congregation. Other leaders spoke of the critical role of the pastor. Having him or her on board was seen as vital to the implementation and success of lifelong faith formation.

Another key leadership element which emerged from the data was the importance of training and nurturing leaders, both paid and volunteer. One participant called it "investing" in leadership.

Helping people discover their gifts was essential to effective faith formation efforts. Offering gifts discernment tools to parishioners who might not see themselves as leaders turned out to be a win-win for the congregation (getting more talent involved in faith formation) and the individual.

3. Community is essential to effective lifelong faith formation.

God does the forming and the community creates the space, a space conducive to God's forming. It's God through community but we shape the community. (national leader)

The more a sense of community and unity can be instilled, the more "time" people seem to find for faith issues. (local congregational leader)

Leaders were fairly united in saying that an experience of community was necessary to faith formation. One participant described quality faith

formation as *being relational*. As one leader described it, faith formation is about people's relationship with God, with each other, and with creation.

It was fascinating to hear leaders remark that experiencing community leads people *into* a desire for more faith formation, and being committed to community emerges *from* good faith formation. When members feel connected, they are more likely to participate in faith formation programs and activities. And one of the special benefits of intergenerational faith formation is that it has created relationships across the ages which probably would not have happened in other ways.

Some of the leaders addressed the importance of community for groups who may not have been part of traditional faith formation programs in the past. Young adults were a group most often identified as needing the communal aspect of faith formation to get them to come—and to stay!

4. There is a strong connection between a congregation's faith formation and its worship.

As the heart of our community life, worship should never be overlooked as the primary vehicle of faith formation. (congregational leader)

What many young people are seeking out of the church is an authentic experience of worship. (national leader)

Liturgical catechesis is not a new concept, but the participants in our study were very excited about the link between liturgy and faith formation. They spoke of how much people learn about their identity as Christian disciples in *good* worship. There was a recognition that liturgy brings us to the source of our identity as followers of Jesus Christ—in both breaking open the Word and in sharing in the Bread of Life (Eucharist).

Leaders described how liturgy also brings learners of all ages together. It is interesting to note that some congregations are just beginning to bring children into Sunday worship experiences to embody the lifelong process of conversion and faith formation.

We were inspired by a congregation which has homebound parishioners proclaim one of the Sunday readings via Skype or a video so that they feel part of the community and the community understands and sees its connection to them.

5. Congregations are discovering that intergenerational faith formation— bringing all age groups together to learn about their faith—is an effective way to accomplish the goals of lifelong faith formation.

Intergenerational faith formation is valuable not just because of what happens to the kids, but what happens to the adults. They really have a sense that "We are all one church." One of our high school kids said, "You know, it's not like we're just kids and adults here. We're all one group; we're all doing this." Because you're all out of your element,... So you're kind of all put on the same level. (national leader)

The faith formation...what it means to me is seeing the different ages coming together, learning from each other, and having these opportunities to interact, especially in a society where we seem so segmented and children never see grandparents anymore, and knowing that there's so much to learn from each other, and also so that older adults know that they have so much to learn from children. (congregational leader)

There was a strong sense among leaders who do intergenerational faith formation that bringing all ages together works. People truly can learn from each other—adults from children, youth from young adults, children from elders, et al. For some denominations, this was a challenge because their history was one of focusing on childhood and adolescent faith formation. They had to "woo" adults into coming. But participants agreed that seniors and adults of all ages benefit from intergenerational faith formation.

Bringing all ages together to learn more about their faith has the benefit of helping the whole congregation see itself as a community of learners. As one local congregational leader put it, *"We are becoming a learning community and that is really coloring how our whole parish functions."*

Intergenerational faith formation also provides an opportunity for families to learn side-by-side about their faith. When families are given the chance to experience faith formation together in the congregation, they seem more likely to continue that learning at home.

Some Lutheran and Catholic congregations identified intergenerational sessions as the central

part of their faith formation endeavors. Others talked about weaving intergenerational opportunities into traditionally age-based programs. One example of that is Vacation Bible School. One congregation involves middle and high school students in working with the children, and engages adults in the experience as well.

6. Congregations seek to offer faith formation opportunities for young adults.

There has to be some careful thinking about how to not only retain young adults in communities of faith but in fact how to really nourish them, how to nurture them and form them in faith. (national leader)

We offer programs aimed towards introducing faith practices to young adults (e.g., a discernment group given to help young adults make vocational, relationship or other big decisions, a "faith in action" group that involves young adults in service projects, an upcoming Lenten group about fasting, a young parents group for parents of infants and toddlers, and a financial planning/stewardship group for young adults). (congregational leader)

Of all the conclusions from the Study, this one was perhaps most surprising. Young adults are often the most neglected part of the congregation's age groups. Yet in all three major groups of the Study, faith formation for young couples and singles emerged as crucial.

Words like "intentional" and "diverse" in methodology and setting were used to describe effective faith formation for young adults. The majority of those who spoke about young adult faith formation agreed that it is only effective when it connects faith with their everyday lives.

Theology on Tap, a faith formation process which was developed by the Catholic Archdiocese of Chicago, was mentioned by more than one denomination as a particularly effective method of reaching young adults. Other key practices include inviting young adults into leadership. One faith community has young adults on the Elder Board, and the young adults are called "under-elders." Another congregation offered a series on Benedictine spirituality. For the application, young adults wrote their own rule of life and explored hospitality in the church.

A very appropriate and effective practice we heard was offering young adults a short-term series on contemporary issues. The young adults receive a five-minute article/chapter to read when they arrive, and the rest of the time is spent discussing the content.

Service and mission trips were also mentioned as great strategies for the formation of young adults.

7. The role of the home church is critical to lifelong faith formation.

I believe we need to make building the "foundations of faith" in the first decade of life the top priority of faith formation, and this will mean an emphasis on the whole family (and parents). The only way to address this is to engage parents and children together in learning—at church and at home. (national leader)

Faith is a partnership between the ministry of the church and the ministry of the home and if the home is church it really becomes foundational for everything we do. (congregation leader)

The vital role of parents in the faith formation of their children was noted by many of the leaders we interviewed. They spoke of balancing the need to challenge parents as the first faith formators of their children with the need to promise those same parents that the church is there to help them do it. They described two particular ways they supported the domestic church: 1) programs in the congregation in which parents and children learn together; and 2) resources for families to continue their learning at home.

An effective practice, which was offered by several congregations, is having parents and children learn together in intergenerational faith formation so that they get used to the interaction and hopefully continue the learning at home. Including a home kit in the intergenerational session extends the learning from the gathered session in the home. One leader commented that the power of intergenerational learning lies in the fact that all members of the family—parents, teens, children—learn the same subject at the same time.

The work of Lutheran churches in offering families resources for faith formation around the milestone moments in family life was noted across denominations as an effective faith formation tool. The *Stepping Stones* program was particularly praised (Faith Inkubators, www.faithink.com).

One leader shared the practice of offering materials for families on the parish website. Another spoke of the importance of giving families something to take home so they remember to do the faith formation exercise. Encouraging families to create a home altar or prayer space was a successful practice for many.

Secondary Findings

1. Breaking open the Word of God in Scripture is an essential part of lifelong faith formation.

...the stories from our Scripture and our church tradition don't remain disconnected from our day-to-day lives. A fertile Biblical imagination can help people see, "Oh, this was a loaves and fishes kind of moment. We came to a potluck and people didn't think they had enough, and lo and behold, somehow we had more than enough food." And name it as a loaves and fishes kind of moment. Or to know a Good Samaritan story in context and not just by the way it's often thought.
(national leader)

Right now, they [elders] are described as being the last Biblically literate generation in our country. So in this congregation, we have a strong commitment to helping all of our generations become Biblically literate.
(congregational leader)

Leaders noted the opportunity for using the Sunday Gospel as a launching point for lifelong faith formation. They also shared some of the best practices, such as a program which engages children in staying with one Scripture passage in-depth for a longer period of time rather than covering many passages but not going in-depth on any of them. The "Question of the Week" which connects the Sunday Gospel to the everyday lives of parishioners was another practice described by different leaders.

One leader spoke about the effectiveness of asking young people, *"How does your world today lead you to these old stories?"* rather than starting with the stories themselves. Another leader talked about studying Scripture topically (e.g., covering selected passages relating to justice) instead of reading a whole book. Developing a 'fertile Biblical imagination" in people by helping them make connections between Scripture and their ordinary lives was also highlighted.

2. Service and mission provide profound opportunities for conversion and ongoing faith formation.

For this formation to really happen in a potent way, people need to get the sense that we are a community both congregating and being sent, and that that is a regular rhythm of the Church: being drawn together and also being sent out into the world, and that the mission is part of God's own sending mission that's consistent with God's character throughout history, so that all the time the Church is being sent. Mission trips are not some kind of exceptional thing in that regard.
(national leader)

...my experience has been that as we do our numerous trips that the whole congregation feels a part of it, too...as they learn and hear the stories and see the photos and the powerful testimonies of faith in another country... (congregational leader)

Participants were very passionate about the effect of service and mission trips on those who experienced them. Different leaders spoke of conversion, generations learning from each other, and a deepening sense of the Gospel call to justice and service from their members participating in mission. And it wasn't limited to any particular age group. One person shared that taking youth on what had always been an adult international service trip changed everyone so profoundly that she concluded she would never do a trip without young people again.

A pastor shared the effectiveness and power of a "Mountain Top" trip which gives participants a God-experience. He added that members of the faith community who go on these trips are invited to share their experience with the whole congregation through photos, testimonies, etc.

Involving families in service was a very positive experience for congregations which provided the opportunity.

Congregations noted the importance of the prepare-engage-reflect process in involving their members in mission trips and service projects. Effective experiences include: intense time for reflection and learning; building relationships with other participants and with the victims of injustice they are serving; opportunities for worship during the experience; studying issues in the context of real life; experiencing an intergenerational program; having the whole congregation involved when they hear the

stories, see the pictures, and are inspired by the testimonies.

3. Adult faith formation requires variety and respect for each individual's learning needs.

…(T)here is a continuing conversation of conversion that goes on throughout one's life. It completely turns on its head the idea that there is a single shining moment in time when a person is transformed.
(national leader)

All of our adults are invited and encouraged to be part of a small group. (congregational leader)

Participants described the importance of offering a variety of methods for engaging adults in faith formation. And several leaders noted that they offer different programs for different age groups within adulthood. One congregational leader talked about needs-based senior formation. Others addressed the needs of young adults in contrast to middle-aged and senior adults.

Many of the adult faith formation opportunities revolve around Biblical studies. One congregation holds adult forums, which are a blend of information and formation. The leaders try to include experiential, spiritual discipline-based learning experiences around current topics. *Theology Uncorked* is a faith formation program for those who are 40 and older. One congregation chose to bring in speakers in the weeks leading up to the presidential election to help congregation members get the tools they needed to vote from a faith perspective.

Other effective practices for adults include: adult forum topics conducted as a series (rather than a string of disparate topics); small groups to which all are invited; weekly series devoted to topics like faith practices, church history and theological topics; Bible study which includes active listening and pushing people beyond what they think they are "supposed" to believe into stating how things really look to them; weaving in the arts and contemporary events to show that great teachings aren't dead ideas but always present truths waiting to be re-learned; and a weekly midday book group. One strategy came from a pastor who invites anyone interested to join him in studying and discussing the upcoming Sunday Scripture readings. A diocesan-wide program for adults, the Bishop's Annual Cathedral Series on Catechesis,

brings in national speakers several times a year to engage adults in learning more about their faith.

Leaders addressed the need to provide a trusting atmosphere in order for faith sharing to take place, especially with adults who aren't used to sharing with others. We heard phrases like "explore" and "not afraid to ask questions" and "vulnerability" and "no pressure to speak." All of these were seen as contributing to that safe place in which people can do the "collective grappling and collective groping" for the work which God has planned for them. A very effective practice which surfaced is having leaders who themselves model vulnerability and authenticity, sharing their own struggles and letting the community know that it is just fine to come as they are in all the messiness of their lives today.

Emerging or Innovative Findings for the Future

There were other findings which we found interesting or exciting. Although they didn't make the "top ten" list, they had a profound impact on the congregations which shared them.

One of these was the use of drama, art and music in faith formation. We found that congregations which recognize that engaging the total person—not just the mind—helped their people develop greater intimacy with God.

An old practice which emerged as a "new" practice was storytelling. We heard many congregations describe the power of having their members share their own personal stories and encounters with Jesus Christ—across generations and within small faith-sharing groups. We also heard the effectiveness of storytelling as a method in intergenerational settings. With children, storytelling around Scripture was described as particularly effective (e.g., *Godly Play* and *Catechesis of the Good Shepherd*).

The use of technology, while not widespread, was really effective for those congregations which have utilized it. Leaders spoke of distance learning opportunities, using DVDs and podcasts, engaging people through chat rooms, Facebook, and other interactive experiences on the Internet. But they were quick to point out the importance of combining technology and presence. One congregation has created online learning accompanied by small group sharing. Another community, recognizing that they are both a community gathered and a community

scattered, attempts to utilize technology to invite young adults into the faith community.

An effective practice we heard several times was involving the entire community in sacramental preparation. In one congregation, when a baby is being baptized, all the children of the community are asked if they will play with the baby and teach him or her stories of Jesus as he grows up. There was a genuine sense of everyone taking responsibility for new members. Other leaders talked about children celebrating the Sacrament of Reconciliation with their parents or within the context of an all-parish reconciliation service so the children would see all ages experiencing the sacrament. Confirmation sponsors and mentors were also identified, as were Confirmation preparation programs which involve the whole family.

Independent learning opportunities, while not widespread, have been very effective for congregations which have implemented them in creative ways. *Expanding Horizons* is the name of a dynamic independent learning program which a Minnesota parish has created. It is a series of learning centers which are open for nine days, including two weekends. Members of the parish can come anytime between 9 am and 9 pm to explore the current topic. There is also a room for younger children. Learning centers are varied—from listening to a CD composed by young adults in one center to participating in the Stations of the Cross at another center.

Many congregations do retreats as part of their faith formation plan. Some of the more innovative practices we heard included retreats for parents and children together; an annual fall retreat for adults; and ministry-based retreats, which include an adult onsite retreat.

One exciting insight we gained from the Study was the importance of engaging people's imaginations in faith formation. Congregations spoke of getting their members to imagine what God is doing in the world, to notice where God is, and to imagine where God is going. This led to deep conversations about both personal and communal faith—and to actions to build God's kingdom on earth.

We also heard many leaders speak of the need for being intentional about inviting people to faith formation. The best practice for getting parishioners to attend faith formation sessions is personal invitation. Other practices include advertising the session and communicating what it involves numerous times and in numerous places (bulletin, website, photo displays in gathering area of the

church, etc.). Leaders also spoke about continuing to invite beyond the initial outreach, and always looking for those who don't traditionally come, such as young adults, and sharing the benefits of coming for their particular age group.

Congregations which make good use of their space and resources invite people in. One powerful practice which surfaced in an on-site interview was the way a congregation makes plant and building decisions based on how well they will serve lifelong learning and worship. The campus has become a tool for learning for all ages, and for all ages to interact with each other. As an example, the day school is centered in such a way that children see and interact with adults who come for Bible study or to use the library. The whole campus shows the intentionality of the congregation's belief in lifelong learning.

Conclusions

At the conclusion of the study, we felt there were many reasons for rejoicing. While embracing lifelong faith formation requires much more time and labor than focusing on just one particular group within the community, the rewards are worth it! Leaders in congregations which embrace lifelong learning have created a space in which members of the faith community develop and deepen a living relationship with God in Jesus Christ and with the Holy Spirit. They see discipleship as ongoing, and firmly believe that it happens in community.

We learned that congregations which are moving from limited faith formation to lifelong are wise to take the time to get the whole community on board before launching their new endeavors. It takes a whole community to make the vision a reality. Moving too quickly can create insurmountable resistance because people tend to have an innate resistance to change. Creating a compelling vision and then sharing that vision across all age groups is vital to success and sustainability.

We learned that one of the biggest challenges to lifelong faith formation is the busy lives which people lead in the twenty-first century. Congregations are competing against numerous other things which occupy people's time and thoughts. The more faith formation efforts are intentional, the better chance congregations have of the formation taking root in their members.

Leaders yearn to awaken people's hunger for further knowledge of their faith with intentional

efforts. The best way to do that is to always make the connection between what is being learned and the everyday lives of those who are learning.

Appendix: Research Method

The Center for Ministry Development chose a qualitative research methodology to do its study of lifelong faith formation in congregations. Qualitative research is a methodology which involves profound listening, treasuring each unit of information received, organizing these units into groups, and letting the insights emerge from the synthesizing of common themes and ideas.

We chose this method over quantitative research because we wanted the richness of face-to-face interviews and dialogue, the opportunity to let the discoveries come directly from the words and experiences of practitioners, and the use of a genuine team approach in identifying our findings.

The staff for the Study of Lifelong Faith Formation included:

- Tom East, Director of the Center for Ministry Development, who acted as our qualitative research consultant and analysis leader
- Leif Kehrwald, Project Coordinator for Lifelong Faith Formation at CMD, who was an interviewer and analysis team member
- Mariette Martineau, Project Coordinator for Lifelong Faith Formation at CMD, who was an interviewer and analysis team member
- Joan Weber, Project Coordinator for Lifelong Faith Formation at CMD, who served as coordinator of the study, interviewer, and analysis team member

Major Steps of the Study

The Center for Ministry Development Lifelong Faith Formation Team created the instruments for surveying the field. Our objective was to mine as much information as possible to fulfill the goals of the Study. We used open-ended questions as much as possible to provide church leaders the opportunity to share what they believed to be the most important insights about lifelong faith formation as they experienced it.

We contacted national and regional leaders in faith formation across Christian denominations, asking them to participate in one of three conference calls. These calls, which were conducted in the spring of 2008, provided the team with insights about the vision and practice of lifelong faith formation in congregations and parishes. Each of the calls was recorded and transcribed.

The conference call questions included:
1. What does "lifelong" faith formation mean to you?
2. Name three best practices which you have seen practiced in lifelong faith formation across the country. Be as specific as possible. These can be big (a whole curriculum) or small (a great take-home strategy).
3. What do you believe to be the necessary "ingredients" for success in lifelong faith formation? In other words, what needs to be true for effective lifelong faith formation to happen in a faith community?
4. What is the biggest challenge you see parishes/congregations facing in implementing lifelong faith formation? Why?
5. What insights have you gained from supporting faith communities in implementing *lifelong* faith formation?
6. What are the most effective practices you are seeing in religious education for each of the following age groups?
   - Seniors/Retired
   - Adults
   - Young adults (18-39)
   - Youth (14-18)
   - Middle schoolers
   - Children
7. What intergenerational faith formation experiences are you training parishes/congregations to do?
8. What are you doing to promote family faith formation?
   - In the parish/congregation?
   - In the home?
9. Have you seen any ecumenical faith formation being done by congregations and parishes in partnership with each other? If so, what are you seeing?

Concurrently, we sent an email request to 20 leaders/representatives of Christian denominations across the country, asking them to recommend congregations doing effective faith formation. We conducted an email survey in late spring of 2008 of the recommended congregations, inviting them to share their vision, best practices, and struggles in implementing lifelong faith formation. We received

responses from 15 congregations and parishes to questions similar to the conference call questions.

Following the email survey, we chose five congregations which emerged as exemplary practitioners of lifelong faith formation and made on-site visits to them in the fall of 2008. The sites were geographically diverse, including one in each of the following states: California, Minnesota, Illinois, Tennessee, and North Carolina. We interviewed the pastoral staff and members of the faith formation team(s). The interviews were conducted by the research team and ranged from 90 to 120 minutes in length. Each interview was tape-recorded.

The interview questions included:

1. What does "lifelong" faith formation mean to you?
2. What are the practices you are doing in lifelong faith formation which are most life-giving and innovative? Be as specific as possible. These can be big (a whole curriculum) or small (one take-home idea).
3. What would you say are the necessary "ingredients" for success in lifelong faith formation? In other words, what do you think has to be true for effective lifelong faith formation to happen in a faith community?
4. What is the biggest challenge you have faced in implementing lifelong faith formation? Why?
5. What insights have you gained from pursuing lifelong faith formation in your parish or congregation?
6. What changes have you seen in your congregation/parish as a result of your faith formation efforts?
7. What are you doing in religious education and faith growth for each of the following age groups?
    • Seniors
    • Adults
    • Young adults
    • Youth
    • Middle schoolers
    • Children
    • Pre-schoolers
8. Are you providing any intergenerational faith formation experiences? If so, what are they?
9. What are you doing to promote family faith formation?
    • In the parish or congregation
    • Through home resources

10. Are you doing any ecumenical faith formation with other congregations? If so, what are you doing?

The transcribed materials and the email surveys were divided into four groups. The staff unitized the findings, taking every new idea or discovery, "cutting it out," and pasting it on its own index card with a hand-written note from the team member as to its salient theme. Each card was also coded to track whether it came from a survey, a conference call, or an on-site interview.

In December of 2008, the team met in Portland for a two-day analysis of the research. We analyzed the data from the national and regional leaders and the data from the surveys and the on-site interviews of local congregations and parishes. Our purpose was to 1) explore each unit of data, 2) match the data on each index card with others reflecting the same theme, and 3) create findings when there were enough cards on the same theme to warrant it.

The transcriber created a report of the raw data for each individual finding which included all of the direct quotes from the index cards. The report was analyzed and the key findings were compared from the three groups to determine overall findings which emerged from all three sets of data. One or two-paragraph summaries were developed for each key finding.

Anyone interested in reading the entire transcript for a particular finding can get it by contacting joanweber@cmdnet.org.

Reading the Future of Adult Learning: Seven Hopeful Predictions

Richard J. Rothwell

Numerous studies have been done about the future. It seems that every day someone comes out with the latest crystal ball reading. Consider reviewing ASTD's annual *State of the Industry Report*, the *State of the Industry* published each year by *Training Magazine*, and the general predictions for the future found on websites of organizations like the World Future Society (www.wfs.org). This article will focus on seven predictions for the future of adult learning:

1. There will be more focus on informal learning and incidental learning as means of building competencies.
2. There will be more appreciation for feelings, values, ethics, and cultural awareness among future learners and among future learning professionals.
3. There will be increasing interest in the special needs of older adult learners—those beyond traditional retirement age, who may remain in the workforce in the United States and in other nations.
4. There will be more sensitivity to diversity among trainers and adult educators, and diversity will be more broadly defined than race or gender.
5. Technology will continue unabated in its impact on learning experiences, and more emerging technologies will surface in the future that will affect the means by which people learn and the means by which learning professionals will reach their learners.
6. More attention will focus on building learning competencies in learning how to learn.
7. More attention will focus on the context in which learning occurs and how context affects learning

Richard J. Rothwell, Ph.D is a Professor of Workforce Education and Development Program in the College of Education at the University Park Campus of The Pennsylvania State University. In that capacity he oversees a graduate program in Human Resource Development and Employee Training, teaches graduate courses on the full range of performance technology issues, directs research projects, and consults with organizations in business, industry, government, and nonprofit sectors. He is the author of *Adult Learning Basics* (ASTD Press, 2008) and *The Action Learning Guidebook* (Jossey-Bass/Pfeiffer, 1999)

Prediction 1: More Focus on Informal and Incidental Learning

Organizational decision makers and workers alike are becoming more familiar with alternatives to traditional, classroom-based, and even online or electronically mediated instruction. Most people are beginning to realize that most development occurs on the job and in real time, not in classrooms and off the job.

Informal learning occurs through experience. It can occur at work, at home, and in other settings. People simply learn through all of their experiences. Informal learning occurs outside educational institutions, is not guided by a plan for instruction or learning, and is seamlessly woven into the experience of living.

Incidental learning is a consequence or byproduct of experience. By setting out to do one thing, individuals learn other things along the way through hands-on experience, observation, and talking or interacting with others. Even failures and mistakes provide lessons of incidental learning.

While neither informal nor incidental learning lend themselves to being easily planning or managed—after all, their unplanned nature is what makes them what they are—they are nevertheless attracting attention as a repository of what many people have actually learned in their lives. They can be enhanced. They can be catalogued. They can also be cross-matched with experience and with competencies.

Prediction 2: More Appreciation for Feelings, Values, Ethics, and Cultural Awareness

There is more to learning—and more to work performance—than simply "knowing" (cognition). Traditional schooling, however, has emphasized knowledge acquisition and retention. And yet the human experience of learning is more complex. Its full complexity should be appreciated, and other elements of the experience beyond knowledge should be considered.

For this reason, the future will hold growing interest in feelings, values, ethics, and cultural awareness. For some people, that is not comfortable territory. Should adult educators and trainers get into feelings? What about ethic considerations—and how

can they be made clear amid so many shades of gray? How can cultural awareness be taught and learned? These and other questions will garner increasing interest as emotional intelligence gains acceptance, organizational leaders struggle with handling scandals stemming from values and ethical issues, and globalization brings cultural awareness increasingly to the fore.

Prediction 3: Increasing Interest in the Special Needs of Older Adult Learners

In 2006, the oldest Baby Boomers turned 60 years old. At this writing, a Boomer turns 50 every seven seconds. The future of Boomers on adult learning should not be minimized. When Boomers progressed through schools, they transformed them, prompting new building—and new techniques. When Boomers entered higher education, they prompted nations to build up their universities. As Boomers entered the workforce, they transformed it. And now, as Boomers prepare for retirement, they are likely to revolutionize thinking about what retirement means. Many Boomers will not be able to afford traditional retirement—sailing off into the sunset for the rest of their lives. They may not have the pensions (or social security) to afford it, and they may not be able to afford the double-digit health care increases that have characterized the U.S. economy in recent years. Consequently, many Boomers may end up delaying retirement, and others may choose to work simply to stay active and involved in life.

But one thing is clear: When roughly 78 million people of the U.S. workforce are at or beyond retirement age, both government and employers will pay attention to the special needs of older people.

Right now, stereotypes about the elderly do not match up to what research shows. The stereotype is that "you can't teach an old dog new tricks." But research indicates that older workers, though participating less often in traditional education than members of many other categories, possess no real difference in learning ability. While it has been shown that they may take longer to learn new things than younger people, this may not reflect inability so much as extra caution. Additionally, older people do face the diminution of their senses—touch, taste, smell, sight and hearing.

More attention in the future will undoubtedly focus on learning among older adults. Is there anything special about them? If so, what is it?

Prediction 4: Increasing Sensitivity to Diversity Among Trainers and Adult Educators

Diversity means more than differences of race or gender. Generation Y is the most diverse generation, and the sheer numbers in that group will gradually build awareness of the full range of diversity. One way to think about it is that diversity means accepting, celebrating, and appreciating people regardless of age, race, gender, socioeconomic status, ethnic background, physical or mental ability, sexual orientation, religion, language, citizenship status, or veteran status. Diversity includes also appreciation for other value systems as well, permitting people to dissent from what they truly do not believe in.

Adult educators and trainers will face growing interest in showing appreciation for a broad mix of people from varied backgrounds and across many cultures. With the growing use of online instruction, people will also increasingly communicate globally. This will prompt growing interest in how national culture affects participation in online or other electronically mediated instruction.

Prediction 5: Technology's Impact on Learning Will Continue Unabated

Adult educators and trainers associated with the business community continue to be enamored with instructional technology and its impact on learning. While approaches to teaching have remained largely unchanged in many educational institutions, technology has advanced rapidly. In 1970, few people could conceive of technology as it exists today. If present trends in the growth of computing power and cost continue, it is conceivable that artificially intelligent robots will be on the market—and have the thinking power to rival a human being—by 2020. Groups like the World Future Society have even predicted that human beings may have chips surgically implanted in their heads—giving them wireless Internet access at all times—within a decade. While these predictions seem hard to believe, consider that common use of the personal computer has only been around since the mid-1980s. That is a short time indeed in the scheme of things. It is like that, in the future, adult educators will increasingly find that they can offer learning experiences across a broad range of channels, using new and emerging media, and that many learners will find such high-tech approaches appealing.

Prediction 6: More Attention Will Focus on Building Learning Competencies in Learning How to Learn

The decided trend in the field of adult learning is to reduce the teacher or trainer's burden in training and dramatically increase the learner's burden to assume initiative in the learning process. This trend will continue—and will intensify. One reason for that is the technologically-assisted learning places more responsibility on the learner. Another reason is that it is consistent with the personal improvement philosophy that has emerged in recent years. Individuals are taking more responsibility for nutrition, their exercise, their "carbon footprints," and their careers. It just makes sense that they would also be expected to take more responsibility for how they learn and for improving how they learn.

The problem is that individuals are still not given effective instruction on how to learn. Most people learn how to study and how to learn as part of an incidental learning process—that is, as a byproduct of their other learning experiences. Few have instruction on how to improve their study skills and how to take initiative for their own learning projects.
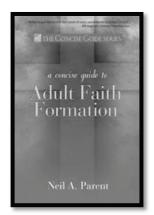
Prediction 7: More Attention Will Focus on the Context in Which Learning Occurs

As business continues to go global, more attention will be paid to how national culture, organizational culture, and even team work affects learning. How are individuals influenced by the context in which they live and work? As business leaders pursue the promise of learning organizations and seek to build cultures that encourage organizational learning, the role of context will only grow in importance. A future goal will be to establish corporate cultures in which people feel encouraged to learn on their own to solve work-related problems in real time.
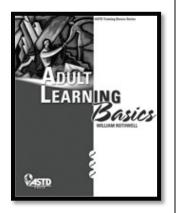
A Concise Guide to Adult Faith Formation
Neil Parent (Notre Dame, IN: Ave Maria Press, 2009) [$15.95]

In *A Concise Guide to Adult Faith Formation* Neil Parent articulates his view that learning about the faith in adulthood is not merely an extension of basic childhood religious education, but is rather a continuous, lifelong process. Chapters include: The Adult as Christian Disciple and Lifelong Learner, The Pari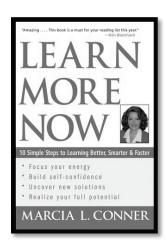sh as Context for Adult Faith Formation, The Adult as Faith Learner, Attending to the Voice of God as Teacher, Supporting the Independent Learner, and Turning Vision into Reality.

Adult Learning Basics
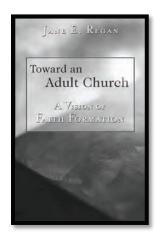William J. Rothwell (Alexandra, VA: ASTD Press, 2008) [$29.95]

Adult Learning Basics examines the principles of adult learning theory and how they relate to the training function—addressing individual learning competencies, organizational learning climate, and technology-related issues as they affect the adult learning process. Learn the seven kinds of adult intelligence and the most effective ways to address them. Chapters include: Understanding and Applying Adult Learning Theory, Using Theory to Design More Effective Training, Leveraging Adult Learner Differences, Managing Cultural Differences in Learners, Making Learning Environment a Key to Success, Putting Technology to Work for Learners, Using Proven Facilitation Techniques to Drive Learning, and Reading the Future of Adult Learning.

Learn More Now: 10 Steps to Learning Better, Smarter, & Faster
Marcia L. Conner (Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley, 2004.) [$14.95]
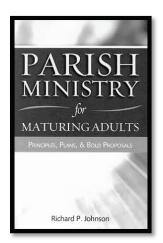
We're all born with a vast capacity to explore and learn. Unfortunately, many of us never discover what we're truly capable of. What if you could reclaim your birthright and tap into your full potential for learning? Imagine how much you could accomplish—how much you could become. In *Learn More Now*, Marcia Conner distills her renowned learning solutions into an easy-to-use ten-step program that will help you: 1) learn better, smarter, and faster; 2) identify your learning style and your motivation style; 3) synthesize your experiences, perspectives, thoughts, and actions; 4) develop new pathways in your brain to increase your opportunities; 5) absorb facts on the fly and overcome information overload; and 6) optimize your environment for concentrating and learning.

Toward an Adult Church: A Vision of Faith Formation
Jane E. Regan (Chicago: Loyola Press, 2002) [$15.95]
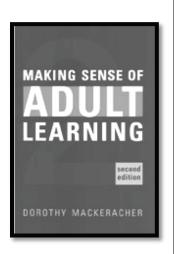
Jane Regan explores the current structure of parish faith formation. Basing her ideas on contemporary theory and traditional practice, Regan sets forth an intriguing argument: the vitality of the Church depends on establishing a new educational paradigm—one that is focused on adults. How can parishes design a framework for adult faith formation? Will such programs be accepted by local church communities? Where does children's faith formation fit into the new structure? Regan answers these questions and offers ideas for developing a balanced approach to faith formation—one that addresses the ongoing faith life of adults. Chapters include: Toward an Adult Church, The Adult as Person of Faith, Transformative Learning, Forming a Learning Community, Adult Formation: From Vision to Presumptions to Structures, and Leadership for Change.

Parish Ministry for Maturing Adults: Principles, Plans, & Bold Proposals
Richard P. Johnson (New London, CT: Twenty-Third Publications, 2007) [$12.95]
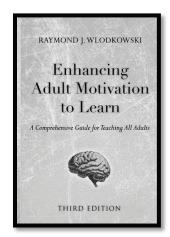
Richard Johnson wants churches to become more active, more assertive, and more focused on the fundamentals of ministering to those in their maturing years. This includes a greater appreciation that this time of life has immense spiritual purpose when people draw closer both to God and their true selves. He calls for a new vision of ministry with maturing adults that moves beyond social activities to a new model of spiritual growth and personal development. Maturing adults need the nurturance of the church's care and compassion; the understanding of their real needs as they are now; the necessary help in discerning the call of God today; encouragement to continue their spiritual pilgrimage; and direction to reach out to others in new ways.

Making Sense of Adult Learning (Second Edition)
Dorothy Mackeracher (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2004) [$35.95]

One of the finest books on adult learning available, *Making Sense of Adult Learning* covers the characteristics of adult learners—emotional, cognitive, social, physical, and spiritual—blending research and practice. Mackeracher includes chapters on the cycles and styles of learning and strategies and models in facilitating adult learner. Concepts are presented from learning-centered and learner-centered perspectives. Each chapter has learning and teaching principles that provide practical ideas about facilitating adult learning more effectively. Chapters include: Assumptions about Learning and Adult Learners, Characteristics of Adult Learners, Emotional Aspects, Cognitive Aspects, Social Aspects, Physical Aspects, Spiritual Aspects, Cycles and Styles in Learning, Strategies and Models in Facilitating, and Putting the Ideas Together.

Enhancing Adult Motivation to Learn: A Comprehensive Guide for Teaching All Adults (3rd Edition)

Raymond J. Wlodkowski (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2008) [$45]

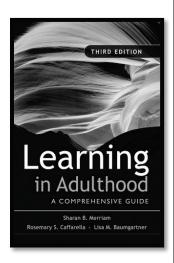Based on the most current educational and biological research, *Enhancing Adult Motivation to Learn* addresses issues that focus on deepening learner motivation and helping adults to want to learn. The book offers a clear framework and sixty practical, research-based strategies that are designed to elicit and encourage learner motivation. In addition, the book is filled with practical examples, guidelines for instructional planning, and cutting-edge ideas for assessment and transfer of learning. Chapters include: 1) Understanding Motivation for Adult Learners, 2) Understanding How Aging and Culture Affect Motivation to Learn, 3) Characteristics and Skills of a Motivating Instructor, 4) What Motivates Adults to Learn, 5) Establishing Inclusion among Adult Learners, 6) Helping Adults Develop Positive Attitudes toward Learning, 7) Enhancing Meaning in Learning Activities, 8) Engendering Competence among Adult Learners, and 9) Building Motivational Strategies into Instructional Designs.

Training Workshop Essentials: Designing, Developing, and Delivering Learning Events that Get Results

Robert W. Lucas (San Francisco: Pfeiffer/John Wiley, 2009) [$50]

This unique training resource offers trainers, educators, and facilitators a hands-on guide for designing and implementing training workshops and sessions that incorporate concepts learned from research on how the human brain best obtains, retains, and recalls information. The author shows how to design, develop, and deliver training from a whole-brain perspective that addresses the three different learning modalities (auditory, visual, and kinesthetic). Trainers can tap into accelerated learning strategies, address needs of different generational and diverse learners, and employ learner-tested techniques by applying key concepts from this book.

Learning in Adulthood: A Comprehensive Guide (3rd Edition)

Sharan B. Merriam, Rosemary S. Caffarella, Lisa M. Baumgartner (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2006) [$60]

In this updated landmark book, the authors have gathered the seminal work and most current thinking on adult learning into one volume. *Learning in Adulthood* addresses a wide range of topics including: Who are adult learners? How do adults learn? Why are adults involved in learning activities? How does the social context shape the learning that adults are engaged in? How does aging affect learning ability? The chapters are organized into four parts: 1) Adult Learning in Contemporary Society, 2) Adult Learning Theory and Models, 3) Newer Approaches to Adult Learning, and 4) Learning and Development.

Drink for the Thirsty: Planning for Adult Faith Formation

Pam Coster

As a deer longs for flowing streams, so my soul longs for you, O God. My soul thirsts for God, for the living God.
(Psalm 42:1-2)

I n the Gospel of John, Jesus asks the disciples of John the Baptist who have followed him, "*What do you want?*" (John 1:38) We might ask the same of the adults in our faith communities today, many of whom are unsettled in their faith and searching, yearning for a deeper relationship with God. Vibrant churches provide activities, resources and a mission-driven culture which help adults more fully understand and live their faith. Helping adults grow spiritually, giving them opportunities for renewal, faith sharing and learning is not only essential for the health of a faith community, it is a work of mercy – giving *living waters* to those thirsting for God.

A Searching People

In the book, *The Gallup Guide: Reality Check for 21st Century Churches* (Gallup Press, 2002) research showed that "The churches of America, in these opening years of the twenty-first century, face an historic moment of opportunity. Surveys record an unprecedented desire for religious and spiritual growth among people in all walks of life and in every region of the nation. There is an intense searching for spiritual moorings, a hunger for God. It is for churches to seize the moment and to direct this often vague and free-floating spirituality into a solid and lived-out faith." Adults of all ages are searching. The Pew Forum study of 2007 found that 44% of U.S. adults have switched religious affiliations. People are thirsting for God, and many are actively seeking a spiritual home that best supports them in their faith. They care. Now is a time of tremendous opportunity to engage adults in the evangelizing mission of Jesus Christ.

Pam Coster is Executive Director of Charis Ministries, a work of the Jesuits of the Chicago Province, which nurtures the spiritual growth of young adults in their 20's and 30's through a closer friendship with Jesus Christ using the gifts of Ignatian Spirituality, primarily through prayer, education and service. Before coming to Charis she was president of Avanza Partners, a consulting firm specializing in adult faith formation and leadership development. Pam has served as a parish director of faith formation; and holds a Masters in Religious Education from Loyola University-Chicago and an MBA from the University of Chicago.

What is the "cast of characters" we find in our Christian faith communities today? In Alan Winseman's influential book, *Growing an Engaged Church: How to Stop "Doing Church" and Start Being the Church Again* (Gallup Press, 2007), he presents the results of research into the relationship between spiritual commitment, congregational engagement and the relevant outcomes of life satisfaction—inviting, serving and giving. Three types of church members emerge: the engaged, the not engaged and the actively disengaged. Someone who is *not engaged*, is generally happy with their faith community but has a low level of commitment and involvement. What changes that person into someone who is *engaged*? Of the twelve outcomes exhibited by engaged members, five have to do with their own spiritual growth and development:

- My spiritual needs are being met.
- Someone encourages my spiritual development.
- Other parishioners are committed to spiritual growth.
- In the last six months someone has talked to me about the progress of my spiritual growth.
- I have opportunities to learn and grow in my faith.

For faith communities to thrive and live the mission of Jesus Christ, they must focus on the spiritual development of their adults. If this isn't done with intentionality, adults may drift, not from a grievance or even unhappiness, but because there is nothing compelling that draws them to choose to spend their time in spiritual pursuits. We would wish it weren't so, but religion competes with other activities for people's attention. As Carol Howard Merritt says in her book *Tribal Church: Ministering to the Missing Generation* (The Alban Institute, 2007), "The societal expectation to attend worship is gone, ...now children have plenty of sporting and scouting opportunities during those once-sacred hours." Adults must be changed in some way by their involvement in church in order to make it a priority in their lives. They must be spiritually fed, know that they are growing in faith, and feel that it is making a difference in their lives.

Certainly making our worship services true celebrations that are alive in faith and transformative for our congregations must be at the center of our efforts. Intergenerational activities are also important. They enrich the faith lives of both children and adults and provide the example of faith that teaches better than any sermon. But adults must also have opportunities to explore the faith in settings and with methods appropriate to their many different learning styles.

Adult formation must be primary within churches and not just in a general way, but in a very personal way. In the early Church, adults experienced conversion through the rich evangelization of community life and the passionate teaching and witness of the apostles. The early Church was an adult church. Believers brought others to faith in a very personal way, just as Jesus had called and taught his disciples.

> *They devoted themselves to the teaching of the apostles and to the communal life, to the breaking of the bread and to the prayers....All who believed were together and had all things in common.... Every day they devoted themselves to meeting together in the temple area and to breaking bread in their homes. They ate their meals with exultation and sincerity of heart, praising God and enjoying favor with all the people. And every day the Lord added to their number those who were being saved.* (Acts 2:42-47)

Children and youth have a more valued place in our society than in the society of first century Palestine, when they were given no consideration. But our society's focus on youth has, in many cases, caused our faith communities to emphasize the religious formation of children and youth and to put the bulk of resources there, to the detriment of ministry to adults. It's so much easier to "raise up a child in the way they should go" than to open up to another adult and witness to our faith. Witness and the invitation into intimacy with Jesus Christ is central to the Christian life.

Ministering to the spiritual needs of adults can be complicated, taxing, and rewarding beyond measure. To see the light of faith go on in an adult's eyes is to know that a seed has been planted that will bear great fruit. That adult will share his or her faith with family and friends. So it was in the early Church, so it is today.

Dr. Jane Regan, in her book *Toward an Adult Church* (Loyola Press, 2002) sets out four shifts which help put the emphasis where it must be for the health of a faith community:

1. *From children to adults*
2. *From information to formation*
3. *From programs to process*
4. *From membership to mission*

If churches are to have engaged members who, according to Winseman, are satisfied with life, invite others to participate in their church, serve others and give more financially to their church, they must consider how they are facilitating the four shifts to a church which values its adults, helps them reflect theologically on their lives, and gives them opportunities to be in conversation with other believers so that they may go into the world and be on the mission of Jesus Christ.

Vision

In order to respond, in faith, to the moving water in which churches swim, they should frequently re-evaluate their effectiveness in reaching adults of all ages. For every generation, appropriate approaches and methods are needed to reach the faithful and the searching.

The mission of our faith communities is Christ's mission. In Luke 4:16-22, he teaches the assembly why he was sent into the world:

The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,
because he has anointed me to bring glad tidings to
   the poor,
he has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives,
and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the
   oppressed go free,
and to proclaim a year acceptable to the Lord.

And in Matthew 28:16-20, we learn how we can best serve that mission:

Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations,
Baptizing them in the name of the Father,
And of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,
Teaching them to observe all that I have
   commanded you.

Before teaching, there is evangelization and initial conversion, which are best rooted in an approach that is personal and profound. Elements that create a firm foundation for future growth in faith include: 1) personal witness and example, 2) walking with others on the journey of faith, 3) welcoming them warmly

into the broader community, 4) sharing Scripture, 5) ritual and symbol, 6) solid teaching, 7) conversing about the meaning of faith for their daily lives, and 8) being aware of their needs as they grow spiritually. How our churches would thrive if each adult were supported in this way!

While personal attention to the growth in faith of each person is essential, it is also important to have a framework from which staff and volunteers can work to give adults opportunities to engage where and when they feel comfortable, to learn and to be renewed in faith. Without a plan, the "tyranny of the urgent" can derail the best intentioned plans for formation of any kind.

In a September 2009 article on planning, Dan Hotchkiss of the Alban Institute talks about a church's annual vision of ministry calling it "an answer to the question, *'In what new and different ways will we transform lives in the next one to three years?'*" All decisions in the life of the faith community should be considered in the context of that question. How do we foster a culture within our faith communities that encourages the transformation brought about by lifelong spiritual development? One of the first steps for leaders is to articulate the goals of adult formation for their church.

Goals

Our Hearts Were Burning Within Us, a document of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, gives us one model. It specifies three goals of adult faith formation:

■ Invite and Enable Ongoing Conversion to Jesus in Holiness of Life: "*...our faith and life as adult disciples are grounded in developing a personal relationship with Jesus...*" This is furthered by reading Scripture and personal prayer.

■ Promote and Support Active Membership in the Christian Community: "*...a conscious and firm decision to live the gift and choice of faith through membership in the Christian community.*" This is exhibited by involvement in the community life and mission of the Church.

■ Call and Prepare Adults to Act as Disciples in Mission to the World: "*...to share the message*

of Christ to renew and to transform the social and temporal order." This is lived out through participation in works of justice and service to the needy.
(Adapted from *Our Hearts Were Burning Within Us #68-73)*

Before any decision is made, church leadership should be asking how their decision will affect the spiritual lives of their congregants: how it is enabling conversion, promoting involvement in the faith community, or preparing people to bring the Good News into the world. Without this focus on the mission, churches may fall into a consumerist mode—trying to make the "customer" happy—which is not at all the model given to us by the early Church, when leaders wanted only growth into maturity of faith for their people.

The goals coincide with the nature of a mature faith in which the believer...

- *Trusts* in God's saving grace and believes firmly in the humanity and divinity of Jesus.
- *Integrates faith and life*, and sees work, family, social relationships and political choices as part of religious life.
- *Seeks spiritual growth* through study, reflection, prayer, sacraments and discussion with others.
- Seeks to be part of a *community* of believers in which people witness to their faith and support/nourish one another.
- Holds *life affirming values*, including a commitment to racial and gender *equality*, an affirmation of cultural and religious *diversity*, and a personal sense of *responsibility* for the welfare of others.
- *Advocates* social and global change to bring about *social justice*.
- *Serves humanity* consistently and passionately through acts of love and justice.
- Experiences a sense of personal *well being, security and peace*.

Roles

While all adults of the congregation are involved in supporting each other in their journey to a mature Christian faith, specific roles are played by church leaders. These leaders have the responsibility to give guidance to the community by formulating a plan which will act as the framework for adult formation activities within the faith community.

- **Pastor**(s): Sets forth the vision of lifelong growth in faith, and shows commitment to the practice of adult faith formation.
- **Church Leadership**: Places adults at the center of its stated mission and goals and promotes their spiritual development at every opportunity, and gives adult formation priority in the allocation of financial resources, learning space and scheduling.
- **Adult Formation Leader** (staff person or qualified member of the congregation) Develops an effective team, and works with ministries to promote cohesive, effective programming for adults.
- **Adult Formation Core Team**: Formulates and implements the church's vision and plan for adults, and provides a diverse range of quality programming.
(Adapted from *Our Hearts Were Burning Within Us #127-148))*

With church leadership committed to and organized for a focus on adults, and with this focus articulated to the congregation, a new image of the church emerges. There is now an *expectation* that adults will actively seek spiritual growth. That is the beginning of something wonderful!

Very important to the success of any plan is the formation of the team itself. Knowledge of effective adult learning methodologies, best practices, and church documents related to adult formation will give team members the foundation they need to be creative in reaching adults. If the team is grounded in this knowledge, and in communal prayer—seeing themselves, and being perceived, as a small community of faith—they will be a trusted resource for adults of the congregation.

Planning: Know Your Congregation

It is important that church leaders work from reality and not perceptions. An outdated understanding of who constitutes the church community can be an obstacle to good planning. A simple mining of the church database can be enlightening. What percentage of the congregation is part of each

generation? Has the congregation moved from being primarily of one ethnicity to another, or to a mix of many ethnicities, or socio-economic groups? Does the church have fewer, or more, members than people perceive? Has the percentage of those who are active changed? How many work outside the home today? How many have computers and the availability of the Internet at home? (The fastest growing group on the Internet is over the age of 70.) All of these questions have a bearing on how church leadership plans for adult formation and the ways in which it will be delivered.

A church formation "check-up" can be very helpful in identifying how the church currently encourages the spiritual development of its various groups. Taking time to consider all groups: young adults, parents at different stages of child-rearing, singles, the elderly, the homebound, the marginalized, people with disabilities, the unchurched in your area; can bear great fruit. Just the discussion of who is "marginalized" in your faith community can be a challenging and healthy exercise. Who are the *poor, captive, blind, or oppressed* in your community? Inviting people from different groups into your discussions keeps the leadership group from becoming insular—a real danger in church leadership.

Planning: Five Year and Annual Plans

Be not afraid of five year plans! It is helpful to have a goal, to know where you are taking the adults of your congregation and why. This is not a plan that is articulated to the congregation, but is a guide for the adult formation leaders. Example A at the end of the article shows a possible five year plan for faith formation. Note that this is not a detailed plan but simply an acknowledgement that there are foundational elements of the faith and every adult should have knowledge of them in order to come to a mature faith. Setting out general topic areas for five years allows the church to provide a systematic formation for its adults. The church's annual plans flow from this broader framework.

Example B at the end of the article shows a sample annual plan. The annual plan leads to the choice and development of programs. The plans are living, flexible documents. Issues will come up, events will happen that are not on the plan but call for theological reflection and/or clarification for your

church members. For example, *The Da Vinci Code* was an extremely popular book and caused Christians to ask questions about the history and teachings of the Christian faith. It was a golden opportunity to gather people for teaching and conversations about the faith. Those types of occurrences should always be taken advantage of, but not relied upon. Underlying the topic-of-the-moment activity, should be an intentional plan.

A good planning exercise is to ask the team to take a moment to list those ways in which they themselves come to God. They may use words such as *scripture, music, nature, others, prayer, holy places*, etc. Rarely do people list "lectures," and yet many times in our churches we bring in a speaker and feel as though we have provided formation. People come to Christ in many different ways. It may be poetry or art that gives them an experience of the divine. If we limit offerings to talks and other essentially intellectual activities, we will miss many people. For example, try gathering people for a walk in a garden while reading and reflecting upon scripture passages related to nature. You may be amazed to see people you have not seen in some time! Many will come to a program on "prayer through movement" who cannot sit in a chair on a Tuesday night and listen to a speaker. Vary the activities to reach all people.

At the heart of any adult formation plan should be small groups, which give adults the opportunity to be in conversation about things that matter. Here is the encouragement of and commitment to growth in faith that Winseman tells us is so important to engagement.

Book groups are extremely popular in the secular society for a reason—they bring people together in community where they form relationships of trust. As Stephen Covey says in his recent book *The Speed of Trust* (Free Press, 2006), "...as a global society, we have a crisis of trust on our hands ...only 34% of Americans believe that other people can be trusted." Within the context of a faith community, that can be very limiting. People are reluctant to share their stories of faith with strangers. The experience of small faith groups breaks down those barriers, challenges people to grow by hearing about the faith journey of others, and opens up avenues for transformative conversation.

Dr. David P. Gallagher in his book *Senior Adult Ministry in the 21st Century* (Group, 2002) says, "the focus must move from large lecture groups to smaller, caring fellowships that encourage involvement." It isn't only seniors, though, who respond to this

relational approach. All adults are enriched by trusting fellowship.

Planning: Dream the Possible

An exhausted adult formation team helps no one. Ambitious plans are wonderful. Certainly we are ambitious for the Gospel! But steady, sure development is better than a long list of poorly done programs with no follow-up. Churches should know what is possible for their staff and team and plan accordingly. This is why an annual plan is so important. It takes the stress out of seasonal planning, provides sufficient lead time for preparation and marketing, and gives everyone the opportunity for input in a calm and constructive way. Once the plan is agreed upon, the team can execute it with confidence and support.

Every church is already providing some opportunities for adult formation: Bible studies, talks, spiritual book groups, seasonal activities, prayer groups, etc. Without adding any new activities, simply reorganizing those offerings into an intentional plan, and promoting it, can go a long way towards sparking interest among adults within the faith community.

For example, assume the adult formation team has chosen to focus on discipleship during the coming year. Example C at the end of the article shows a sample plan for the fall of the year. The church may already be offering these types of activities, but instead of each group choosing their own materials, the team suggests materials that focus on discipleship and assists the groups by promoting them together as a series on discipleship. Every meeting that takes place at the church during the fall begins with a prayer related to discipleship. Discipleship is emphasized from the pulpit. The conversation within the faith community begins to change. People in the community become aware of the theme. This sort of common focus has been shown to attract people to activities as they feel they want to be part of what is affecting the whole faith community. It lowers barriers to entry into groups, which can sometimes be formidable, especially for new church members.

Once people do decide to become involved, they must find programs to be "as advertised." Good quality in programs is essential. In today's culture, people are used to sophisticated media regardless of their socio-economic level, at the very least through television. They expect a good experience. Time is precious and studies show that if you waste their time *once,* you very likely will lose them to future programs. Your preparation, communication, and hospitality tell them that you value the content and, especially, their time.

And how can they participate if they have not heard, and heard, and heard again? Substantial staff time and resources are put into developing programs. They shouldn't be wasted by insufficient promotion. To be effective, advertising has to be repetitive. Personal invitation is best, of course, but churches should use every means of communicating: brochures, podcasts, flyers, posters, the church bulletin, e-mail, social networking sites, web sites, newspaper ads, radio ads, etc. Studies have shown that on average only 15% of churchgoers pick up bulletins at church, others may view them on-line, but obviously other means have to be used to get the message out about upcoming programs. To reach those who are unchurched, churches have to go beyond inside channels of communication.

Evaluation: Simple and Often

When people are used to interactivity in many areas of their lives, they want to know that their experience is valued. After every event or activity, the adult formation team should ask for the evaluation of participants. Three simple questions focus on what is important, gather sufficient input and take only a short time to answer:

- What is one thing you learned that you will be able to bring into your life?
- What questions do you have that could be addressed at future gatherings?
- What would help you further enrich your spiritual life?

Input is only good, however, if it's acted upon. Let people know how you have used the input they have provided. It will encourage them to funnel information to leaders on an on-going basis, which is invaluable in creating programs that respond to real needs within the community.

Great Challenges – Great Rewards

The Gallup Guide: Reality Check for 21st Century Churches lays out the reality: "The challenges to churches in deepening the faith of Americans are great." "Many know little of their own faith traditions, let alone other religions of the world." The challenge is clear, and so is the opportunity.

There is a thirsting for God in the American population. People have deep questions for which the Christian faith has answers. We are the messengers; we are the ones who can "...direct this often vague and free-floating spirituality into a solid and lived-out faith."

> *But how are they to call on one in whom they have not believed?*
> *And how are they to believe in one of whom they have never heard?*
> *And how are they to hear without someone to proclaim him?*
> *And how are they to proclaim him unless they are sent?*
> *As it is written, "How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!"*
> (Romans 10:14-15)

Example A
Adult Faith Formation Five Year Plan

Grounded in the Elements of a Mature Faith

- *Trusts* in God's saving grace and believes firmly in the humanity and divinity of Jesus.
- *Integrates faith and life,* and sees work, family, social relationships and political choices as part of religious life.
- *Seeks spiritual growth* through study, reflection, prayer, sacraments and discussion with others.
- Seeks to be part of a *community* of believers in which people witness to their faith and support/nourish one another.
- Holds *life affirming values*, including a commitment to racial and gender *equality*, an affirmation of cultural and religious *diversity*, and a personal sense of *responsibility* for the welfare of others.

- *Advocates* social and global change to bring about *social justice*.
- *Serves humanity* consistently and passionately through acts of love and justice.
- Experiences a sense of personal *well being, security and peace*.

Themes

Year One: Discipleship
Year Two: Father, Son, Holy Spirit
Year Three: Worship and Prayer
Year Four: Moral Life
Year Five: Social Teachings

Example B
Adult Faith Formation Annual Plan
Year One: Discipleship

Goals

Adult members of the faith community will:
- be able to articulate what it means to be a disciple.
- be able to describe Christ's mission.
- identify their gifts and how they can be used at the service of Christ's mission in the faith community and beyond.

Activities for Year One

1. Intergenerational Events
2. Bible Studies
3. Spiritual Book Groups
4. Speakers
5. Morning of Reflection—Advent
6. Busy Person's Retreat—Lent
7. Small Faith Sharing Groups - Lent
8. Workshop on Gifts Discernment
9. Meeting Prayers
10. Film Discussions
11. Religious Field Trips
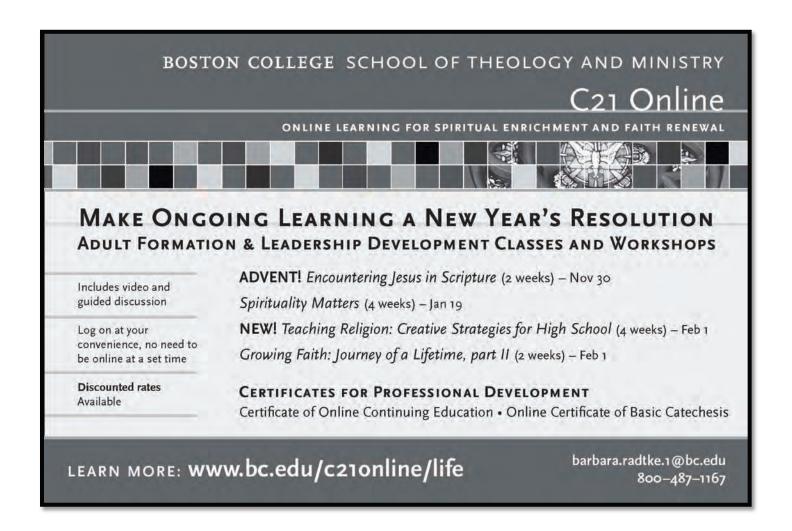
Example C

Adult Faith Formation Plan
Year One: Discipleship – Fall Activities

Fall Activities

1. Intergenerational Event: Holy People, Models of Faith
2. Bible Studies: *Disciple Bible Study Series* (Cokesbury)
3. Spiritual Book Groups: *My Life with the Saints* (Loyola Press)
4. Speaker: Christ's Mission, My Mission
5. Morning of Reflection: Mary, Model of Discipleship
6. Workshop: Gifts Discernment
7. Meeting Prayers: Scripture Readings for Next Sunday and Discipleship Reflection Question
8. Film Discussion: *A Man for All Seasons*
9. Religious Field Trip: Art Museum—Discipleship in Religious Art

Faith Formation for Every Adult in Your Church—It's Possible Today!

John Roberto

What would it be like if your church embraced the audacious claim that you could provide faith formation for every adult in your faith community? What new insights and assumptions about adult faith formation would you need to adopt? What would a "faith formation for every adult" plan look like? Where could you possibly find all of the leaders and resources to offer faith formation for every adult in your church? What would it be like if you conceptualized adult faith formation, not as a series of program offerings, but as a adult learning resources system—a diverse community of learning?

Most Christian churches have similar goals for adult faith formation. Churches want faith formation for adults that helps them to grow in their relationship with God, develop a deeper understanding of the Bible and their faith tradition, relate the Christian faith to life today, participate in the life and ministries of the faith community, and live as disciples of Jesus Christ in their daily life at home, in the workplace, in the community and the world. Churches want faith formation that touches the head, the heart, and actions of adults. They want faith formation that informs, forms, and transforms.

The question today is not what do we want to accomplish, but rather how can accomplish these goals for *every* adult in our faith communities. It's all about delivery systems. How can we utilize the life of our church community; the variety of excellent print, audio, and visual resources; the variety of learning models; and the new digital and online technologies to develop a faith formation plan that addresses the wide diversity of interests, religious and spiritual needs, and life tasks and situations of today's adults. This article describes the concept of an "Adult Faith Formation Learning Resources System" as a way to provide faith formation for every adult in your church and offers practical tools to help you build a learning resource system in your church.

John Roberto is editor of the journal *Lifelong Faith* and works as a consultant to churches and national organizations, teaches courses and conducts workshops in faith formation, manages the LifelongFaith.com website, and has authored books and program manuals in youth ministry, family ministry, and intergenerational faith formation. His latest publications include *Living Well: Christian Practices for Everyday Life* (published by LifelongFaith Associates), *Becoming a Church of Lifelong Learners* (Twenty-Third Publications), and four volumes of intergenerational learning programs in the *People of Faith* series (Harcourt Religion Publishers). John was the founder and director of the Center for Ministry Development, where he worked for 28 years. He can be reached at jroberto@lifelongfaith.com and at www.lifelongfaith.com.

Part 1. Four Principles of an Adult Faith Formation Learning Resources System

1. Adult faith formation addresses the diverse life tasks and situations, spiritual and religious needs, and interests of adults in the church by offering a variety of content topics and learning activities out of which adults can develop their own personalized learning pathway.

To address the increasing diversity within the adult population, churches need to offer a greater variety of adult faith formation topics and activities. In the past churches have often chosen the "one size fits all" mentality for adult faith formation: How do we get every adult to participate in a small faith sharing group or to come to the Lenten series or to study the Bible? Adult faith formation is no longer about finding *the* program to attract all adults. It is about addressing the diversity of adult learning needs with a variety of faith formation activities. It is offering faith formation programming that is varied in content, expectations, depth, involvement, and timing. It is meeting individuals at the point of their spiritual and learning needs and offering personalized pathways of faith growth. Adults can create their individual "faith growth learning plans" to help 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. By expanding the options for adult learning (offering "something for everyone"), churches can engage more adults in faith formation, even if some of the offerings involve only one person.

Today, as never before, a local church has access to adult faith formation programming, resources, and networks, that can address the diversity. Resources for learning abound in every environment; a primary task of a learning system is to identify these resources and link learners with them effectively. Consider this: iTunes University, part of the iTunes Store, is possibly the world's greatest collection of free educational media available to students, teachers, and lifelong learners. With over 200,000 educational audio and video files available, iTunes U has quickly become the engine for the mobile learning movement. It puts courses and resources from over 150 universities and learning organizations into the hands of individuals, groups, and organizations. The new reality of faith formation programming is that churches can offer activities that cater to niches— individuals and small groups with a particular spiritual or religious need, interest, passion, concern, or life issue. They no longer have to worry about reaching a "mass audience."

The culture of our day is all about personalization and customization. We have moved from a "one size fits all" mentality in our culture and economics. Several decades ago the typical bookstore at the mall featured several dozen books on the NY Times best seller lists, books by popular bestselling authors, and a very limited variety of specialized titles. In the early 1990s Borders and Barnes and Noble opened megastores with 100,000 titles that addressed a wide diversity of customers' needs and interests. In 1995 Amazon.com opened for business online with millions of titles, addressing an even greater diversity of readers' needs and interests. Amazon.com will even recommend books to you based on the interests expressed in your previous book purchases.

The same personalization and customization can be seen in music and in films. More than 99 percent of music albums on the market today are not available in Wal-Mart. However, iTunes offers millions of songs online available for download 24x7, and is constantly adding music, both old and new. Of the more than 200,000 films, TV shows, documentaries, and other videos that have been released commercially, the average Blockbuster store carries just 3,000 titles. However, Netflix has over 100,000 DVDs available for rental online and delivered to your home in about one business day. By offering such great diversity Amazon.com, iTunes, and Netflix not only make money on the "blockbusters" they sell/rent, but also on every title in their vast storehouse, even if they only sell/rent one copy a month. (Amazon.com, iTunes, and Netflix are only three examples of the transformation taking place in business and culture today.)

By consulting research findings and listening carefully to adults of different age groups, church leaders can determine foundational spiritual and religious needs, interests, and life tasks that adult faith formation should address. Using this knowledge, churches can expand their faith formation programming to offer enough variety that each adult in the faith community can find a learning experience that addresses his or her spiritual and religious needs, life tasks, and/or interests. Consider using the

following categories to identify the needs and interests of adults in your church.

- **Life Issues**: What's happening in the lives and world of adults today and how does the Christian faith connect to these issues? How can faith formation help adults view the myriad dimensions of human life today—family, work, leisure, relationships, sexuality, suffering and grief, social and political issues, community issues—in the light of the Gospel and faith tradition? How can faith formation equip and support adults in making life choices and moral decisions as Christians?

- **Life Tasks**: What are the developmental life tasks facing adults in the major life periods: 20s-30s, 40s-50s, 60s-70s, 80s-90s? How can faith formation integrate continued faith growth with life tasks at each stage of adulthood?

- **Milestones and Transitions:** What are the significant milestones/transitions in adulthood that can be a focus of adult faith formation, such as geographic relocations, family formation and re-formation, career changes, empty nests, retirement, unanticipated illness, divorce, and the loss of loved ones? How can faith formation help people find meaning in their lives during these transitions and bring a faith perspective to the transitions adults are experiencing?

- **Religious Needs:** What are the significant religious learning needs of adults at each stage of adulthood? How can faith formation provide adults with opportunities to deepen their understanding of the Bible and their faith tradition and beliefs, and relate their Christian faith to life today?

- **Spiritual Needs:** What are the significant spiritual needs of adults at each stage of adulthood? How can faith formation assist adults in growing in their relationship with God and in living as disciples of Jesus Christ in their daily life at home, in the workplace, in the community and the world? How can faith formation deepen adults' practice of the spiritual disciplines and traditions in their daily lives?

- **Ethnic/Cultural Needs**: Who are the ethnic/cultural communities in your church? What are the unique lived experiences, needs, and aspirations of people from each ethnic/cultural community in your church? How can your church offer *culturally-specific* adult faith formation for each ethnic/cultural community in the church, and, when appropriate, in the language of the people? How can faith formation be *inclusive* of the traditions, heritages, and unique gifts of each ethnic/cultural community in your church?

2. Adult faith formation recognizes that learning is a process of active inquiry with initiative residing in the adult learner and that adults are motivated to learn as they experience needs and interests that adult learning activities will satisfy.

A core principle of adult learning is that *learning is an process of active inquiry with initiative residing in the adult learner*. Adults prefer to determine their *own* learning experiences. The traditional model of schooling has conditioned adults to perceive the proper role of learners as being dependent on teachers to make decisions for them as to what should be learned, how it should be learned, when it should be learned, and if it has been learned. Increasingly today's adult learners are knowledge workers. They are accustomed to searching out what they want to know, when they want and need to know it. People are becoming more and more self-directed in their learning, and they have almost unlimited access to information through the Internet and the wide variety of print and media learning resources available in our society today.

Research studies on adult learning point to motivation as a key factor in determining whether or not adults will participate in an adult faith formation offering. *The key motivation in adult learning is that adults are motivated to learn as they experience needs and interests that adult learning activities will satisfy*. The research tells us to be aware of a variety of adult motivations and design learning activities that utilize these motivational factors.

- Adults are motivated to learn when *facing life transitions*. They seek learning and support to cope with changes in their lives that give rise

to new developmental tasks, e.g., raising children, aging parents, financial matters, job changes, divorce, etc.

■ Adults are motivated to learn when there is a *gap* between their present level of understanding, skill, performance and/or growth and the desired level or goal that they set for themselves or that their organization/ community expects of them.

■ Adults are motivated by appealing to personal and spiritual growth and/or personal benefits.

■ Adults are motivated to learn when they identify they have a need to learn.

■ Adults are motivated to learn when the benefits of a learning experience outweigh their resistance.

■ Adults are motivated to participate in adult learning programs that are enjoyable and enriching.

■ Adults are motivated to learn when they have the opportunity to do something they could not do before.

■ Adults are motivated to learn by settings that have a natural, interactive, communal feel. They want to be treated and seated as adults in the physical settings where they gather.

■ Adults are motivated to learn when programs are sensitive to their time constraints by keeping commitments short in terms of duration and offering choices of times for participation.

3. Adult faith formation views learning as a lifelong process that involves both formal and informal learning, intentional or unexpected.

Learning is a lifelong process and adult learners need access to a wide variety of learning activities throughout life. We are a society of lifelong learners. Learning in adulthood is now taken as normative. Over the 12 month period from Spring 2004-2005 (the latest year statistics are available), 44 percent of adults in the U.S. reported having participated in *formal* adult educational activities, excluding full-time only enrollments in college/university or vocational/technical credential programs. The 44 % percent of adults who participated in formal adult educational activities were divided almost equally between work-related courses (27% of all adults in the

U.S.) and personal interest courses (21% of all adults in the U.S.).

By most estimates *informal learning* accounts for more than 70% of adult learning taking place today. Informal learning describes a lifelong process whereby individuals acquire attitudes, values, skills and knowledge from daily experience and the educational influences and resources in his or her environment, from family and neighbors, from work and play, from the marketplace, the library, the mass media, and the Internet. Informal learning can be intentional or not. There might be a teacher, but it's probably a colleague or friend. We might read an article or book, visit a website, listen to a podcast, or watch a video online. We might visit Home Depot or Lowe's for a clinic on home repair or gardening or stop by our local bookstore or library for a reading group or special program. On television many channels are devoted to informal learning. The programs of *The Food Network*, while not formal education, promote learning as shows teach people how to cook, try new recipes, etc. The variety of home improvement, such as the "This Old House" on PBS, or the extreme home makeover shows on the TLC and HGTV networks, promote learning, even though they are not formal educational TV programs.

Formal and informal learning can be *intentional*—when an individual aims to learn something and goes about achieving that objective or *unexpected*—when in the course of everyday activities an individual learns something that he or she had not intended or expected.

Applying the four types of learning to adult faith formation, we can visualize the relationship among these four types of learning in the following way.

Formal Learning

classes speaker series workshops online courses small group Bible study	self-study Bible study social media/networking faith-sharing groups
Intentional	**Unexpected**

reading
mentoring
service/mission activity
program at the library or
  local bookstore
	internet surfing
	playing
	watching a movie
	TV show
	shopping at a home
	  improvement store

Informal Learning

Most of the adult faith formation efforts in churches are *formal* and *intentional* learning through organized programs. Churches can expand their faith formation efforts by promoting all four types of learning. For example, Sunday worship is *informal* and *intentional* learning. A church can help adults learn from their participation in worship through a weekly journal (online and in print) with reflection questions on the Scripture readings and the sermon. The readings and sermon can also be available in print or audio for further study on the church's website. The journal could also be used in a weekly faith sharing group or in table discussion after Sunday worship. These are all examples of informal and intentional learning activities.

4. Adult faith formation utilizes a variety of learning models to address the diverse life tasks and situations, religious and spiritual needs, and interests of adults; and incorporates both face-to-face, interactive learning activities <u>and</u> virtual, online learning activities.

We know from research that adult learners will chose the learning activity that best fits their learning needs, preferred modes of learning, and time constraints. In order to accomplish this, an adult faith formation needs to provide a variety of content and learning activities, <u>and</u> a variety of program models for learning that include learning activities in physical places and virtual spaces. Five models that should be part of adult faith formation include:

- ■ *Learning on Your Own* (through reading, online courses, audio and video programs, movies, television programs)

- ■ *Learning in Small Groups* (through Bible and theology study groups, social issues study groups, faith sharing groups, lectionary-based groups, service/mission action groups, support groups, special interest groups)

- ■ *Learning in Large Groups* (through courses, speaker series, workshops, film festivals, retreats, conferences, intergenerational programs)

- ■ *Learning in the Congregation* (through Sunday worship, church year events and celebrations, service/mission activities, ministry and leadership in the church and community)

- ■ *Learning in the Community and World* (through programs/courses/clinics/ workshops/presentations at universities, retreat centers, YMCAs, libraries, bookstores, regional church programs; through engagement in community/political action, local and global service/justice organizations and projects)

Adult faith formation includes learning activities in physical places and virtual spaces, blending face-to-face, interactive learning with virtual, online learning. Online websites, social networking services, and digital technologies (e.g., an iPod Touch, smart cell phones) mean that churches can deliver faith formation experiences and resources anytime and anywhere, reaching people wherever they go online (home, work, school, vacation, coffee house). The interplay between learning in physical places and virtual online spaces can revolutionize adult faith formation in a church.
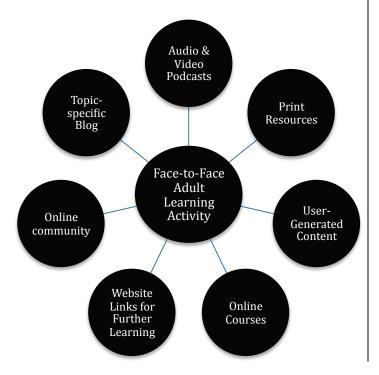
There are two ways to envision the relationship between the physical and virtual. The first approach begins with people's participation in face-to-face learning activities (small group, large group, congregation, community/world) and then uses virtual online spaces (learning activities, print/audio/video, social networking) to extend, deepen, and support the learning that began in the physical program. For example, a church sponsors a three-session program on the Gospel of Luke in preparation for Cycle C of the upcoming liturgical year. The learning from this short program can be extended and deepened online with 1) weekly commentaries on the Sunday Gospel from Luke, 2) online Bible study program (independent or with a small group) on the Gospel of Luke, 3) a university course on the Gospel of Luke on iTunes U, and 4) an online blog that allows people to post their reflections on each Sunday's reading and invites discussion online.

The second approach begins with people's involvement in online/digital learning activities and leads them to participate in face-to-face learning activities. For example, a church uses its website to develop an online spiritual formation center using a

variety of already existing resources: 1) daily fixed hour prayer (liturgy of the hours), 2) weekly and seasonal prayer resources, 3) links to prayer sites around the world (www.sacredspace.ie, www.taize.fr, www.upperroom.org), 4) an online retreat (*A 34 week retreat for Everyday Life* from Creighton University, http://onlineministries.creighton.edu/CollaborativeMinistry/cmo-retreat.html), and 5) online courses with spiritual guides like Thomas Merton, Joyce Rupp, Henri Nouwen, Joan Chittister from Spirituality and Practice (www.SpiritualityandPractice.com): 40-day retreats with daily emails containing short readings for reflection, practice suggestions, and access to a private "Practice Circle" where people can share their wisdom and experiences with other e-course participants.

The online spiritual formation center could connect people to church-based learning activities and resources, such as a relationship with a spiritual director, a spiritual formation course (such as the small group program *Companions in Christ* from Upper Room Books), a retreat experience at church or a retreat center, a series of workshops on the spiritual disciplines (e.g., Lectio Divina, silence, contemplation, the Examen, meditation, spiritual reading, fixed hour prayer), etc.

These relationships between adult faith formation in physical places and virtual spaces can be visualized in the following way:

One example of this integrated approach to adult faith formation is **Bible with Brian** from Ginghamsburg Church in Ohio. Brian Brown, the teaching pastor at Ginghamsburg, teaches through the entire Bible in a year, including practical application on how to live out God's truths everyday. Every Tuesday and Wednesday nights, "Bible with Brian" follows the book of the Bible featured in the daily *Transformation Journal* produced by the church. The journal is centered around a weekly topic and provides Bible verses about that topic, wisdom about the day's study from authors, and questions to help people apply the reading to their daily life. The Bible study begins with a meal from 5:30-6:30 p.m. and then the program from 6:30-8 p.m. or 7-8:30 p.m. Children's care and activities for birth through grade 5 are available. In addition to the gathered program, the program is available as an MP3 audio file so people can listen to it online or download to their computer or MP3 player. Adults can also subscribe to the podcast on iTunes and listen to current and past episodes. Adults can download the "Bible with Brian" handout and use it to follow along with the audio broadcast of the program. People can also subscribe to the "Bible with Brian Spiritual Vitamins" newsletter—a daily take on the *Transformation Journal* from Brian Brown. (For more information go to http://ginghamsburg.org/biblewithbrian.)

A Summary of Key Features

In summary, an Adult Faith Formation Learning Resources System needs to:

1. Include a variety of content topics and learning activities in order to address addresses the diverse life tasks and situations, spiritual and religious needs, and interests of adults in the church.
2. Guide adults in developing their own personalized learning pathway.
3. Recognizes that the initiative for learning resides in the adult learner.
4. Incorporate four types of learning: formal and informal, intentional and unexpected.
5. Utilize a variety of learning models: learning on your own, in small groups, in large groups, in the congregation, and in the community and world.
6. Provide learning activities in physical spaces (face-to-face) and virtual places (online).

Part 2. Designing an Adult Faith Formation Learning Resources System for Your Church

The goal of the design process is to guide your church in developing and implementing a plan for an Adult Faith Formation Resources System for all of the adults in your church (and community), utilizing a wide variety of learning activities and resources.

Task 1. Form an Adult Faith Formation Task Force

Develop an "Adult Faith Formation Task Force" consisting of 1) church staff and faith formation leaders, 2) at least one adult from each of the decades of adulthood (20s, 30s, 40s, 50s, 60s, 70s, 80s+), and 3) church members who are involved in the different forms of adult education in your community. The Task Force is responsible for designing an adult faith formation plan, organizing the implementation logistics, finding leaders and resources for the plan, monitoring progress, and conducting evaluations. The Task Force needs a coordinator/convener who facilitates the work of the Task Force in designing an adult faith formation plan, organizing implementation logistics, finding leaders and resources to implement the plan, monitoring progress and conducting evaluations, and serving as a liaison between the task force and the church and wider community.

Task 2. Prepare a Statement of Your Church's Vision and Goals for Adult Faith Formation

Work together as a Task Force to prepare a short statement of your church's vision and goals for adult faith formation. Most Christian churches have similar goals for adult faith formation. Churches want faith formation for adults that helps them to grow in their relationship with God, develop a deeper understanding of the Bible and their faith tradition, relate the Christian faith to life today, participate in the life and ministries of the faith community, and live as disciples of Jesus Christ in their daily life at home, in the workplace, in the community and the world. Churches want faith formation that touches the head, the heart, and actions of adults. They want faith formation that informs, forms, and transforms.

Together as a team review the important documents on the vision and goals for adult faith formation in your denomination. You might want to invite a guest speaker to present a workshop on the goals and vision of adult faith formation or find a video presentation. You can contact your diocese/synod/regional church body for suggestions.

Task 3. Develop an Inventory of Your Church's Current Adult Faith Formation Programming

Develop an inventory of your church's current adult faith formation activities and programs. The inventory is developed around the five basic adult learning models: 1) learning on your own, 2) learning in small groups, 3) learning in large groups, 4) learning in the congregation, and 5) learning in the community and world. Use the format outlined on the worksheet to organize your inventory. After completing the inventory, discuss the state of your church's adult faith formation:

- What are the strengths in your current adult faith formation? What are the weaknesses?
- What is most effective in your current programming? What is not?
- Which of the five adult learning models are being used most effectively? Which are not?
- Who is being served by current adult faith formation programming? Who is not?
- Where are the greatest needs or gaps? What are the priority areas for growth and improvement?

Task 4. Research the Life Issues and Learning Needs of Adults in Your Church

1. Research and Discussion

Discuss the important issues and learning needs of the adults in your church using the following questions. Feel free to adapt these questions and add your own.

- **Life Issues**: What's happening in the lives and world of adults in your church today: family, work, leisure, relationships, sexuality, suffering and grief, social and political issues, community issues, etc.?
- **Life Tasks**: What are the developmental life tasks facing adults in the major life periods: 20s-30s, 40s-50s, 60s-70s, 80s-90s?
- **Milestones and Transitions:** What are the significant milestones/transitions that adults in your church are experiencing, such as geographic relocations, family formation and re-formation, career changes, empty nests, retirement, unanticipated illness, divorce, loss of loved ones, etc.?
- **Religious Needs:** What are the significant religious learning needs of adults in your church, such as understanding the Bible and relating it lie today, understanding the faith tradition and beliefs and how to live them today, making Christian moral decisions, etc.
- **Spiritual Needs:** What are the significant spiritual needs of adults in your church, such as growing in their relationship with God; living as disciples of Jesus Christ in their daily life at home, in the workplace, in the community and the world; spiritual disciplines and traditions; prayer, etc.?
- **Ethnic/Cultural Needs**: What are the unique lived experiences, needs, and aspirations of people from each ethnic/cultural community in your church?

2. Focus Groups

Organize focus groups of 6-12 people in each of the following age groups of adulthood: 1) 20-30, 2) 40-50, 3) 60-75 , and 4) 75+. Be sure to select a diversity of adults who reflect the ethnic and socio-economic character of your church, and the various states in life (single, married, divorced, etc.) Use the following questions as the basis of your focus group interviews (see worksheet). Feel free to adapt the questions to your church.

1. How would you describe your age group in key words or phrases?
2. What are some of the key life tasks that your age group is experiencing?
3. What are some of the important life issues that your age group is experiencing today?
4. What are the most meaningful experiences you have in life? What makes these experiences meaningful to you?
5. How important is your relationship with God? Why?
6. Where do you experience God most?
7. What are the significant spiritual issues that your age group is experiencing today?
8. What is most important to you about being a Christian (or your particular faith tradition) today?
9. How do you live your Christian faith? Name some of the ways you put your faith into practice.
10. How can the church help you to continue growing as a Christian? Be specific. Name some of the things you would like to see your church offer for adults?

3. A Profile of Life Issues and Learning Needs

Based on the results of your research, discussion, and focus group interviews, develop a profile of the life issues and learning needs of adults in your church.

Complete your research by identifying **the most important life issues and learning needs your church's adult faith formation should address in the coming year(s)** for each age group: 1) 20-30, 2) 40-50, 3) 60-75, and 4) 75+.

Task 5. Research Learning Activities, Leaders, and Resources to Address the Important Life Issues and Learning Needs

Today, as never before, a local church has access to an abundance of adult faith formation programming, resources, and networks that can address the diversity of adult learning needs. Resources for learning abound in every environment; a primary task of a learning system is to identify these resources and link learners with them effectively.

Using the list of the most important life issues and learning needs as a guide, research the resources available to your church that will address these needs and eventually become part of your Adult Faith Formation Learning Resources System (see worksheet). Consider the following categories:

- **People Resources**: Conduct a gifts/talents/skills/knowledge survey of the people resources in your church, the wider community, the diocese/synod/regional

church body, colleges and universities, church-related organizations, etc. who can be invited to take a leadership role in the adult faith formation plan. Consider people who teach courses or specialized programs, guest presenters on specialized topics, leaders for small groups and Bible studies, prayer guides/spiritual directors, leaders for service/mission programs, etc.

- **Physical, Face-to-Face Learning Activity Resources:** Identify face-to-face learning activities that you can use to address the priority issues and learning needs. There are a variety of options: 1) programs that your church is already sponsoring, 2) an opportunity that you are not utilizing (e.g., design reflection activities around Sunday worship), 3) a new program that your church can adopt, and 4) a program that you can promote as part of your plan and encourage adult participation. Consider programs in your church, the wider community, the diocese/synod/regional church body, retreat and conference centers, colleges and universities, church-related organizations, etc. Indicate the learning model(s) used in the program: Learning on Your Own, Learning in Small Group, Learning in Large Group, Learning in the Congregation, and/or Learning in the Community and World.

- **Print and Media Learning Activity Resources:** Identify print and media resources from publishers and learning organizations that you can use to address the priority issues and learning needs. Indicate the learning model(s) used in the resource.

- **Online Learning Activity Resources:** Identify online learning activity resources that you can use to address the priority issues and learning needs. Indicate the learning model(s) used in the resource,

After you have completed your research, review your work to determine if there are priority life issues and learning needs for which your church will need to design new programming.

Task 6. Design and Implement Your Adult Faith Formation Learning Resources System Plan

Use the following process to move from research on learning resources to a final Adult Faith Formation Plan that you can implement. You may find it helpful to review adult faith formation plans from other churches before you begin. Here are four examples:

- Ginghamsburg Church (Ohio) (http://ginghamsburg.org/adult)
- Willowcreek Church (Illinois) (http://classes.willowcreek.org)
- Holy Infant Church (North Carolina) (www.holyinfantchurch.org/faith_development_spirituality)
- The United Methodist Church of the Resurrection (Kansas) (www.cor.org/programs-ministries/thejourney)

1. **Timeframe**
   Decide on the timeframe for your final plan. Will it be a plan for the whole year or will you develop seasonal plans (Fall, Winter-Spring, and Summer)?

2. **Development of Integrated Adult Faith Formation Learning Activity Plans**
   Use the research on learning activities, leaders, and resources, to create Adult Faith Formation Learning Activity Plans that address each of the important life issues and learning needs (see worksheet). Decide which learning activities you will incorporate in your plan. You will also need to determine if there are priority needs for which there are no program resources. The team will need to design new programs to address these needs.

   A Learning Activity Plan addresses a life issue or learning need with learning opportunities and resources using the five learning models:

   1. learning on your own
   2. learning in small groups
   3. learning in large groups
   4. learning in the congregation
   5. learning in the community/world

A Learning Activity Plan incorporates a variety of options for learning in face-to-face, physical places and in virtual, online spaces.

- **Physical**: church, homes, coffee shop, colleges, service/mission sites, retreat centers, monasteries, theaters, community sites, etc.
- **Online**: audio and video podcasts, print resources, online courses, website links for further learning, online community and social networking, topic-specific blogs, etc.

For example, an Adult Faith Formation Learning Activity Plan for Lent on the church-wide theme of repentance and conversion, could have the following learning activities:

- book of Scripture readings, reflections, and prayers for each day of Lent (print and online)
- all of the sermons/homilies during Lent focus on repentance and conversion and are available online in MP3 files with a personal and small group study guide
- daily Bible reading, reflections, and prayer are emailed to all of the adults in the church and are available online
- a Sunday morning Bible study on the Lenten lectionary readings is offered after Sunday worship service; an online group meets during the week to study and reflect on the readings
- a guest speaker presents a two-evening program on repentance and conversion in the Christian life during the first two weeks of Lent; the program is video-taped and available online in a podcast with a study guide
- a retreat day on the theme of conversion is conducted at the local retreat house the week prior to Holy Week; for those who cannot attend an online retreat experience is offered
- resources for Lenten study and reflection are available online
- a reconciliation service is offered during the third week of Lent

Each Adult Faith Formation Learning Activity Plan seeks to incorporate a variety of ways to learn: differing levels of depth and commitment, a variety of learning models reflecting the diversity of learning styles, online and face-to-face learning, and times and locations that are convenient for adults. This approach means that adults can have a variety of ways to learn a topic, removing many of the more common obstacles to adult learning in churches.

3. **Balance**
Review each Adult Formation Learning Activity Plan to make sure you have balance among the five learning models (on your own, small group, large group, in the congregation, in the community/world) <u>and</u> between learning in physical places and in virtual spaces.

4. **Leadership**
Using the research you conducted into people resources, identify leaders who will be involved in coordinating/conducting/facilitating individual learning activities. Determine which learning activities still need leaders and develop a plan for finding and preparing leaders for their role.

5. **Church Website**
Consider how you will use you church's website as part of your Adult Faith Formation Plan. For example:

- ✓ provide adult formation programming online for adults
- ✓ provide resources for adults to download
- ✓ connect adults to faith formation programs on other websites
- ✓ network adults engaged in faith formation
- ✓ market/advertise adult formation offerings

6. **Program Guide**
Create an adult faith formation program guide with your annual or seasonal offerings (your "course catalog" and calendar) in print format and online format (PDF, online calendar, etc.). Develop descriptions for every learning activity, indicating clearly the content or focus of the program and the particulars, such as date, location, cost, time, website location, etc.

7. **Spiritual/Learning Assessment**
Create an assessment tool (with a print and online version) that can help adults in your church assess their spiritual growth and identify their needs for learning. The United Methodist Church of the Resurrection in Leawood, KS has developed a tool to assist adults in their church to assess where they are in their faith journey and their needs of continuing growth and learning (see handout).

We invite you to join us on the greatest journey of your life – The Journey of Knowing, Loving and Serving God – as we strive to become a community of deeply committed Christians. We know that sometimes getting started can be daunting, especially in such a large church, but we want to travel this journey with you. Our Adult Discipleship Ministry offers you a navigation system that provides directions, routes and traveling companions to support and encourage you along the way. We believe that nothing in the world will bring you greater joy, greater challenge and greater meaning than the journey into life as God intended us to live it. To help encourage and equip you for your Journey, we've created the Journey assessment tool.

Visit their website to see their adult faith formation offerings and the assessment tool: www.cor.org/programs-ministries/thejourney.

8. **Marketing**
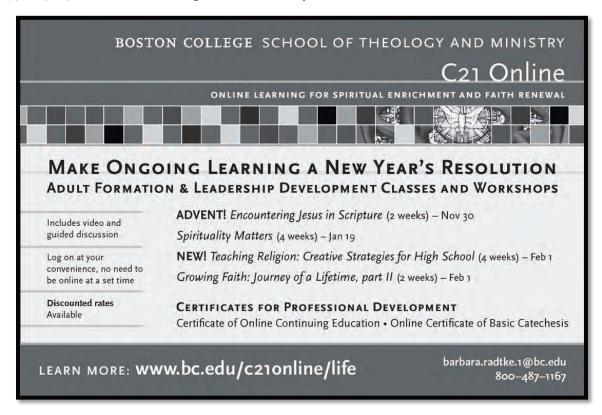
   Develop your marketing plan for adult faith formation. Consult the handout, "Marketing Suggestions" for a process and ideas. United Methodist Communications has an excellent online guide with a process and practical strategies for developing a marketing plan: www.umcom.org/site/c.mrLZJ9PFKmG/ b.5160951/k.54F3/Church_Marketing_Plan.htm.

9. **Evaluate**

   Develop an evaluation form for each type of learning activity so that you can receive feedback on the quality and effectiveness of the learning activity (see worksheet for examples). These can be done online or in person. Each season schedule a team meeting to review the past season's offerings, make adjustments and revisions, and plan for the next season.

Worksheets & Handouts

1. An Inventory of Current Faith Formation Programming
2. Researching Adult Life Issues and Learning Needs
3. Adult Faith Formation Interviews
4. Profile of Adult Life Issues and Learning Needs
5. Priority Issues and Learning Needs for Adult Faith Formation
6. Researching Learning Resources
7. Integrated Adult Faith Formation Learning Plans
8. Digital Media and Online Strategies for Adult Faith Formation
9. Spiritual Assessment Tool (The United Methodist Church of the Resurrection)
10. Marketing Suggestions
11. Sample Questions for Evaluating an Adult Learning Activity

Adult Faith Formation Learning Resources System

An Inventory of Current Adult Faith Formation Programming

Use this format to develop an inventory of your adult faith formation programming.

1. Learning on Your Own

■ Examples: reading, online courses, audio and video programs, movies, television programs

What are the ways your church promotes and supports Learning on Your Own?

Learning Activity	Participants/Target Group	Resources Used	Delivery System	Date/Timing

2. Learning in Small Groups

■ Examples: Bible and theology study groups, social issues study groups, faith sharing groups, lectionary-based groups, service/mission action groups, support groups, special interest groups

What types of small groups does your church offer?

Type of Small Group	Topic/Theme	Participants/Target Group	Resources Used	Date/Timing

3. Learning in Large Groups

■ Examples: courses, speaker series, workshops, film festivals, conferences, intergenerational programs

What types of large group learning activities or programs does your church offer?

Learning Activity/Program	Topic/Theme	Participants/Target Group	Resources	Date/Timing

4. Learning in the Congregation

■ Examples: Sunday worship, church year events and celebrations, service/mission activities, ministry and leadership in the church and community

How are people helped to learn through their participation in congregational events and ministries?

Church Event or Activity	Date/Timing	Ways People Are Helped to Learn through their Participation

5. Learning in the Community and World

■ Examples: programs/courses/clinics/workshops/presentations at universities, retreat centers, YMCAs, libraries, bookstores, regional church programs; through engagement in community/political action, local and global service/justice organizations and projects

How does your church utilize and promote learning opportunities in the community/world? How does your church support people's participation and help them to learning through their participation ?

Learning Activity, Group, or Program	Organization	Ways People Are Helped to Learn through their Participation	Date/Timing

Adult Faith Formation Learning Resources System

Researching Adult Life Issues and Learning Needs

Together as a team research and discuss the important issues and learning needs of your church's adults.

Life Issues

■ What's happening in the lives and world of adults in your church today: family, work, leisure, relationships, sexuality, suffering and grief, social and political issues, etc.?

Life Tasks

■ What are the developmental life tasks facing adults in the major life periods: 20s-30s, 40s-50s, 60s-70s, 80s-90s?

Milestones and Transitions

■ What significant milestones/transitions are adults in your church experiencing, such as geographic relocations, family formation and re-formation, career changes, empty nests, retirement, unanticipated illness, divorce, loss of loved ones, etc.?

Religious Needs

■ What are the significant religious learning needs of adults in your church, such as understanding the Bible and relating it lie today, understanding the faith tradition and beliefs and how to live them today, making Christian moral decisions, etc.

Spiritual Needs

■ What are the significant spiritual needs of adults in your church, such as growing in their relationship with God; living as disciples of Jesus Christ in their daily life at home, in the workplace, in the community and the world; spiritual disciplines and traditions; prayer, etc.?

Ethnic/Cultural Needs

■ What are the unique lived experiences, needs, and aspirations of people from each ethnic/cultural community in your church?

Adult Faith Formation Learning Resources System

Adult Faith Formation Interviews

Interview Groups

Organize focus groups of 6-12 people in each of the following age groups of adulthood: 1) 20-30, 2) 40-50, 3) 60-75, and 4) 75+. Be sure to select a diversity of adults who reflect the ethnic and socio-economic character of your church, and the various states in life (single, married, divorced, etc.)

Interview Questions

Use the following questions as the basis of your focus group interviews.

1. **How would you describe your age group in key words or phrases?**

2. **What are some of the key life tasks that your age group is experiencing?**

3. **What are some of the important life issues that your age group is experiencing today?**

4. **What are the most meaningful experiences you have in life? What makes these experiences meaningful to you?**

5. **How important is your relationship with God? Why?**

6. **Where do you experience God most?**

7. **What are the significant spiritual issues that your age group is experiencing today?**

8. **What is most important to you about being a Christian (or your particular faith tradition) today?**

9. **How do you live your Christian faith? Name some of the ways you put your faith into practice.**

10. **How can the church help you to continue growing as a Christian? Be specific. Name some of the things you would like to see your church offer for adults?**

Adult Faith Formation Learning Resources System

Profile of Adult Life Issues and Learning Needs

Based on your research, discussion, and focus group interviews, develop a profile of the adults in your church.

	20-30 year olds	40-50 year olds	60-75 year olds	75+ year olds
Life Issues				
Life Tasks				
Milestones and Transitions				
Religious Needs				
Spiritual Needs				
Ethnic/ Cultural Needs				
What they want the church to offer				

Adult Faith Formation Learning Resources System

Priority Issues and Learning Needs for Adult Faith Formation

Identify the most important life issues and learning needs from your Profile that
your church's adult faith formation should address in the coming year(s).

20-30 year olds	40-50 year olds	60-75 year olds	75+ year olds

Adult Faith Formation Learning Resources System

Researching Learning Resources

Use this format to research and catalog your learning resources.

1. People Resources

➢ Using your priority issues and learning needs as guide, conduct a gifts/talents/skills/knowledge survey of the people resources in your church, the wider community, the diocese/synod/regional church body, colleges and universities, church-related organizations, etc. who can be invited to take a leadership role in the adult faith formation plan. Consider people who teach courses or specialized programs, guest presenters on specialized topics, leaders for small groups and Bible studies, prayer guides/spiritual directors, leaders for service/mission programs, etc.

Life Issue/Learning Need	Potential Program Leader	Particular Gift/Talent/Skill/Knowledge

2. Face-to-Face Learning Activity Resources

➢ Identify face-to-face learning activities that you can use to address the priority issues and learning needs. There are a variety of options: 1) programs that your church is already sponsoring, 2) an opportunity that you are not utilizing (e.g., design reflection activities around Sunday worship), 3) a new program that your church can adopt, and 4) a program that you can promote as part of your plan and encourage adult participation. Consider programs in your church, the wider community, the diocese/synod/regional church body, retreat and conference centers, colleges and universities, church-related organizations, etc.
➢ Indicate the **learning model(s)** used in the program: Learning on Your Own, Learning in Small Group, Learning in Large Group, Learning in the Congregation, and/or Learning in the Community and World.

Life Issue/Learning Need	Learning Program & Sponsor	Learning Models	Location	Date/Timing	Cost

3. Print and Media Learning Activity Resources

➢ Identify print and media resources from publishers and learning organizations that you can use to address the priority issues and learning needs. Review the **Adult Faith Formation Resource Guides** for assistance.
➢ Indicate the **learning model(s)** used in the resource: Learning on Your Own, Learning in Small Group, Learning in Large Group, Learning in the Congregation, and/or Learning in the Community and World.

Life Issue/Learning Need	Resource	Producer	Learning Models	Cost

4. Online Learning Activity Resources

➢ Identify online learning activity resources that you can use to address the priority issues and learning needs. Review the **Adult Faith Formation Resource Guides** for assistance.
➢ Indicate the **learning model(s)** used in the resource: Learning on Your Own, Learning in Small Group, Learning in Large Group, Learning in the Congregation, and/or Learning in the Community and World.

Life Issue/Learning Need	Website	Learning Activity	Website Address	Cost

Adult Faith Formation Learning Resources System

Integrated Adult Faith Formation Learning Activity Plans

Create Adult Faith Formation Learning Activity Plans to address each of the important life issues and learning needs. Decide which learning activities you will incorporate in your plan. You will also need to determine if there are priority needs for which there are no program resources. The team will need to design new programs to address these needs.

A Learning Activity Plan addresses a life issue or learning need with learning opportunities and resources using the five learning models:

1. learning on your own
2. learning in small groups
3. learning in large groups
4. learning in the congregation
5. learning in the community/world

A Learning Activity Plan incorporates a variety of ways to learn in face-to-face, physical places and in virtual, online spaces.

- **Physical**: church, homes, coffee shop, colleges, service/mission sites, retreat centers, monasteries, theaters, community sites, etc.
- **Online**: audio and video podcasts, print resources, online courses, website links for further learning, online community and social networking, topic-specific blogs, etc.

Each Adult Faith Formation Learning Activity Plan seeks to incorporate a variety of ways to learn: differing levels of depth and commitment, a variety of learning models reflecting the diversity of learning styles, online and face-to-face learning, and times and locations that are convenient for adults. This approach means that adults can have a variety of ways to learn a topic, removing many of the more common obstacles to adult learning in churches.

Example
Spiritual Formation Learning Activity Plan
Focus: Learning Spiritual Disciplines and Practices

On Your Own
- Daily Prayer: www.sacredspace.ie, www.taize.fr, www.upperroom.org, www.loyolapress.com
- Fixed Hour Prayer: www.explorefaith.org/prayer/fixed/hours.php
- Spiritual Guides: a list of individuals available for 1-1 spiritual mentoring
- Spiritual Reading: a list of recommended books on the church website
- Online Retreat: *A 34 week retreat for Everyday Life* from Creighton University, http://onlineministries.creighton.edu/ CollaborativeMinistry/cmo-retreat.html
- Weekly and Seasonal Prayer Resources: online and in booklets
- Online Spirituality Course: 40-day retreats with spiritual guides like Thomas Merton, Joyce Rupp, Henri Nouwen, and Joan Chittister from Spirituality and Practice, www.SpiritualityandPractice.com

In Small Groups
- Spiritual Formation Course: *Companions in Christ: A Small-Group Experience in Spiritual Formation*, Upper Room Books, www.companionsinchrist.org

In Large Groups
- Intergenerational Learning Programs on Prayer: monthly sessions for all ages on prayer practices
- Retreat Experience: at church or a retreat center
- Workshop Series on the Spiritual Disciplines: Lectio Divina, silence, contemplation, the Examen, meditation, spiritual reading, fixed hour prayer
- Monastery Trip: experiencing monastic life

In the Congregation
- Prayer Room: with resources about prayer and spiritual practices
- Advent and Lent Prayer Services

Learning Activities for Adult Faith Formation

Learning on Your Own
- ✓ Reading
- ✓ Bible Reading
- ✓ Devotions
- ✓ Prayer and Spiritual Practices/Disciplines
- ✓ Online Theology and Bible Courses
- ✓ Online Spirituality Courses
- ✓ Online Spiritual Formation
- ✓ Online Retreats
- ✓ Spiritual Direction
- ✓ Milestones/Life Transitions Resources and Support
- ✓ Mentoring and Apprenticeship
- ✓ Audio Podcasts
- ✓ Video Podcasts
- ✓ Feature Films
- ✓ Television Programs

Learning in Small Groups
- ✓ Book Clubs
- ✓ Bible Study Groups
- ✓ Lectionary-Based Small Groups
- ✓ Prayer Groups
- ✓ Theology Study Groups
- ✓ Social Issues Study-Action Groups (e.g., *JustFaith*, *JustSkills*, *JustMatters*, and *Engaging Spirituality*: www.justfaith.org)
- ✓ Discipleship and Faith Sharing Groups
- ✓ Christian Practices Small Groups
- ✓ *Living Your Strengths* Small Group Program (book, DVD, and leader's kit)
- ✓ Service/Mission Action Groups
- ✓ Kindred Groups (mom's groups, men and women groups, parents groups)
- ✓ Recovery Groups (divorce, addition, depression)
- ✓ Special Interest Groups
- ✓ Movie Discussion Group
- ✓ Career Transitions Group (exploring a new career or seeking a new career direction)
- ✓ Life Transitions Groups (family changes, retirement, loss of loved ones)

Learning in Large Groups
- ✓ Theological Topics Courses
- ✓ Bible Courses
- ✓ Introduction to Christian Faith Courses (e.g., Alpha course: www.alphausa.org)

- ✓ Life Issues Courses
- ✓ Parenting Classes and Workshops
- ✓ Intergenerational Programs
- ✓ Speaker Series
- ✓ Single-Session Programs
- ✓ Workshops
- ✓ Round Table Discussions
- ✓ Field Trips (museums, monastery, theater, concert)
- ✓ Faith and Film Festivals
- ✓ Retreats
- ✓ Conferences
- ✓ Faith and Music Concert
- ✓ Financial Planning Course (e.g., Financial Peace University by Dave Ramsey: www.daveramsey.com and Crown Financial Study: www.crown.org)
- ✓ Milestones Faith Formation: 1) preparation for a milestone, 2) church celebration, and 3) continued learning, resources, and support

Learning in the Congregation
- ✓ Sunday worship (lectionary and sermon study)
- ✓ Church year seasons and events (Advent, Lent, Holy Week, etc.)
- ✓ Service/Mission Projects
- ✓ Ministry and Leadership
- ✓ Milestone and Life Transition Celebrations

Learning in the Community and World
- ✓ College/University/Seminary Programs (programs, courses, clinics, workshops, lecture series)
- ✓ Retreat Center Programs
- ✓ Monastery Programs/Experiences
- ✓ YMCA/YWCA
- ✓ Library Programs
- ✓ Bookstore Programs and Reading Groups
- ✓ Regional Church Programs
- ✓ Community Social/Political Action
- ✓ Local and Global Service and Action for Justice (organizations and projects)
- ✓ Community Lunch and Learn (community leaders speaking about key issues in the community)

Adult Faith Formation Learning Resources System

Adult Faith Formation Learning Activity Plan Worksheet

Use this worksheet for each life issue or learning need that you will include in your Adult Faith Formation Plan.

Life Issue or Learning Need: _____

Target Participants: _____

Learning Activities

Learning Model List each activity.	Learning Resources List resources to be used.	Leaders List leaders involved.	Date Timing
Learning on Your Own			
Learning in Small Groups			
Learning in Large Groups			
Learning in the Congregation			
Learning in the Community and World			

An Adult Faith Formation Learning Resources System needs to take advantage of the abilities and resources that the new media afford: websites, online learning, email/texting/Twitter, social networking, and digital technologies (an iPod Touch, smart cell phones like the iPhone). This means that churches can deliver faith formation experiences and resources anytime and anywhere, reaching people wherever they go online (home, work, school, vacation, coffee house). Utilizing the new media will revolutionize adult faith formation in a church. Think of the possibilities for using the new media:

- A virtual faith formation center 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 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 faith formation resources

The good news is that your church doesn't have to create all of this content or web programming. You can use your church's website (perhaps with some redesign), and existing technologies and resources to take advantage of all the new digital media. Do a little research on the ways churches are using their websites as platforms for extending and expanding people's experience of church and faith formation. Here are several churches to begin your research:

- Christ Presbyterian Church (Minnesota): www.cpconline.org
- Ginghamsburg Church (Ohio): http://ginghamsburg.org/
- New Hope Church, Hawaii www.enewhope.org/
- New Song Church (Southern California): www.newsong.net/
- Northcoast Church (San Diego): www.northcoastchurch.com
- Redeemer Presbyterian Church (New York City): www.redeemer.com

1. Connecting to Podcasts and Courses at iTunes University

iTunes U, part of the iTunes Store, is possibly the world's greatest collection of free educational media available to students, teachers, and lifelong learners. With over 200,000 educational audio and video files available, iTunes U has quickly become the engine for the mobile learning movement. With a computer or iPhone (or other video-enhanced phone) or iPod Touch, iTunes U is directly accessible over both cellular and Wi-Fi networks through the iTunes Store. Audio and video podcasts let university students and adult learners study at their own pace, wherever and whenever they want.

A course or podcast (audio or video) from iTunes U can be used as the content for Learning on Your Own or for Learning in a Small Group or as the content presentation for Learning in a Large Group (using a computer and projector). Using the iTunes search engine you can identify your topic and search through hundreds of faith-related podcasts (audio

and video) and courses. Download the iTunes software at: www.apple.com/itunes.

A Catholic parish could utilize a podcast series, *Catholic Comments*, produced by professors J.J. O'Keefe and W.M. Wright of Creighton University on topics relating Catholic theology and life. These podcasts could be connected to religious learning needs in the Learning Resources System and linked to iTunes U. A second example is a complete 26-session course, *Introduction to New Testament History and Literature*, by professor Dale Martin of Yale University covering each of the books of the New Testament.

2. Connecting to Online Courses

Many universities and seminaries offer continuing education courses in theology, scripture, and the Christian life for adults. These courses can be incorporated into an adult faith formation plan as Learning on Your Own experience by connecting adults to the course's website. Courses can also be used as a Learning in a Small Group experience using a presentation with a computer and large screen monitor or projector and screen.

Here are three examples of online courses that can be a part of a church's adult faith formation plan. Be sure to research online continuing education courses for adults at your denomination's seminaries and universities.

- C21 Online at Boston College (www.bc.edu/sites/ c21online). C21 Online, or Church in the 21st Century Online, offers non-credit online courses for adult spiritual enrichment and faith formation. With a focus on shared reflection in an online learning community, C21 Online models the kind of conversation and participation that lead to deeper understanding of and personal growth in faith.
- STEP Online Theology at University of Notre Dame (http://step.nd.edu). STEP offers online courses designed and developed by a professor from Notre Dame's Department of Theology and then delivered by a STEP facilitator.
- The Virtual Learning Community for Faith Formation (VLCFF) at University of Dayton (http://vlc.udayton.edu). VLCFF offers dozens of online courses in theology, scripture, and Christian life in seven cycles through the year.

3. Connecting to Website Content-Providers

Many websites provide content-rich faith formation resources that you can utilize as part of your Adult Faith Formation Plan. Select the websites and resources that you want, include the information in your adult faith formation program guide, and provide links to these websites from your church's website.

Here are a few of the excellent content-rich websites that you can utilize:

- www. bustedhalo.com (young adult)
- www.thethoughtfulchristian.com (bible studies related to today's world)
- www.spiritualityandpractice.com (spiritual practices and spiritual life courses)
- www.loyolapress.com (faith formation and spirituality resources)
- www.practicingourfaith.org (Christian practices resources and study guides)
- http://leaderresources.org (Christian formation resources for adults and all ages)

4. Creating a Social Network

Creating online communities and social networks should become an important component of an Adult Faith Formation Plan and it has never been easier when a church uses an established social networking site, such as Facebook, LinkedIn, and Ning. The top reason for beginning a social network is to connect with church members, but churches now use their social network to communicate important upcoming events and volunteer opportunities to members of the congregation. Here are two examples.

Christians @Work
(The United Methodist Church of the Resurrection, Leawood, KS and LinkedIn, www.linkedin.com)

We are Business Leaders living Christian principles and values that transform the workplace. The mission of the Christians @ Work ministry is to help business leaders become deeply committed Christians and to apply those values in the workplace. The ministry is dedicated to

establishing a fellowship among Resurrection and community Christian business leaders by:

- *providing opportunities to join small groups of business leaders that encourage one another and explore how to best integrate their faith into the workplace,*
- *offering periodic network events at Resurrection and elsewhere in partnership with regional and national Christian workplace organizations.*

How Do I Get Connected?
- *Join our Christians@Work online network at LinkedIn. By joining this network, you will receive communications about upcoming events and opportunities.*
- *Sign up to join or start a new group. A list of groups are located at the right side of this page. Pick a group that works best for you and email the leader. We will help you get started, identify others in your area, and pick studies for group meetings.*

Book of Faith Initiative
http://bookoffaith.ning.com
(The Book of Faith Initiative of the ELCA and Ning, www.ning.com)

The purpose of the Book of Faith Initiative is to increase biblical literacy and fluency for the sake of the world. The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America has made a commitment to encourage all members of our congregations, from children to adults, to dig deeper into our book of faith, the Bible. The Book of Faith Initiative recommends a new model for our church—a grass-roots approach embracing a common vision in which all are invited to open scripture and join the conversation. Each community is encouraged to decide.

The Ning Bible of Faith Network includes 1) stories of churches implementing the Book of Faith Initiative, 2) a blog, 3) conversations, 4) interest groups, 5) videos and photos, 6) event listings, and 6) resources.

5. Creating a Podcast
(From "Podcasting Faith: Media for Ministry" by Mike Hayes, *Lifelong Faith* Volume 2.4, Winter 2008)

The steps to podcasting are simple enough. First, you need a way to record audio in digital format. This can be done several ways. You can buy an audio recorder from a high end audio/video store. You can spend a lot of money and build a studio in your church basement and soundproof the room. Or you can simply plug a microphone into your computer or run a cable from your church's sound system into your audio recording device as well. I do all three. I bought a rather inexpensive mp3 recorder from Radio Shack that had good enough quality. I downloaded an audio editor from the internet for free (audacity.com) and my boss and I built a studio in his religious community's basement in a room that ironically was once a radio station. When I'm on the road, I use my audio recorder often—to interview people I meet, to record meditation services or reflections that I preach at services or even to simply describe a scene in a unique venue (like World Youth Day with the Pope or the World Series in Philadelphia). We sit down weekly in our studio and simply answer a question of faith that is on the minds of young adults and my priest friends record their homilies right off of their audio system.

Further innovations include the BustedHalo® Pod Retreat where we take the reflection witness talks that young people give and expose them to a wider audience. We provide additional technical support by forming a discussion group online and even connecting them with a spiritual director that they can chat with over the internet for some further direction.

People find these podcasts on what is called a Podcast aggregator—a website of sorts that lists podcasts and creates a link not merely for you to download the podcasts but also for you to subscribe to it. iTunes is the most popular aggregator on the internet and that is where people can find your podcasts after you list it in their directory.

Sounds confusing? It's not. What's more is that there are two places that will lead you step by step through the process. One is a book called *Podcast Solutions* by Michael Geoghegan and Dan Klass (Berkeley: Friends of Ed, 2007). This book is what I used when we started our podcast at BustedHalo® Ministries. The second source is BustedHalo.com® our website where Fr. Dave Dwyer has listed the steps for how to podcast at the bottom of our homepage.

6. Creating a Blog

Blogs are an excellent way to share information about your church, adult faith formation, the Bible, theology, etc. with the adults in your church and to engage them in sharing their thoughts, ideas, practices, etc. Churches can develop a variety of blogs to engage people in continuing learning around specific learning activities, programs, and events.

Generally speaking (although there are exceptions), blogs tend to have a few things in common: 1) a main content area with articles listed chronologically, newest on top, and often organized into categories; 2) an archive of older articles; 3) a way for people to leave comments about the articles; and 4) a list of links to other related sites, sometimes called a "blogroll"; and 5) one or more "feeds" like RSS, Atom or RDF files.

Content is the raison d'être for any web site. Retail sites feature a catalog of products. University sites contain information about their campuses, curriculum, and faculty. News sites show the latest news stories. For a personal blog, you might have a bunch of observations, or reviews. Without some sort of updated content, there is little reason to visit a web site more than once.

On a blog, the content consists of articles (also sometimes called "posts" or "entries") that the author(s) writes. Yes, some blogs have multiple authors, each writing his or her own articles. Typically, blog authors compose their articles in a web-based interface, built into the blogging system itself. Some blogging systems also support the ability to use stand-alone "weblog client" software, which allows authors to write articles offline and upload them at a later time.

Want an interactive website? Wouldn't it be nice if the readers of a website could leave comments, tips or impressions about the site or a specific article? With blogs, they can! Posting comments is one of the most exciting features of blogs. Most blogs have a method to allow visitors to leave comments. There are also nifty ways for authors of other blogs to leave comments without even visiting the blog! Called "pingbacks" or "trackbacks," they can inform other bloggers whenever they cite an article from another site in their own articles. All this ensures that online conversations can be maintained painlessly among various site users and websites.

Two of the more popular, free, and easy-to-use blogging sites and services are Blogger and WordPress. They both provide you with the tools and templates for developing a blog, and you can host your blog on their sites if you want. Check out the tools and services: Blogger: www.blogger.com; WordPress: http://wordpress.org.

The 5 Immutable Laws of Persuasive Blogging
Brian Clark (www.copyblogger.com)

Blogging is a great way to grow a business, promote a cause, or spread new ideas, because when you take an educational approach to marketing, you gain the attention and trust of people who might otherwise simply ignore old-fashioned advertising. Not only can those people become your customers or converts, they can also become your advocates. While there are as many ways to approach blogging as there are blogs, some things remain steadfast when it comes to gaining influence and prompting action. Here are the 5 bedrock elements to keep in mind when you blog to persuade:

1. ***The Law of Value***: Your blog must provide value to the reader by addressing a problem, concern, desire, or need that the reader already has. Fresh, original content is critical.

2. ***The Law of Headlines and Hooks***: Your post titles must stand out in a crowded, noisy blogosphere, and you must quickly communicate the value of reading further with your opening.

3. ***The Law of "How To"***: People don't want to know "what" you can do, they want to know "how" it's done. If you think you're giving away too much information, you're on the right track.

4. ***The Law of the List***: Love them or hate them, informational posts presented in list format are easily digestible, and allow for an efficient transfer of your value proposition to the reader.

5. ***The Law of the Story***: Stories are the most persuasive blogging element of all, as they allow you to present a problem, the solution, and the results, all while the connotation of the story allows readers to sell themselves on what you have to offer.

Digital Media and Online Resources

Podcast Solutions: The Complete Guide to Audio and Video Podcasting
Michael Geoghegan and Dan Klas (Berkeley: friends of Ed, 2007) [$24.99]

Podcast Solutions is a comprehensive and perceptive guide to all things podcasting, covering the entire world of podcasting whether you want to use podcasting to inform, educate, entertain, or inspire, whether you are a complete novice or an experienced professional. In this book you'll learn 1) how to find and download audio and video podcasts to your computer or portable media player, 2) how to develop, format, produce, edit, encode, and upload your audio or video podcast, 3) how to set up an effective audio studio, and 4) how to create great video.

Web Empower Your Church: Unleashing the Power of Internet Ministry
Mark M. Stephenson. (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2006. $23.50)

Web-Empower Your Church offers step-by-step guidance to web implementers and other church leaders who are on the exciting journey to building an effective web ministry. The book offers first-hand advice on every aspect of building an internet ministry: from assembling a team to designing and maintaining the website to adding powerful ministry features. The accompanying CD-ROM contains documentation, training, and a demonstration version of website software.
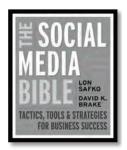
The Blogging Church: Sharing the Story of Your Church through Blogs
Brian Bailey with Terry Storch (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2007) [$19.95]

The Blogging Church offers church leaders a field manual for using the social phenomenon of blogs to connect people and build communities in a whole new way. Inside you will find the why, what, and how of blogging in the local church. Filled with illustrative examples and practical advice, the authors answer key questions learned on the frontlines of ministry: How does it benefit ministry? How do I build a great blog? and Who am I blogging for? *The Blogging Church* is a handbook that will inspire and equip you to join the conversation.

Reaching Out in A Networked World
Lynne Baab. (Herndon, VA: Alban Institute, 2008) [$18]

In *Reaching Out in a Networked World*, communications expert and pastor Lynne Baab examines technologies such as websites, blogs, online communities, and desktop publishing. She demonstrates how a congregation can evaluate these tools and appropriately use them to communicate its heart and soul, to convey its identity and values both within and outside the congregation. Baab urges congregation leaders to reflect on the way they communicate. The recent explosion in communication technologies offers many new ways to present values and identity.
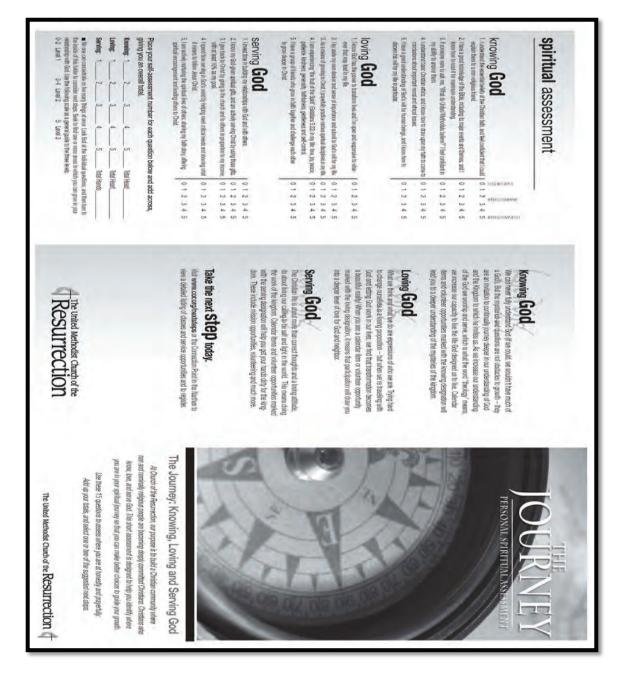
The Social Media Bible: Tactics, Tools & Strategies
Lon Safko and David K. Brake (Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley Publishers, 2009) [$29.95]

The Social Media Bible will show you how to build or transform your organization into a social media-enabled enterprise where people can connect and collaborate. You'll learn how to engage people in new forms of communication, collaboration, education, and entertainment; determine which social media tactics you should be using; evaluate and categorize the tools and applications that constitute the rapidly evolving social media ecosystem, make social media tools like Facebook, MySpace, YouTube, Twitter, blogging, podcasting, and hundreds of others a part of your strategy.

Adult Faith Formation Learning Resources System

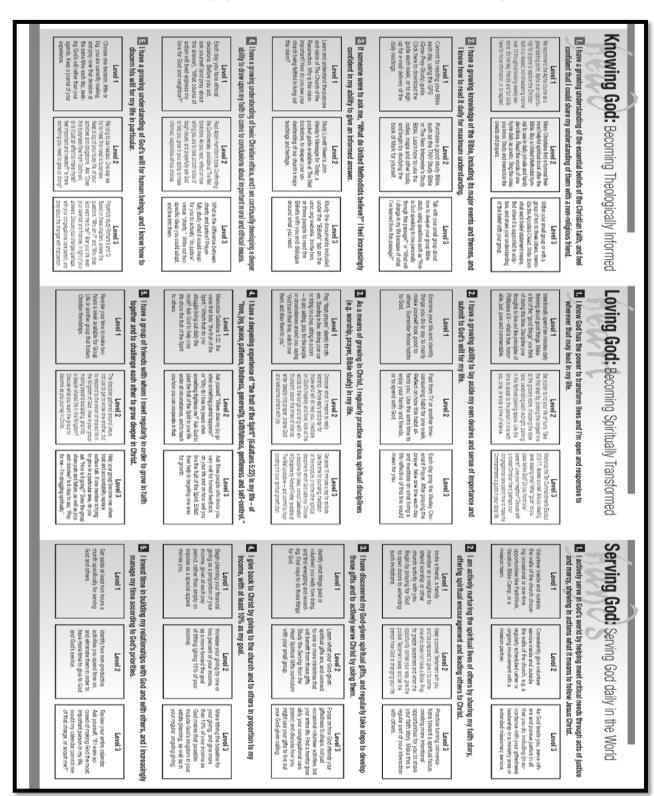## Spiritual Assessment Tool

The United Methodist Church of the Resurrection, Leawood, KS
(www.cor.org/programs-ministries/thejourney)

We invite you to join us on the greatest journey of your life – The Journey of Knowing, Loving and Serving God – as we strive to become a community of deeply committed Christians. We know that sometimes getting started can be daunting, especially in such a large church, but we want to travel this journey with you. Our Adult Discipleship Ministry offers you a navigation system that provides directions, routes and traveling companions to support and encourage you along the way. We believe that nothing in the world will bring you greater joy, greater challenge and greater meaning than the journey into life as God intended us to live it. To help encourage and equip you for your Journey, we've created the Journey assessment tool.

Spiritual Growth Opportunities

This chart offers recommendations for spiritual growth. Adults are also encouraged to go online to: www.cor.org/next steps or the Connection Point in the Narthex of Resurrection Church to view detailed listing of classes and service opportunities and to register.

Knowing God: Becoming Theologically Informed

Loving God: Becoming Spiritually Transformed

Serving God: Serving God daily in the World

Creating Your Message

Here are five things to remember as you develop your marketing plan. You may need to develop several "messages" for each target audience (20s-30s, 40-50s, 60s-70s, and 75+). Be sure to pay careful attention to the titles of your programs so that they capture people's interests. Develop descriptions that are positive in tone, indicate clearly the content or focus of the program, and include the particulars (date, location, cost, and time).

1. **Find the inherent drama within your offering**: What's interesting in your program offerings? How does it respond to something within the lives of people? Connect the program offerings to the real needs of adults.
2. **Translate that inherent drama into a meaningful benefit**: What are the major benefits in participating in adult faith formation? Why should people respond? The benefit should come directly from the inherently dramatic feature. And even though you have four or five benefits, stick with one or two—three at most.
3. **Get people's attention**: How will you interest people in adult faith formation? People do not pay attention to advertising. They pay attention only to things that interest them. So you've just got to interest them.
4. **Motivate your audience to do something**: What do you want people to do once you've introduced the adult faith formation offerings? You must tell people exactly what you want them to do. Tell them to go online a register for a program, complete an interest finder, send in a registration form, call someone, etc.
5. **Be sure you are communicating clearly**: Do adults understand what you're talking about? Make sure you are putting your message across. Show your promotion or booklet or advertising to ten people and ask them what the main point is. If one person misunderstands, that means 10 percent of the audience will misunderstand. Make revisions so your message is clear.

■ United Methodist Communications has a great online resource for developing a marketing plan. Go to www.umcom.org/site/c.mrLZJ9PFKmG/b.5160951/k.54F3/Church_Marketing_Plan.htm.

Developing Your Marketing Strategies

1. Create a seasonal or annual adult faith formation program booklet in various formats: print, online in PDF, online calendar, etc.
2. Use your church's website to post regular announcements, new program offerings, calendar, etc.
3. Establish a Facebook site for your church's adult faith formation and include a calendar of events with descriptions, locations, times, a link to your church's website, current news, stories from adults who are participating in learning activities, etc.
4. Send email invitations to adults in the church community. Target your message to particular groups or ages.
5. Send personalized and targeted invitations by mail to people with a letter, program booklet, registration form, etc.
6. Have the pastor share the importance and benefits of adult faith formation and the church's program offerings at Sunday worship.
7. Use orientation or information sessions to describe the benefits of adult faith formation and introduce each new season of adult faith formation programming (e.g., coffee and donuts after Sunday worship).
8. Promote program offerings in the community: coffee shops, YMCA/YWCA, gyms, bookstores, theaters, etc.
9. Include information about adult faith formation offerings in new member packets. Send a personalized invitation to new members with the program booklet.
10. Send a personalized invitation and program booklet to newly married couples, parents who are having their children baptized, adults who have been fully initiated into the church (RCIA), et al.
11. Develop a introductory brochure on adult faith formation, the types of programs offered, and how to get more information and register for programs on the church's website.

Adult Faith Formation Learning Resources System

Sample Questions for Evaluating an Adult Learning Activity

Here are a variety of evaluation questions that you can use to construct your own evaluation forms. Be sure to adapt the questions depending the model of learning used and if the learning is in a physical place or online space.

1. What is your overall feeling after participating in this program/learning activity? (Circle all that apply.)
   Enthused   Astounded   Satisfied   Indifferent   Ambivalent   Encouraged   Uneasy   Threatened   Discouraged   Affirmed   Challenged   Enriched
2. This program/learning activity was... very helpful   somewhat helpful   not very helpful   not at all helpful
3. I was pleased by/with...   I was disappointed by/with...
4. One thing I found most helpful during this program/learning activity...
5. One of the biggest benefits from participating in the program/learning activity...
6. One way I can use what I learned in my life...
7. I need to know more about...
8. I'm excited by...   I'm challenged by...
9. What knowledge or practices have you learned that you did not know before the program/learning activity?
10. How do you feel about the amount of presentation/activities/discussion in this program/learning activity?
    ☐ Too much presentation ☐ Too much discussion ☐ Too many activities ☐ Good mixture
11. Circle the number that best represents your evaluation of the program/learning activity.
    (1=strongly disagree, 4 = strongly agree)
    - I feel that I will be able to use what I learned.   1 2 3 4
    - The program was presented in an interesting manner.   1 2 3 4
    - The program covered the promised objectives.   1 2 3 4
    - The presenter encouraged participation, questions, and practical application.   1 2 3 4
    - The schedule and length of the program was appropriate.   1 2 3 4
    - The program utilized my experience effectively as a resource for learning.   1 2 3 4
    - The program environment was characterized by physical comfort, mutual trust   1 2 3 4
      and respect, mutual helpfulness, freedom of expression, and acceptance of differences.
    - The program respected my learning style.   1 2 3 4
    - The program offered a variety of learning activities and a variety of ways to learn.   1 2 3 4
    - The program helped me apply my learning to daily life, so that I could see the   1 2 3 4
      results and rewards of the learning experience.
12. Please rate the environment or physical facilities...
    ☐ Fine   ☐ Good   ☐ Okay   ☐ Poor
13. Please rate the scheduling (time, day, month) of the program/learning activity...
    ☐ Fine   ☐ Good   ☐ Okay   ☐ Poor
14. How did you find out about the program/learning activity?
15. Why did you decide to participate in this program/learning activity?
16. What are two or three suggestion for improving this program/learning activity...

Create a Learning Journal for an Adult Learning Activity

Create a learning journal for a program/learning activity that includes the following information:
   To reflect on what you have learned, identify the insights you have gained and the potential application to your life.
   - *Insights (What I've Learned)*
   - *Applications (How I'll Use What I've Learned)*
   - *Questions (What I Need to Learn or Explore Further)*