Families at the Center of faith formation

Leif Kehrwald
John Roberto
Gene Roehlkepartain
Jolene Roehlkepartain

Families at the Center OF faith formation

Leif Kehrwald
John Roberto
Gene Roehlkepartain
Jolene Roehlkepartain

LifelongFaith Associates

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

My child, keep your father's commandment,
     and do not forsake your mother's teaching.
Bind them upon your heart always;
     tie them around your neck.
When you walk, they will lead you;
     when you lie down, they will watch over you;
     and when you awake, they will talk with you.

—Proverbs 6:20–22

● ● ● ● This book is guided by the conviction that families—in all their diversity of family forms, ethnicities, spiritual-religious identities, socioeconomic statuses—*are at the center of Christian faith formation*. We are proposing a "Family-at-the Center Approach" to faith formation that recognizes that parents and the family are the most powerful influence for virtually every child and youth outcome—personal, academic, social, and spiritual-religious; and that parents are *the* most important influence on the social and religious lives of children, youth, and emerging adults. Given the central role of families in shaping the lives of children and youth, the value of engaging, supporting, and educating families should be self-evident to all of us.

This book seeks to address these questions.

What might a new approach to family faith formation look like that starts with the life experience of twenty-first families?

What insights should inform us and guide the development of a new family faith formation approach and the creation of strategies to implement the approach?

How do we promote discipleship and faith growth in all parents and families—engaging them in a process of experiencing, learning, and practicing the Christian faith and following Jesus and his way in today's world?

And how can we develop an approach that provides a platform for reaching every family in our faith communities and in the wider community?

Embracing the Family-at-the Center Approach means adopting a new set of attitudes and assumptions about families and faith formation, including:

- Seeing the home as the essential and foundational environment for faith nurture, faith practice, and the healthy development of young people.
- Reinforcing the family's central role in promoting healthy development and faith growth in children and youth, and enhancing the faith-forming capacity of parents and grandparents.
- Building faith formation around the lives of the today's families and parents, rather than having the congregation prescribe the programs and activities in which families will participate.
- Addressing the diversity of family life today by moving away from one-size-fits-all programs and strategies toward a variety of programs and strategies tailored to the unique life tasks and situations, concerns and interest, and religious-spiritual journeys of parents and families.
- Overcoming the age-segregated nature of church and its programming by engaging parents and the whole family in meaningful intergenerational relationships and faith formation that involves all ages and families.
- Building upon the assets, strengths, and capacities present in parents and families rather than focusing on their deficits and solving problems.
- Partnering with parents in working toward shared goals and aspirations for their young people by supporting, equipping, and resourcing them.

Embracing the Family-at-the Center Approach means letting go of outdated attitudes and practices that tend to dominate congregations' approach to families. It means letting go of control over families—which congregations really don't have anyway—and becoming family friendly and family responsive in everything we do. It means moving away from spending time, energy, and resources to get parents and families to comply with congregational priorities and expectations ("what we want them to do") toward becoming responsive to what is happening in the lives of parents and families, and engaging with them wherever they may be.

We are proposing a new comprehensive approach to family faith formation that realizes the vision of *families at the center of faith formation* and is better suited to the challenges and opportunities of the twenty-first century. We are proposing an approach that promotes growth in faith and discipleship, develops the family as a community of faith and school of discipleship, and equips parents (and grandparents) to transmit the religious tradition at home. This new approach is grounded in solid research on what promotes growth in faith and healthy individual and family development, and addresses the family as a whole, its individual members (children, teens, emerging adults), parents/grandparents, and the faith community. It builds a connection between families and the congregation and provides congregations with a plan for how they can engage and equip families toward the goals of deeper faith and discipleship.

In **Chapter One,** "Transforming Narratives of Families in the Twenty-first Century," Gene Roehlkepartain proposes six shifts in emphasis that have potential to transform the narrative of faith formation in families and create a new narrative that can more effectively guide how we understand and engage families as the center of faith formation in the twenty-first century. He argues that the dominant narratives about families and faith formation are either inaccurate or, at best, capture only part of the reality. Just as troubling, from a practitioner perspective, is that these narratives—in addition to being inaccurate—are neither helpful nor hopeful for shaping whether and how faith communities engage with families as partners in nurturing children, including faith formation.

It's time to weave together a new, hopeful, and practical narrative. To make this case, Gene examines the competing narratives about families in US society and then argues that, in the midst of dramatic social change, families remain central to and powerful in forming the faith of the youngest generations. For congregations to fully partner with families in this formative task, however, they must revisit and reconstruct the narratives that guide our approaches. The chapter concludes by proposing six needed shifts in the narrative in order to unleash the capacity of families to be at the center of faith formation in the twenty-first century.

Chapter Two, "Understanding Twenty-first Century Parents and Families: A Review of Research Trends," presents a summary of current research on family life today, Generation X and Millennial parents, and family religiosity. We know that parents and family life are dramatically different today from earlier generations. It's hard to keep pace with the rapid change within families and in the surrounding society and culture. What is becoming increasingly clear is that families are not responding to congregations—and their programs and activities—that work from outdated understandings of family life. To transform our approaches and move families to the center of faith formation, we need to be familiar with the contemporary lives of families with young people. This will involve keeping current on family and parent research findings *and* listening to the families in our communities.

The chapter summaries key research findings that paint a picture of the world of parents and families in the first third of life (with children, adolescents, and emerging adults). It is our belief that listening carefully to the research and to families in our communities is essential for developing a new approach to family faith formation that addresses the "real lives" of parents and families today. If we are going to develop an approach that moves the family to the center of faith formation then we need to understand the lives of today's parent and families.

Chapter Three, "Reimagining Family Faith Formation: Families at the Center," describes seven insights that provide the foundation for the vision of the Family-at-the Center Approach.

1. God is actively present in family life.
2. The family is a community of faith and a "school of discipleship."
3. Faith is formed through eight essential processes.
4. Faith is formed in intergenerational faith communities
5. Faith is formed in developmentally appropriate ways.
6. Parents and the family are the most important religious influence on religious transmission.
7. Parents and families have a diversity of religious-spiritual identities.

In **Chapter Four,** "Growing in Faith as a Family," Leif Kehrwald focuses on how families grow in faith at home and the faith practices that facilitate that growth. These practices lie at the core of family faith transmission. And our listening to parents and families bears that out. In November 2015 we surveyed 926 parents and grandparents from across the United States. We followed up our survey with four online live group interviews with parents of children, parents of teenagers, parents of young adults, and grandparents. Leif's chapter summarizes the findings from parents and also provides research on what kinds of faith-forming activities parents are finding most useful for use at home from VibrantFaithatHome.org.

In **Chapter Five,** "Nurturing the Faith of Young People through the Family," Jolene Roehlkepartain focuses on the processes of growing in faith from childhood through the early years of young adulthood and the role of parents and grandparents in nurturing this growth. She presents ten faith factors that help us understand *how to form faith* in developmentally appropriate ways at each stage of life: young children (0–5), older children (6–10), young adults (11–14), older adolescents (15–18), and emerging adults (19–29). She provides important insights into the way young people think and assimilate information and values at each life stage.

Chapter Six, "Developing the Family-at-the-Center Approach to Faith Formation" presents eight strategies for developing faith formation that brings to life the Families-at-the-Center Approach.

• Discovering God in everyday life.
• Forming faith at home through the life cycle.
• Forming faith through milestones.
• Celebrating seasonal events through the year.

- Encountering God in the Bible through the year.
- Connecting families intergenerationally.
- Developing a strong family life.
- Empowering parents and grandparents.

Chapter Seven, "Designing Faith Formation with Families at the Center," provides a process for creating family faith formation with families at the center. It guides congregations in designing a model of faith formation tailored to the families in your congregation and community using a network model of faith formation, which was described in the book *Reimagining Faith Formation for the 21st Century*, as a way to build a model and a digital platform that integrates a comprehensive approach to family faith formation where families are at the center.

Online Resource Center: Reimagine Faith Formation
Be sure to check out the Reimagine Faith Formation website, developed by LifelongFaith Associates, for articles, models, strategies, and resources for family faith formation (and lifelong faith formation). Family resources can be found in the "Family" section on the Reimagine Faith Formation website: www.reimagine faithformation.com.

About the Authors

Leif Kehrwald has worked in family ministry and faith formation on the local, regional, and national levels for more than thirty years. Leif is the parish pastoral administrator at St. Charles Catholic Church in Portland, Oregon. From May 2011 through June 2016 he worked on the Vibrant Faith staff as program coordinator for Vibrant Faith @ Home and for training services. Leif has published several books and numerous articles on family life, family ministry, marriage, and youth ministry, including *The Catholic Faith and Family Bible*, for which he served as general editor, published by HarperCollins, 2010. He travels frequently throughout the country offering presentations and workshops on family faith development. Leif and his wife, Rene, live in Portland, Oregon.

Gene Roehlkepartain, PhD, is vice president of research and development at Search Institute, a nonprofit organization focused on discovering what kids need to succeed in their families, schools, and communities. Since joining Search Institute in 1991, Gene has contributed to the organization's groundbreaking research and outreach on developmental relationships, Developmental Assets, spiritual development, and character strengths. Gene is author, coauthor, or editor of more than two hundred publications, including more than thirty books and reports. He speaks and leads workshops nationally and internationally. He is the primary creator of Parent Further.com, Search Institute's online resource for families. Gene holds a doctorate in education from the University of Minnesota.

Jolene Roehlkepartain is a writer and speaker on family, children, teenagers, and faith development. She also is the founder and president of Ideas to Ink, an innovative company that focuses on parenting, children's issues, youth develop-ment, and spirituality. Jolene has written thirty-two books, including *Nurturing Faith in Families*, *Raising Healthy Children Day by Day*, *Parenting Preschoolers with a Purpose*, and *Doing Good Together*. Her books have been translated into Chinese, Hindi, Bahasa Indonesia, Polish, and Korean. Jolene and her husband Gene live in Minneapolis, Minnesota. They have two adult children.

John Roberto is president of LifelongFaith Associates, which he founded in 2006, and works as a consultant to churches and national organizations, teaches courses and conducts workshops in faith formation, and has authored books and program manuals in faith formation. His latest publications include *Seasons of Adult Faith Formation* (editor and coauthor, 2015), *Reimagining Faith Formation for the 21st Century* (2015), *Generations Together* (coauthor, 2014), and *Faith Formation 2020* (2010).

Transforming Narratives of Families for the Twenty-first Century

Gene C. Roehlkepartain

• • • • The contrast is always striking: Whether you talk with people in church basements, community centers, or national studies about today's families, you inevitably hear some version of these two statements:

Today's families are really messed up.

and

Nothing is more important to me than my family.

Like our attitudes about schools and members of Congress, we like our own families (and those most like us), but we're pretty sure everyone else is missing the mark. Though it reflects a natural thought process, this dichotomy points toward a vexing challenge for churches, families, and faith formation. On the one hand, we see abundant evidence that families must be falling short in bringing up children in the faith. Yet we also see the determination so many people bring to the challenge of forming children's faith and well-being, even amid daunting circumstances.

At some level, these two sentences also reflect competing narratives that "connect the dots" and reveal patterns to find overall meaning across multiple examples, incidents, and subplots. Each statement can be bolstered with compelling evidence. These narratives help us get our bearings and shape our attitudes and choices. But like a legal brief, evidence can also be selectively used to make a case that doesn't accurately reflect the whole story.

In this chapter I argue that the dominant narratives about families and faith formation are either inaccurate or, at best, capture only part of the reality. Just as troubling, from a practitioner perspective, is that these narratives—in addition to being inaccurate—are neither helpful nor hopeful for shaping whether and how faith communities engage with families as partners in nurturing children, including in faith formation.

In challenging these dominant narratives, I offer an alternate narrative that, by necessity, reflects on my own frame of reference. Since the early 1990s, my colleagues and I at Search Institute have spent considerable energy reframing how children and youth are understood and nurtured in society. This work has called for moving from an almost exclusive focus on young people's risks and deficits toward recognizing and tapping their strengths and contributions across all parts of their lives, from home to school to community to congregation. Even in the midst of their challenges and imperfections, young people from all backgrounds are gifts to be cherished and nurtured by everyone in society so that they can become their best selves.

It is time, I propose, to bring a similar shift in focus to how we think about and engage families. It's time to weave together a new, hopeful, and practical narrative. To make this case, I first examine the competing narratives about families in US society and then argue that, in the midst of dramatic social change, families remain central to and powerful in forming the faith of the youngest generations. For congregations to fully partner with families in this formative task, however, they must revisit and reconstruct the narratives that guide our approaches. The chapter concludes by proposing six needed shifts in the narrative in order to unleash the capacity of families to be at the center of faith formation in the twenty-first century.

This exploration begins with the fundamental, and still controversial, question of whether families have been through irretrievable moral decline and influence or whether they have been through transformations that open up new possibilities for healing and justice across a diversity of forms and structures.

Families Declining or Changing: Which Narrative Guides Us?

It has almost become a cliché to say that families are changing. In the United States, the past half century has seen delayed marriage and childbearing, and increases in cohabiting couples, divorce, children outside of marriage, and women's participation in the workforce (Bianchi). Underneath these changes was "the weakening of social prescriptions concerning the necessity of marrying and staying married,

having children, and limiting sexual expression and childbearing to marriage" (Thornton and Young-DeMarco, 1011), as well as shifts toward more egalitarian attitudes in workplaces and homes.

Underneath these changes are "increasing individualization, freedom, and tolerance of diverse ideas and behaviors, coupled with reduced commitment to the collective" (Thornton and Young-DeMarco, 1010). In addition, family life has become less "sequenced," with, for example, childbearing often preceding marriage (if marriage ever occurs) or later in life after peak fertility. A major federal study found that two-thirds of unmarried mothers had experienced one or more partner changes by their child's third birthday (Bogenschneider and Corbett).

Each of us responds to these changes in different ways, based on our beliefs and experiences. The narratives we internalize to understand these patterns have profound implications for how we respond. I see three broad narratives at play in the church and in society: reclaiming "The Family," embracing diverse families, and strengthening all families.

Narrative 1: Reclaiming "The Family"

A dominant narrative—particularly in the church—in response to these changes has been to lament the family's decline or collapse, often arguing that the family is under attack. Indeed, when asked in polls, most US adults generally agree that family life has declined in their lifetime. For example, a national poll of three thousand US parents found that 64 percent of parents say family life has declined since they were growing up (Bowman and colleagues).

This narrative emphasizes the structure or composition of families (who is in them and who has what roles) and then advocates for a normative structure that it believes best for raising children and for society. From this perspective, deviations from an idealized "normal family" are stigmatized and even pathologized. The social agenda, then, becomes to reclaim "The Family" based on structure and composition, resisting "normalizing" families that do not fit that definition. This requires clearly distinguishing between good (normal, healthy, productive, moral) family structures and bad (harmful, deviant, dysfunctional, immoral) family structures, and then that as many families as possible aspire to and maintain that ideal.

I do not find this narrative to be empirically, theologically, or practically compelling, but it continues to consume tremendous energy and resources. In the minds of many outside the church, it represents the entrenched position of religion in America.

Narrative 2: Embracing Diverse Families

The other end of the spectrum views the diversification of families (emphasis on plural) as strengthening society—in the same way that biodiversity is essential for a strong and resilient ecology. Advocates of this model emphasize that the nuclear

family that has been idealized in the past two hundred years in Western society is, in fact, not the dominant form of family in history. The loosening of social taboos that kept abusive families together and that suppressed individual identities and expressions have opened opportunities for greater personal fulfillment and greater justice and inclusion in society.

Thus, this approach accepts and celebrates the variety of households. "Variety is not viewed as a problem to be solved by putting pressure on households to conform to the neostandard model," wrote John Scanzoni. "Instead, it is celebrated as an indicator of freedom" (18).

A more personal polling question reinforces this "embracing" narrative (in contrast to the "are families declining?" question, which was cited for the "reclaiming" narrative). A 2010 survey of 2,691 US adults by the Pew Research Center found that 76 percent said their family is the most important element of their lives, and 75 percent said they are very satisfied with their family. Furthermore, eight out of ten said their family now is as close or closer than the family in which they grew up. This same study found that most Americans have "an expansive definition of what constitutes a family" (Taylor, 1).

Narrative 3: Strengthening All Families

Between these two vantage points is a third narrative, which I believe is most accurate and productive. It embraces the diversity of families. But it also recognizes the importance of stable, nurturing families for children and for society. Thus, it focuses on family *functions* (such as companionship, care, childrearing, and the economic stability) more than family *forms*.

This narrative also recognizes the importance of social forces beyond the family that affect the family. Thus it resists demonizing families for profound, entrenched problems that have their roots in family dysfunction, addictions, or generational poverty or trauma. Instead, it points to the pressures, burdens, stresses, and frayed (or missing) economic and social safety nets that make it hard to be a strong, stable family today. It focuses on creating opportunities, supports, and other conditions that make it more likely that families, regardless of their structure or composition, can flourish.

At the same time, this narrative also recognizes that families—in all their diversity and complexity and challenge—have responsibility and potential to nurture each other not only for their own benefit but as a cornerstone of community and society. To be sure, too many families (across the socioeconomic spectrum) are characterized by interactions and practices that are counterproductive at best or harmful at worst. Yet with very rare exceptions, families want to be nurturing, life-giving crucibles for each other.

This narrative accepts, even embraces, the diversity of families. But it also recognizes the responsibility of families and society to adapt, to ensure that families fulfill their obligations and responsibilities to each other and to society.

Unfortunately, the evidence suggests that neither families nor the systems around them have yet adapted. As Michael Wear wrote in *The Atlantic,* "Our policies have failed to address this new landscape, and because of it we are inhibiting one of our nation's greatest contributors to the public good, and Americans' most personal aspirations: family."

This indictment, I fear, can be extended to the vast majority of churches in the United States today. A core premise of this chapter is that *churches have been so focused on debating which forms of family are acceptable or unacceptable that they have failed to engage meaningfully with today's complex and diverse families*. As a result, they have not only inhibited one of the most powerful crucibles of faith formation, but have become increasingly irrelevant to the most meaningful and motivating part of life for the vast majority of people in our communities: their families.

What about Faith Formation?

The three narratives outlined above are largely relevant across many institutions and parts of society. But what about the family's role in faith formation? Consistent with the "family decline" narrative is a belief that families have failed to pass on the faith, in part because of the overall moral decline of families. Churches have had to fill the gap by expanding programs and services to reach and teach children who aren't being taught the faith at home. On the other end of the spectrum, the "embracing diversity" narrative is often reinforced with an attitude that emphasizes children's individual freedom and choice among many equally valid belief systems, values, and practices.

The "strengthening all families" narrative opens doors to engage diverse families as authentic partners in faith formation. It seeks to identify and build on the strengths already present in each family. At the same time, it invites them into adaptive relationships and practices of family life that nurture a faith that is dynamically integrated with family and community life. Four data points reinforce this narrative.

1. The Enduring Priorities of Families

Despite massive social changes and troubling declines in overall religious identification and participation (Pew Research Center), the vast majority of parents maintain powerful, positive aspirations for their children. Not long ago, I was working with a group of low-income parents at a public school labeled as "failing." Most of the moms in this Southern city had faced a string of traumas and challenges, including persistent poverty, throughout their lives. In order to draw them into a conversation about family strengths, we asked a question like this: "What are three hopes you have for your child in the next five years?" Almost immediately, a mom called out: "To grow strong in her faith." Others nodded vigorously, adding their own stories and worries.

Though that response might be expected in the Bible Belt, it is echoed in conversations in all types of communities as well as in national studies. For example, a Pew Research Center survey of 815 parents asked what values were "especially important to teach their children." Topping the list of the "most" important values to teach were being responsible (54 percent), hard work (44 percent), and religious faith (31 percent) (Parker). Though some might wish that every parent would place "religious faith" at the top of the list, the fact that it rises to the top amid many other important values (such as helping others, persistence, and independence) is a testament to its importance to many families. What's more, other values named can be nurtured within a holistic understanding of faith as guiding choices and priorities in all aspects of life.

2. The Power of Family Life in Faith Formation

The volume of research on religion and families has expanded dramatically across the past thirty to fifty years, with almost every scholarly handbook on families addressing either the contribution of religion to family well-being and/or the role of family in nurturing religions beliefs, practices, and values (Cornwall). Parents' own religious commitment is associated with higher parental warmth, stronger parent–child relationships, and various other outcomes for children and youth. In addition, parents and extended family exert tremendous influence on children's religious beliefs and commitments (Boyatzis, Dollahite, and Marks). A quarter-century ago, Search Institute's *Effective Christian Education* study found that faith conversations, rituals, and service to others in the home were more strongly associated with adolescents' faith maturity than was participation in effective Christian education programs (Benson and Eklin; Roehlkepartain, 1990).

The evidence of the power of families continues to mount. A central finding of the landmark longitudinal study of youth and religion by Christian Smith and his colleagues was the influence of parents' own religious beliefs and practices on whether teens maintain their faith into adulthood. Smith and Denton concluded that "contrary to misguided cultural stereotypes and frequent parental misperceptions, we believe that the evidence clearly shows that the single most important social influence on the religious and spiritual lives of adolescents is their parents" (261; also see Smith).

Thus, it is clear that families matter a great deal for faith formation. But have changes in the family eroded this influence? That question leads to the next key data point.

3. The Adaptability of Families' Role in Faith Formation

One can accept that families are essential for faith formation within a "declining family" narrative. Doing so would hypothesize that, due to the decline in

traditional families, today's diverse families are less effective in forming faith than were previous generations. At a national level, you might correlate the decline in families with a decline in religious beliefs and participation as evidence of this breakdown. University of Southern California researcher Vern Bengtson and his colleagues (2013) wrote: "In the eyes of many, families have lost a disturbing amount of their moral and religious influence, seemingly a consequence of parental divorce, excessive individualism, and a breakdown in traditional social structures. From this perspective, if parents are passing religion on to their children, they are not doing it very often or very well" (185).

However, Bengtson and colleagues' unprecedented longitudinal study of families in the Los Angeles area from 1970 to 2005 challenges those assumptions. The study included four generations within the same families. "In the context of cultural changes reflecting increased individualism and altered family forms and functions," the researchers wrote, "we had anticipated considerably greater evidence of a weakening of parental influences on religiosity" (185)

Instead, young adult children and their parents were as likely to be similar in 2005 as they were in 1970 on five different measures of religiosity. In 2005, 40 percent of parents and young adults answered questions the same way. In 1970, 41 percent of parent–young adult pairs responded the same. Thus, even amid significant changes in family structure and processes, families appear to be as good as they were thirty–five years ago at passing on their religious beliefs and values.

In other words, families find ways to do the functions that are important to them, even as they change and the world changes around them. In an earlier book on the influence of families from the same study, Bengtson and his colleagues (2002) wrote: "Families still matter greatly, and families can and do tend to perform well those functions that are particularly relevant to the lives of children, even in different social and historical contexts, household arrangements, and living conditions" (156).

4. The Ordinariness of Families' Faith–forming Power

There are many things families do or could do to enhance the formation of faith across generations. (Other chapters in this book highlight many of these strategies.) Most studies focus specifically on religious practices in families, such as conversations about faith, scripture reading, prayer and devotional practices, and acts of service and compassion. Yet we may too quickly overlook seemingly ordinary, everyday dynamics of family life that may, in fact, be the most powerful catalysts for faith formation across generations.

Again, Bengtson's study offers compelling insight. In addition to following several dimensions of religious commitment, the study also tracked emotional closeness and mutual support across generations. For all dimensions of religious commitment, the researchers found a strong and consistent correlation between

warmth in parent–child relationships while growing up and the likelihood that parents and young adults would share religious commitments. In other words, "parents who interact with their children during their formative years in a warm, affirming, and respectful manner are more likely to pass on their religious tradition, beliefs, and practices" (Bengtson and colleagues, 2013).

The quality of parent–child relationships during the formative years may be one of the best predictors of whether the faith, beliefs, and values of the parents will be embraced by their children. Emerging Search Institute research is beginning to articulate a framework of "developmental relationships," or relationships that propel young people on a path to thriving in all areas of life, beginning with a study of parents with children ages three to thirteen in the general population. We found that relationships characterized by expressions of care, challenge, and support along with sharing power and expanding possibilities were strongly associated with multiple measures of child well-being (Pekel, Roehlkepartain, Syvertsen, and Scales).

What's more, these relational practices were found to be ten times as powerful as family demographics in correlating with an overall measure of thriving in childhood. Though the study did not include measures of religious commitment, Bengtson's study would suggest that this robust measure of parent-child relationships would be highly predictive of transmission of religious beliefs and values.

This finding not only points to the importance of relationships in faith formation, it also opens the conversation about faith formation amid the ordinary patterns, stresses, and practices of everyday family life. Theologian Bonnie J. Miller-McLemore (2007) surveyed the checkered history of the church's attitude toward family life. Too often, she wrote, "Christian perception of faith as something that happens outside ordinary time and within formal religious institutions, or within the private confines of one's individual soul, still pervades Western society" (6). She argued, however, that living into faith in families "can bring us as close to God as sublime contemplation. God loves and transforms us in the midst of messy details and troubles. The family can function as a workshop or laboratory for honing practices of faith that nurture forgiveness, generosity, hospitality, and justice" (7).

Families Navigating a Changing and Challenging World

In emphasizing the role of parents in faith formation, it is important to note that families may have the most influence on faith formation, but they are not the only influence. Many other factors are also at work, including young people's own sense of agency, peer influence, media and other cultural influences, and multiple dimensions of congregational participation. These may either reinforce or undermine family influence, including factors that influence parents and parenting.

We must resist the temptation to assume that families have failed to do their jobs if children don't follow the path of their parents. Their influence is interacting with multiple other influences that also shape how families live their lives and nurture faith. These influences also shape how faith communities engage with and nurture children, youth, and families. Here are a few of the many social changes that reshape the context of faith formation.

- An increasing awareness of living in a *multicultural and global society*, which can both open up new opportunities for growth and learning or generate reactions of fear or mistrust of those who are different from us.
- *Growing religious pluralism* in schools, communities, and even within families, which may be seen as a threat or as an opportunity for engagement and learning. Although Christianity continues to be the religion of choice in the United States, the percentage of adults who describe themselves as Christians dropped from 78 percent to 71 percent between 2007 and 2014. The fastest–growing group of adults is those who claim no religious affiliation (Pew Research Center, 2015).
- *A digital world with ever-changing technology* that permeates all aspects of family and community life. Rare is the conversation with parents that doesn't include a conversation about social media, cell phones, video games, or other technologies. As digital natives become parents, these dynamics will inevitably continue to shift.
- Overall, *organizational participation, affiliation, and trust* have declined considerably in the past fifty years. For example, Jean Twenge and colleagues (2014) analyzed data from 1972 and 2012 and found that "Americans became significantly less trusting of each other and less confident and trusting in large institutions, such as the news media, business, religious organizations, the medical establishment, Congress, and the presidency" (1914). The gap in community resources and trust is particularly problematic in low–income communities, which have too often been neglected or abandoned by schools, grocery stores, banks, and other social institutions. This is not to say that congregations have become irrelevant to families. A 2012 study by Search Institute asked parents of young adolescents how much different institutions helped strengthen their families. About half of the parents (52 percent) said churches helped somewhat or a lot, the highest percentage of any institution. Schools were next at 42 percent (Roehlkepartain, 2013).
- A growing opportunity and income gap has not only galvanized national politics, but it has had a profound impact on children, youth, and families. More than any demographic factor, economic strain on families undermines family functioning, relationships, and young people's development (Pekel, Roehlkepartain, Syvertsen, and Scales). As society becomes more economically polarized, these strains are exacerbated, leaving too many families without adequate economic, educational, or social resources to pull them

through. Commentator Michael Gerson (2015) summarizes Robert Putnam's compelling conclusions in *Our Kids* (2015): "When the children of wealthier parents get into trouble—as children are wont to do—they are surrounded by a broad network of parents, tutors, counselors, mentors, youth pastors and coaches who minimize the negative consequences and steer them away from future problems. When poor children get in trouble, the air bags do not deploy. Their parents—often just one parent—are distracted by chronic economic stress. Their schools reinforce disadvantage. Their neighborhoods have become atomized, indifferent, drug-ridden and violent."

- Too many families are increasingly isolated and expected to manage increasingly complex systems (such as health care and retirement savings) on their own. In Search Institute's *American Family Assets Study* (Syvertsen, Roehlkepartain, and Scales, 2012), only 22 percent of families with ten- to fifteen-year-olds indicated that they had close relationships to others in their neighborhood. Gary Melton's (2010) study in rural South Carolina reached a similar conclusion: "Social poverty—social isolation and a lack of easy access to help—had become rampant, regardless of families' socioeconomic status. To a large extent, help had become a commodity that people buy, not what they do. . . . By their own admission, [parents] do not know from whom they could obtain emergency child care, they do not know the names of any children in the neighborhood other than those of their own children, they do not belong to any community organizations (except perhaps a church), and so forth" (90).

Families have always faced challenges, and throughout history, they have been resilient and adaptive in the face of massive social changes. However, as the context shifts and new challenges and opportunities emerge in society and around families, there is an inevitable impact on how families nurture faith in the youngest generations. Furthermore, these major shifts challenge faith communities to ask anew whether the narratives they have created to understand and partner with families in faith formation still make sense. Or is it time to reexamine the evidence and "connect the dots" in fresh ways that help us get our bearings and adjust our strategies in this ever-changing world?

Reconstructing Our Guiding Narratives

Earlier in this chapter, I claimed that congregations, on the whole, have not meaningfully engaged with today's complex and diverse families. The dominant narratives about families and faith have, among other things, too often led to families being chastised for the choices they make and implicitly blamed for their apparent failures. As a result, faith communities have both inhibited the faith-forming capacity of families and have been on the periphery, at best, of the most meaningful and

motivating part of life for most people, both in congregations and in the broader community: their families.

If this claim has merit, how do we respond? Rather than inhibiting the faith–forming capacity of families, how do congregations enhance it? Instead of being on the periphery of family life, how does the broader faith–forming community become an integral partner with families in nurturing faith in a complex and changing world?

In some sense, this whole book is dedicated to exploring these questions. To set the stage for more specific strategies, I suggest first reconstructing the implicit narratives that guide how we understand, approach, and engage with families. I propose six shifts in emphasis we need to make in how we approach families that have potential to transform the narrative of faith formation in families (see summary in Display 1.1).

DISPLAY 1.1

Six shifts to transform our guiding narratives about families and faith formation

These six shifts are needed to create a new narrative that can more effectively guide how we understand and engage families as the center of faith formation in the twenty-first century.

From an emphasis on . . .	**Toward an emphasis on . . .**
• Programs	• Relationships
• Parenting as a strategy	• Parenting as a relationship
• Pathologizing or idealizing families	• Tapping their strengths and resilience
• "Passing on" the faith	• "Living into" the faith
• Serving families	• Empowering families
• Congregation-centered ministries	• Community-centered ministries

---

Shift 1: From an Emphasis on Programs to an Emphasis on Relationships

With few exceptions, congregations have assumed that the way to engage families in faith formation is to offer more or better or different programs that give parents the information they need to pass on the faith to their children. In this approach, the challenge becomes "selling" parents on the idea that what the church has to offer will benefit them and their families.

To be sure, there are many strong program models available, and they play an important place in an overall family engagement strategy. But by themselves, they cannot be an effective foundation for family engagement.

Part of the broad challenge in communities may be a "fundamental disconnect between what is designed and offered and what families want and need," according to Karen Mapp and Soo Hong (2010), leading researchers in family engagement. "In other words, it is our institutions and the programs, practices, and policies that school personnel design that are 'hard to reach,' not the families" (346). Though these authors focus on schools, their critique rings true for too many faith communities.

Adding to the challenge, most parents are simply not looking for "help" from professionals. Three-fourths of parents believe they know what they need to know to be a good parent, and two-thirds believe they should be able to deal with their family's problems on their own (Pekel, Roehlkepartain, Syvertsen, and Scales). When they do want help or support, they will first turn to their extended family and social network, not professionals (Martin, Gardner, and Brooks-Gunn).

Leaders in many institutions who are most successful in engaging families, particularly those who have been disconnected, invariably point to building trust and relationships as a foundation for engagement (Axford and colleagues). To adapt the widely quoted and adapted aphorism in education, "Parents don't care what you know until they know that you care."

These relationships begin (or are renewed and deepened) by first listening to families, not just to get feedback on our ideas, but to develop an empathetic, deep understanding of their lives, challenges, and hopes beyond the assumptions (or stereotypes) we may hold when engaging them from a distance.

Though focused on the relationships young people need, Search Institute's framework of developmental relationships (www.search-institute.org/research/developmental-relationships) also triggers insights about forming relationships between congregations and families. Focusing on the five actions in a developmental relationship (shown in italics), leaders might ask:

- To what extent do we *express care* with the families in our congregations and communities, including listening to them, showing interest in their lives, and investing in them?
- In what ways do we *challenge growth* in families by expecting them to live up to their potential and helping them learn from their mistakes?
- How do we *provide support* and advocacy when families really need it?
- How do we *share power* with families, treating them as true partners by giving them voice in things that matter to them and collaborating with them to solve problems and reach goals?
- How do we encourage families to *expand possibilities* by connecting them with other people, ideas, and opportunities to help them grow?

These relational questions may ultimately lead to programmatic responses. What will be different, though, is that the programs will occur in the context of trusting relationships and connections within a vibrant relational community. Those relational bonds become the foundation for a true partnership for faith formation.

It is also worth noting that a growing body of research suggests that relationships within programs are the key to program effectiveness. Li and Julian argue that developmental relationships are "the active ingredient upon which the effectiveness of other program elements depend" (163). They contend that "when developmental relationships are prevalent, development is promoted, and when this type of relationship is not available or is diluted, interventions show limited effects" (159). Thus, a primary focus when designing and operating programs needs to be on whether and how the programs intentionally cultivate the kinds of relationships that are catalytic for nurturing faith in the lives of children, youth, and families.

Shift 2: From Parenting as a Strategy to Parenting as a Relationship

One of the unintended consequences of emphasizing the power of parents in faith formation (and other aspects of life) is that the response has been to inundate parents with strategies, tips, and techniques designed to help them shape or control their child. What too easily gets lost is the recognition that parenting is, at its core, a relationship that is rooted in mutual affection, attachment, and influence between parenting adult and child (Tuttle, Knudson-Martin, and Kim). This was a key insight in Bengtson and colleagues' study (2013), cited above: The most powerful factor in predicting whether young adults and parents shared similar faith commitments was whether the parents and children had close, affectionate relationships during the formative years for the children.

In Search Institute's study of parents with three- to thirteen-year-olds (Pekel, Roehlkepartain, Syvertsen, and Scales), the relational factor most strongly associated with youth thriving and other areas of well-being was "share power." More than any of the other aspects of a relationship, this dimension reinforces the bidirectional nature of parent–child relationships, reinforcing mutuality as an integral part of development, including faith formation.

Congregations have the opportunity, the calling, to walk alongside and support families as they form and transform relationships across the life stages, recognizing that both parents and young people are actively shaping the journey. One response to this dynamic is to engage families together (children, youth, and adults) in learning, service, and fellowship, providing opportunities for their relationships to grow within a broader community of faith.

Shift 3: From Pathologizing or Idealizing Families to Tapping Their Strengths and Resilience

For too long, the implicit assumption in many programs and services for families has reflected one of two extremes, driven by the narrative that views the family as being in decline.

- The family is idealized based on a unrealistic image of what it ought to be and do.
- Families are pathologized as being broken or dysfunctional, requiring intervention from professionals who bring their expertise and/or generosity to fix the family. Indeed, a consistent barrier for low-income parents seeking support is their experience with professionals who made them feel inadequate or like "bad parents" (Attree).

Recent decades have seen a shift toward more balanced and nuanced understandings of families as having both strengths and challenges, as is reflected in the research on family strengths and resilience. Froma Walsh, a pioneer in family resilience, described the approach this way: "A family resilience approach [shifts] . . . from seeing families as damaged to viewing them as challenged. It also corrects the tendency to think of family health in a mythologized problem-free family. Instead, it seeks to understand how families can survive and regenerate even in the midst of overwhelming stress. A family resilience perspective affirms the family's capacity for self-repair" (5).

Though some families clearly have and experience more or fewer strengths than others (including capacity for faith formation), all families have some strengths that can be identified, tapped, and nurtured in order to strengthen other areas of family life. One does not have to have a perfect, challenge-free life in order to flourish. Many families facing adversity have the capacities to survive, regenerate, and do well, particularly with support from others. This reframing of the challenges many families face is grounded in the realities of life for many families while also optimistic about their capacity to learn, grow, and thrive. And though this particular study did not explicitly examine the dynamics of faith formation, these insights likely translate easily into how we might understand and engage families for faith formation as well.

Shift 4: From "Passing on" to "Living into" Faith

A core concern for parents and the church is often expressed as the need to "pass on" the faith to each successive generation. In addition, this book focuses on faith formation across generations, relying on research based in religious socialization and transmission. So it seems odd to propose a shift *away from* "passing on" faith. Isn't that the goal? Although it may be, I invite you to reconsider the connotation of this phrase, which I suggest may inadvertently undermine the *formation* of faith in families. (Note that this unpacking of the term doesn't reflect the more nuanced understanding that most leaders would certainly articulate.)

When people hear "passing on the faith" from one generation to the next, the un-nuanced assumption is that "the faith" is something one generation has and needs to "pass on" to the next. Much of what needs to be done is to teach young

people a body of knowledge or beliefs and convince them to adopt these beliefs as their own. In this scenario, faith can easily be reduced to another subject area like history or math or a world language, and we worry if young people don't learn it and repeat it and follow its rules.

I admit that the above paragraph is a bit of a caricature. But when it's put that way, we all see through it. If you ask many young people about their experiences in Sunday school, catechesis, confirmation, or youth group, you get the sense that they experienced something not much different. Rarely do they communicate being fully engaged with a living faith that makes sense in and brings meaning to their everyday lives and their changing world.

Adding to the challenge for faith formation in families is that the parents may or may not have become steeped in the language, teaching, and beliefs of their tradition when they were growing up. So they can feel unequipped to answer their kids' questions and skepticism about whether the Bible really condemns homosexuality, abortion, or the death penalty; when and how the world was created; whether there is a God or the Trinity or a physical resurrection; and what will happen to their Buddhist, Muslim, Jewish, Hindu, agnostic, or atheist friends after they die.

If passing on the faith means being able to convincingly answer these kinds of questions, then most parents would, I suspect, prefer to leave it to the professionals.

Although those questions and issues are certainly an important part of theological and ethical discourse and understanding, they are not, I would argue, at the core of how families nurture Christian faith. Rather, to reiterate the words of Miller-McLemore, forming faith in families centers around the ways "God loves and transforms us in the midst of messy details and troubles. The family can function as a workshop or laboratory for honing practices of faith that nurture forgiveness, generosity, hospitality, and justice" (7).

Families are at their best when they focus on living the faith (orthopraxis) more than learning beliefs (orthodoxy). Both matter and both are interconnected. The proposal here is to tilt the focus of family faith formation toward living into the commitments, values, and practices that emanate from a relationship with Jesus Christ.

My perspective is strongly influenced by Search Institute's research on faith maturity, originally conducted in the late 1980s (Benson and Eklin). At its core, a mature Christian faith is a relational faith that embodies both a vertical dimension (a relationship with God) and a horizontal dimension (relationships with and commitments to serving others). It is characterized by at least eight indicators of faith.

1. Trusting and believing, including acceptance of core theological beliefs.
2. Experiencing the fruits of faith or personal well-being.
3. Integrating faith and life, including family, work, and political choices.
4. Seeking spiritual growth through religious practices and study.
5. Seeking to be part of a community of believers for worship and mutual support.

6. Holding life-affirming values, such as a commitment to the welfare of others.
7. Advocating for social justice to bring about greater justice in the world.
8. Engaging in acts of service and compassion for other people.

It is less important to debate or endorse these specific eight marks of faith than it is to articulate the ways faith might be manifested in everyday life. These eight— or variations on them—suggest concrete ways in which families can and do live into their faith. Many of these beliefs, priorities, and practices have been passed down from generation to generation. But they are experienced or "caught" more than they are taught. They come alive in new ways within the "messy details and troubles" of families living in the twenty-first century.

Shift 5: From Serving Families to Empowering Families to Live Their Faith

At this point, the broader narrative begins to become clearer, with several shifts cascading from those that have already been introduced. Thus, if we recognize the strengths and capacities of families and focus on the power of relationships instead of programs, our focus shifts . . .

• From viewing families as consumers of religious programming toward recognizing them as epicenters of faith formation across generations.
• From shaping ministry to compensate for families' shortcomings toward designing ministries that complement and reinforce the roles of families in faith formation, thus creating an ecology of faith formation in which each element interacts with and is mutually reinforcing of the others.
• From focusing only on what families need to engaging them as leaders and contributors in the congregation and community.
• From measuring program effectiveness by the number of people who show up for events toward celebrating evidence of a vibrant faith at work in the everyday lives of children, youth, and families wherever they spend their time.

These shifts do not mean congregational activities and programs become irrelevant, but their assumptions, emphases, and goals will shift. They will focus more on helping families grapple with the challenges and opportunities they face in living their faith in a complex world. Programs may also shift to focus on opportunities for families to live out their faith in acts of service and justice with others in the community of faith.

This emphasis parallels a broader trend in family engagement that emphasizes "the role of parents as members of communities and the larger world" (Doherty, Jacob, and Cutting, 303). The professional's role shifts from being the expert holder of knowledge to facilitating the skills of shared action around the issues and concerns that families have in their communities—their own sense of calling for service and justice as part of their faith.

Shift 6: From Congregation–centered to Community–centered Ministries

Most faith formation activities in most congregations occur within the church's facilities. Furthermore, congregations recruit volunteers and ask parents to support the congregation's ministries. The implicit assumption is that a primary role of members of the church, including the families, is to support the mission and ministry of the congregation. And, to be sure, the collective mission of the congregation is and should be formative for its families.

At the same time, this narrative has the unintended consequence of placing greater emphasis on what happens within the walls of a church building than what happens in the homes, neighborhoods, schools, and communities where youth and families live most of their lives. So what if the narrative shifted to emphasize what happens in families and communities? What if the ministries that were announced and celebrated when the community gathers reflect how its members are living out their faith in their daily lives? How might congregations' ministries with families be different if the center shifted?

Here, once again, I borrow from a model in education, believing that ideas from divergent sources often shed new light on longstanding challenges. Mark Warren and his colleagues proposed a "community-based relational approach" for parent involvement in education that emphasized building relationships, strengthening leadership capacities, and closing culture and power gaps between schools and the low–income communities they serve. Their vision stands in sharp contrast to school–centered approaches to family engagement. I suggest that, by analogy and extension, this same contrast is evident in how the majority of faith communities approach parent and family engagement in faith formation (see Display 1.2).

Congregation-centered and community-based models of parent engagement

Congregation-Centered Models	Community-Based Models
• Activity based	• Relationship based
• Parents as individuals	• Parents as members of their communities
• Parents follow the congregation's agenda	• Parents as collaborators in setting the agenda
• Teach information	• Equip for leadership and growth
• Congregation-to-parent communication	• Mutual exchange of relational power

Many of the themes in these two contrasting models reflect what we have already highlighted in the shifting narrative for family faith formation. But they push beyond adjusting programs toward reimagining the roles of families in the congregation and in faith formation. The model also invites experimentation to discover new ways that congregations and their leaders might effectively transform their ministries to reflect this alternate vision of how congregations and families partner for faith formation.

Transforming Our Narratives for the Twenty-first Century

In the past, it may have been that families did not have to work as hard at forming faith in younger generations. Perhaps the priorities, schedules, and expectations of church, school, neighborhood, and community were homogeneously in sync, so that each mutually reinforced the other. Perhaps they were simpler times—at least to a point and for some people.

Whether or not that was true or simply nostalgic wishful thinking, it is abundantly clear that the narratives about families and faith that may have guided churches two or three generations ago no longer fit the lives of today's diverse families. Autopilot isn't an option for nurturing faith in families in today's complex and changing world.

Family-centered faith formation in the twenty-first century calls for crafting a new narrative that weaves in wisdom from the past with new possibilities. What that looks like is unlikely to come from sitting in meetings to design outreach strategies. It is much more likely to emerge from engaging families, with all their problems and possibilities, in authentic relationships and on their own terms, empowering and supporting them to find their voices and their calling to live out their faith in their homes and communities (and sometimes in our church buildings). In that process, they will tell new stories and create new narratives of faith that we can celebrate, but might never have imagined.

Works Cited

Attree, P. "Parenting Support in the Context of Poverty: A Meta-Synthesis of the Qualitative Evidence." *Health & Social Care in the Community,* 13, no. 4 (2005): 330–37.

Axford, Nick, Minna Lehtonen, Dawn Kaoukji, Kate Tobin, and Vashti Berry. "Engaging Parents in Parenting Programs: Lessons from Research and Practice." *Children and Youth Services Review,* 34, no. 10 (2012): 2061–71.

Bengtson, Vern L., Timothy J. Biblarz, and Robert E. L. Roberts. *How Families Still Matter: A Longitudinal Study of Youth in Two Generations.* Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2002.

Bengtson, Vern L., Norella M. Putney, and Susan Harris. *Families and Faith: How Religion is Passed Down across Generations.* New York: Oxford University Press, 2013.

Benson, Peter L., and Carolyn H. Eklin. *Effective Christian Education: A National Study of Protestant Congregations—A Summary Report on Faith, Loyalty, and Congregational Life.* Minneapolis, MN: Search Institute, 1990.

Bianchi, Suzanne M. "Family Change and Time Allocation in American Families." *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science, 638, (2011): 21-44.*

Bogenschneider, Karen and Thomas J. Corbett. "Family Policy: Becoming a Field of Inquiry and Subfield of Social Policy." *Journal of Marriage and Family,* 72, (2010): 783–803.

Bowman, Carl Desportes, James Davison Hunter, Jeffrey Dill, and Megan Juelfs–Swanson. *The Culture of American Families: Executive Report.* Charlottesville, VA: Institute for Advanced Studies in Culture, University of Virginia, 2012. Accessed from http://iasc-culture.org/research_character_of_american_families_project.php.

Boyatzis, Chris J., David C. Dollahite, and Loren D. Marks. "The Family As a Context for Religious and Spiritual Development in Children and Youth." In *The Handbook of Spiritual Development in Childhood and Adolescence,* edited by Eugene C. Roehlkepartain, Pamela Ebstyne King, Linda Wagener, and Peter L. Benson, 297–309. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2006.

Cornwall, Marie. "Religion and Family Research in the Twenty-First Century." In *Handbook of Marriage and the Family,* edited by Gary W. Peterson and Kevin R. Bush, 637–55. New York: Springer, 2013.

Doherty, William J., Jenet Jacob, and Beth Cutting. "Community Engaged Parent Education: Strengthening Civic Engagement among Parents and Parent Educators." *Family Relations,* 58, no. 3 (2009): 303–15.

Gerson, Michael. "The Effects of Inequality on America's Kids." *Washington Post,* March 16, 2015. Accessed from www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/inequalitys-effects-on-kids/2015/03/16/252d7010-cc0c-11e4-a2a7-9517a3a70506_story.html.

Li, Junlei, and Megan M. Julian. "Developmental Relationships as the Active Ingredient: A Unifying Working Hypothesis of 'What Works' across Intervention Settings." *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry,* 82, no. 2 (2012) 157–66.

Mapp, Karen L., and Soo Hong. "Debunking the Myth of the Hard-to-Reach Parent." In *Handbook of School-Family Partnerships,* edited by Sandra L. Christenson and Amy L. Reschly, 345–60. New York: Routledge, 2010.

Martin, Anne, Margo Gardner, and Jeanne Brooks–Gunn. "The Mediated and Moderated Effects of Family Support on Child Maltreatment." *Journal of Family Issues,* 33, no. 7 (2012) 920–41.

Melton, Gary B. "Angels (and Neighbors) Watching over Us: Child Safety and Family Support in an Age of Alienation." *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry,* 80, no. 1 (2010): 89–95.

Miller-McLemore, Bonnie J. "The Rule of Family Faith: Practicing the Presence of God in Our Outward Lives." *Lifelong Faith,* (Summer 2007) 3–11.

Parker, Kim. *Families May Differ, but They Share Common Values on Parenting.* Washington, DC: Pew Research Center, September 18, 2014. Accessed from www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2014/09/18/families-may-differ-but-they-share-common-values-on-parenting/.

Pekel, Ken, Eugene C. Roehlkepartain, Amy K. Syvertsen, and Peter C. Scales *Don't Forget the Families: The Missing Piece in America's Effort to Help All Children Succeed.* Minneapolis, MN: Search Institute, 2015. Accessed from www.search-institute.org/dff.

Pew Research Center. *America's Changing Religious Landscape.* Washington, DC, 2015. Accessed from www.pewforum.org/2015/05/12/americas–changing–religious–landscape/.

Putnam, Robert D. *Our Kids: The American Dream in Crisis.* New York: Simon and Schuster, 2015.

Roehlkepartain, Eugene C. *The Teaching Church: Moving Christian Education to Center Stage.* Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 1993.

————. *Families and Communities Together: Strength and Resilience during Early Adolescence.* Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota, 2013. Accessed from the University of Minnesota Digital Conservancy, http://hdl.handle.net/11299/162517.

Scanzoni, John. "Household Diversity: The Starting Point for Healthy Families in the New Century." In *Handbook of Contemporary Families: Considering the Past, Contemplating the Future,* edited by Marilyn Coleman & Lawrence H. Ganong, 3–22.Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2004.

Smith, Christian with Patricia Snell. *Souls in Transition: The Religious and Spiritual Lives of Emerging Adults*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2009.

Smith, Christian, and Melinda Lundquist Denton. *Soul Searching: The Religious and Spiritual Lives of American Teenagers*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2005.

Syvertsen, A. K., E. C. Roehlkepartain, and P. C. Scales. *The American Family Assets Study.* Minneapolis, MN: Search Institute, 2012. Accessed from www.search-institute.org/research/family-strengths.

Taylor, Paul. *The Decline of Marriage and the Rise of New Families*. Washington, DC: Pew Research Center, 2010. Accessed from www.pewsocialtrends.org/2010/11/18/the-decline-of-marriage-and-rise-of-new-families/.

Thornton, Arland, and Linda Young-DeMarco. "Four Decades of Trends in Attitudes toward Family Issues in the United States: The 1960s through the 1990s." *Journal of Marriage and Family,* 63, no. 4 (2001): 1009–37.

Tuttle, Amy R., Carmen Knudson-Martin, and Lana Kim. "Parenting As Relationship: A Framework for Assessment and Practice." *Family Process,* 51, no. 1 (2012): 73–89.

Twenge, Jean M., W. Keith Campbell, and Nathan T. Carter. "Declines in Trust in Others and Confidence in Institutions among American Adults and Late Adolescents, 1972–2012." *Psychological Science*, 25, no.10 (2014): 1914–23.

Walsh, Froma. "The Concept of Family Resilience: Crisis and Challenge." *Family Processes*, 35, no. 3 (2004): 261–81.

Warren, Mark R., Soo Hong, Carolyn Leung Rubin, and Phitsamay Sychitkokhong Uy. "Beyond the Bake Sale: A Community-Based Relational Approach to Parent Engagement in Schools." *Teachers College Record*, 111, no. 9 (2009): 2209–254.

Wear, Michael. "The American Family Is Making a Comeback." *The Atlantic,* October 1, 2014. Accessed from www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2014/10/the-family-is-making-a-comeback/380956/.

Understanding Twenty–first Century Parents and Families: A Review of Research Trends

John Roberto

● ● ● ● Parents and families are dramatically different today from earlier generations. It's hard to keep pace with the rapid change within families and in the surrounding society and culture. What is becoming increasingly clear is that families are not responding to congregations—and their programs and activities—that work from outdated understandings of family life. To transform our approaches and move families to the center of faith formation, we need to be familiar with the contemporary lives of families with young people. This will involve keeping current on family and parent research findings *and* listening to the families in our communities.

This chapter presents a summary of research findings that paint a picture of the world of parents and families in the first third of life (with children, adolescents, and emerging adults). It is our belief that listening carefully to the research and to families in our communities is essential for developing a new approach to family faith formation that addresses the "real lives" of parents and families today. If we are going to develop an approach that moves the family to the center of faith formation then we need to understand the lives of today's parent and families.

Key Research Findings

We have distilled some of the most important research findings that have the potential of influencing the way we conceptualize and design family faith formation for today's families and organized them into three major sections.

- Part 1. A Profile of Family Life Today
- Part 2. A Profile of Generation X and Millennial Parents
- Part 3. A Profile of Family Religiosity Today

Here are fifteen summary findings that have emerged from this review of the research trends. They provide an introduction to the presentation of the findings in this chapter.

1. There is no single family arrangement that encompasses the majority of children today. Two-parent, married-couple households are on the decline.
2. The overwhelming majority of mothers and fathers say that being a parent is extremely or very important to their overall identity and a rewarding experience.
3. Parents are busier than even—and often "overwhelmed"—managing and balancing work, education, family life, young people's activities, and their own personal lives. Today's family is far more complex than in prior decades as parents deal with constant and accelerating change.
4. Nearly fifteen million children in America live below the official poverty level. Low-income families with children age eight and under face extra barriers that can affect the early years of a child's development. Parents in these families are more likely than their higher-income peers to lack higher education and employment, to have difficulty speaking English, and to be younger than twenty-five.
5. Parents turn to people close to them (family and friends) for advice on raising their children. Mothers tend to have extensive support networks that they can rely on for advice.
6. A large majority of parents of young people say they get along well or pretty well, have fun together, and feel close to each other.
7. Young people are very involved in a variety of extracurricular activities, but parents with higher income and higher education are more likely to report that their children participate in activities.
8. A majority of parents—across income levels—are involved in their children's education (talking with teachers, attending school meetings, going on class trips).
9. Parents' biggest concerns are about the well-being and safety of their children: being bullied, struggling with anxiety of depression, being kidnapped, getting beat up or attacked, getting pregnant/getting a girl pregnant, getting shot, getting in trouble with the law.

10. Parents want their children to become adults who are honest and ethical, caring and compassionate, and hardworking. The top values that are important for them to teach include (in order): being responsible, hard work, religious faith, helping others, being well-mannered, independence, empathy, obedience, persistence, creativity, tolerance, and curiosity.

11. Parents and their children are immersed in media and the new digital tools. There is a widespread adoption of new digital technologies and mobile devices that are transforming the way parents and children relate, communicate, work, and learn. Parents can be divided into three groups based on how they limit or guide their children's screen time with each group representing about one-third of all parents: *Digital Limiters, Digital Enablers,* and *Digital Mentors*.

12. Generation X parents and Millennial parents have distinct parenting styles that reflect their generational experiences as well as the current world in which their children are growing up. In general, Gen X parents approach child-rearing as a set of tangible practices that will keep their children safe, reasonably happy, well-behaved, and ready to take on life's challenges. They practice protective parenting. In general, Millennial parents, reflecting their values of individuality and self-expression, focus more on a democratic approach to family management, encouraging their children to be open-minded, empathetic, and questioning—and teaching them to be themselves and try new things. They are moving away from the overscheduled days of their youth, preferring a more responsive, less directorial approach to activities.

13. Generation X and Millennial parents reflect an increasing diversity in religious beliefs, practices, and affiliation. A growing number of parents and whole families are now religiously unaffiliated and/or spiritual but not religious. Twenty-three percent of Generation Xers and more than 34 percent of Millennials are not religiously affiliated, and the number of unaffiliated Millennials is growing.

14. Families of Generation X and Millennial parents are participating less in church life and Sunday worship. Parents may bring their young people to educational programs and milestone celebrations (first communion, confirmation), but they are not participating in Sunday worship or other church activities. Religion and spirituality may be important to families today, but for many it is not usually expressed by participation in churches.

15. Generation X and Millennial parents are providing religious socialization and religious transmission in declining numbers. Significant indicators, such as religious identification as a Christian, worship attendance, marriages and baptisms in the church, and changing generational patterns, point to a decline in family religious socialization across all denominations. There is also a decline in religious traditions and practices at home. Gen X and

Millennial parents often lack the religious literacy and religious experiences necessary for faith transmission. Many did not grow up in families where they experienced religious traditions and practices. Many were away from a church for ten or more years before returning with their children for baptism or the start of Sunday school or first communion. They lack the fluency with the Christian faith tradition or the confidence to share it with their children.

Part 1: A Profile of Family Life Today

Family Life: No One Dominant Model

Two-parent, married-couple households are on the decline in the United States as divorce, remarriage, and cohabitation are on the rise. There is no one dominant family form, and, in many cases, young people experience multiple forms from childhood through adolescence.

- Less than half (46 percent) live in a family with two married parents in their first marriage.
- Fifteen percent of children live in a family with two parents who are remarried (blended family).
- Seven percent live with cohabitating parents.
- Twenty-six percent live with a single parent.
- Five percent live with no parent (*Parenting in America*, 15–18).

These family forms differ across racial and ethnic groups.

- Large majorities of white (72 percent), Asian American (82 percent), and Hispanic (55 percent) children are living with two married parents.
- Only 31 percent of black children are living with two married parents, while more than half (54 percent) are living in a single-parent household (*Parenting in America*, 18–19).

These family forms differ by educational background.

- Eighty-eight percent of children with at least one parent with a bachelor's degree or more are living in a two-parent household, including 67 percent percent who are living with two parents in the first marriage.
- Fifty-nine percent of children who have a parent with a high school diploma are in a two-parent household, including 33 percent whose parents are in their first marriage (*Parenting in America*, 19).

Families are smaller now, both due to the growth of single-parent households and the drop in fertility. Today fully four-in-ten births occur to women who are single or living with a nonmarital partner (*Parenting in America*, 20).

Family Finances: Financial Stress Related to Family Form

One-third of parents say they live comfortably. Roughly the same share (32 per-cent) say they are able to meet their basic expenses with a little left over for extras. One in four parents say they are just able to meet their basic expenses, and 9 percent say they don't even have enough to meet their basic expenses (*Parenting in America*, 28–29).

Household financial circumstances differ markedly by family type.

- Among married parents, roughly four in ten (39 percent) say they live comfortably.
- Parents who are living with a partner (23 percent) or have no spouse or part-ner (18 percent) say they live comfortably.
- One in five (19 percent) of those with no spouse or partner say they don't have enough money to meet their basic expenses. That is three times the rate as among married parents (*Parenting in America*, 28–29).

The economic outcomes for these different types of families vary dramatically.

- Thirty-one percent of children living in single-parent households were liv-ing below the poverty line, as were 21 percent of children living with two cohabiting parents.
- Only one in ten children living with two married parents were in this cir-cumstance. In fact, more than half (57 percent) of those living with married parents were in households with incomes at least 200 percent above the poverty line, compared with just one in five (21 percent) of those living in single-parent households (*Parenting in America*, 7).

Work: A Majority of Mothers Working outside the Home

Today labor force participation stands at 70 percent among all mothers of children younger than eighteen and 64 percent of mothers with preschool-age children. About three-fourths of all employed moms are working full time. Today about 40 percent of families with children at home include mothers who earn the majority of the family income.

About 30 percent of mothers living with children younger than eighteen are at home with the children (*Parenting in America*, 24–26).

Poverty: Low Income Families Face Tremendous Pressures and Diminished Opportunities

For many American families, every day is a juggling act involving work, child-care, school, and conflicting schedules. But for ten million low-income families, the balls are more likely to fall, and the consequences can be dire when they do.

A lack of reliable childcare can mean fewer work hours or even a lost job. Weekly or daily shift changes require repeatedly stitching together a patchwork of care. Just getting to work is tough without dependable transportation. And for children in these families, early educational opportunities and extracurricular activities tend to be unaffordable luxuries as parents stretch their dollars to keep the lights on. These daily obstacles can threaten the entire family's stability and lead to lifelong difficulties for their kids.

Child poverty remains at record high levels across the United States. Children are the poorest age group, and the poorest are children of color and those under age six.

- Children are the poorest age group in America. Nearly one in three of those who are poor in America is a child.
- Nearly fifteen million children in America live below the official poverty level—$23,834 for a family of four—based only on cash income.
- More than 40 percent of these children live in extreme poverty, at less than half the poverty level (6.8 million children). They live in families with annual incomes slightly more than $12,000 per year—$235 a week, $33 a day—for a family of four.
- The youngest children are most likely to be poor, with more than one in five children under age five living in poverty during the years of rapid brain development (*Ending Child Poverty Now*).
- More than 45 percent of poor children live in homes where not everyone has enough food. Food insecurity is associated with lower reading and math scores, greater physical and mental health problems, higher incidence of emotional and behavioral problems, and a greater chance of obesity (*Ending Child Poverty Now*).

Low-income families with children age eight and under face extra barriers that can affect the early years of a child's development. Parents in these families are more likely than their higher-income peers to lack higher education and employment, to have difficulty speaking English, and to be younger than twenty-five (*Creating Opportunities for Families*).

Poor parents have fewer financial resources and often experience more stress. As a result their young children are less likely to be read to, spend less time talking to adults, and hear many fewer words each week than children from more affluent families. One study found that by age four, high-income children had heard thirty million more words than poor children. Poor preschoolers are also less likely to be able to recognize letters, count to twenty, or write their first names. Income-related gaps in cognitive skills can be observed in babies as early as nine months old and often widen with age. These disparities create an early disadvantage that is often hard to overcome (*Ending Child Poverty Now*).

Being a Parent: A Rewarding and Important Part of One's Overall Identity

Parents believe they are doing a very good job as a parent.

- Fifty-one percent of mothers and 39 percent of fathers report that they are doing a very good job as a parent.
- The percentages are consistent across generations for Millennial, Generation X, and Baby Boomer parents, and across socioeconomic groups of parents (*Parenting in America*, 7).

Mothers and fathers are equally likely to say that being a parent is extremely important to their overall identity and a rewarding experience.

- About six in ten moms (58 percent) and dads (57 percent) say this, and an additional 35 percent of moms and 37 percent of dads say being a parent is very important to their overall identity (*Parenting in America*, 9).
- About nine in ten parents say being a parent is rewarding for them all (53 percent) or most (35 percent) of the time. And a similar share say that being a parent is enjoyable all (43 percent) or most (47 percent) of the time (*Parenting in America*, 33).

More parents say parenting is rewarding and enjoyable than say it is tiring and stressful.

- One-third of parents say their job as a parent is tiring all (15 percent) or most (18 percent) of the time, and one-quarter say being a parent is stressful all (10 percent) or most (15 percent) of the time.
- Overwhelming majorities say being a parent is tiring or stressful at least some of the time.
- Parents who have at least one child younger than six are more likely to say parenting is tiring for them than parents who do not (*Parenting in America*, 34).

Parents are even busier than ever.

- About three in ten (31 percent) parents say they always feel rushed, even to do the things they have to do, and an additional 53 percent say they sometimes feel rushed.
- Not surprisingly, parents who feel rushed at least sometimes are more likely than those who almost never feel rushed to see parenting as tiring and stressful and less likely to see it as enjoyable all of the time (*Parenting in America,* 11–12).

Parent Support Networks: Turning to Each Other, Family, and Friends

Most American parents say that they have at least some support from friends or extended family when it comes to raising their children.

- Forty-four percent of parents say they have a lot of support, and an additional 39 percent say they have some support.
- Fifteen percent of parents say they have almost no support when it comes to raising their children, and 2 percent have no support at all.
- Parents without a spouse or partner (22 percent) are significantly more likely than married parents (15 percent) to say that they have almost no support (or none at all) when it comes to raising their children (*Parenting in America*, 37).

Parents turn to people close to them for advice on raising their children.

- Those who are married or living with a partner lean heavily on that person. Parents are less reliant on other family members and on friends for parenting advice (*Parenting in America*, 38).
- Mothers have more extensive support networks that they rely on for advice about parenting. They're much more likely than fathers to turn to family members and friends and to take advantage of parenting resources such as books, magazines, and online sources (*Parenting in America*, 9).
- Fewer parents say they rely on outside resources (rather than people) for parenting advice. Less than one in ten (7 percent) say they often turn to parenting websites, books, or magazines for advice on how to raise their children; and another 27 percent say they sometimes get advice from parenting websites, books, or magazines. Forty-four percent say they never do.
- Internet sites where information is shared are used less often: 15 percent say they often or sometimes turn to online message boards or social media for parenting advice, while 64 percent say they never do (*Parenting in America*, 38).

Parents and Children: Getting Along Well and Feeling Close

A 2016 survey of more than nine thousand kids ages eight to fourteen (and nine hundred moms and dads) by KidsHealth.org and *TIME for Kids* explored how well young people get along with their parents.

- The majority of young people surveyed (67 percent) say they get along well, or pretty well, with their parents.
- Most parents (67 percent) say they get along well, or pretty well, with their kids.
- Most young people (85 percent) say they have fun with their parents (90 percent for children, 76 percent for teens).
- Most parents (84 percent) say they have fun with their kids.
- Most young people (79 percent) say they feel close to their parents.
- Most parents (77 percent) say they feel close to their kids.

The survey found some sharp differences between children (eight to eleven) and adolescents (twelve to fourteen). Older young people were less likely than children and kids to say that they:

- Get along very well with their parent (16 percent vs. 31 percent).
- Have fun with their parent (76 percent vs. 90 percent).
- Share good news with a parent (86 percent vs. 93 percent).
- Feel comfortable going to a parent with a problem (38 percent vs. 57 percent).

Overall, 82 percent of parents say they are proud of their child but only 76 percent of eight- to eleven-year-olds and 58 percent of twelve- to fourteen-year-olds say their parents are proud of them.

The survey found that 93 percent of the eight- to eleven-year-olds and 88 percent of the twelve- to fourteen-year-olds who felt their parents were proud of them also said they felt "close" or "very close" to their parents.

About 20 percent of children and one-third of teens said they argued "a lot" with their parents. (That's one out of every five in the eight to eleven age group and one in every three for the twelve to fourteen age group.)

Time with Children: Spending about the Right Amount of Time

Even though many parents feel rushed in their daily lives, most (59 percent) say that they spend about the right amount of time with their children and one-third (36 percent) say they spend too little time with their children.

- Mothers (66 percent) are much more likely than fathers (50 percent) to say they spend the right amount of time with their children. Roughly half of dads (48 percent) say they spend too little time with their kids, compared with 25 percent of moms.
- Four in ten (39 percent) full-time working moms say they spend too little time with their children, compared with only 14 percent of moms who work part time or don't work outside the home at all.
- Half of full-time working fathers say they have too little time to spend with their children, significantly larger than the share of full-time working mothers who said the same (*Parenting in America*, 35).

Children's Activities: Active Children and Engaged Parents

American children—including preschoolers—participate in a variety of extracurricular activities. Over the past twelve months children have:

- Participated in sports or athletic programs—73 percent.
- Participated in religious instruction/youth group—60 percent.
- Taken lessons in music, dance, or art—54 percent.
- Done volunteer work—53 percent.
- Had a part time job—36 percent.
- Received regular tutoring or extra academic preparation—36 percent.
- Participate in an organization like the scouts—23 percent (*Parenting in America,* 65).

Parents with higher income and higher education levels generally are more likely to report that their children participate in various activities after school.

- Among parents with an annual family income of $75,000 or higher, 84 percent say their children participated in sports or athletic activities in the twelve months prior to the survey. Sixty-two percent say their children took music, dance, or art lessons.
- Fifty-nine percent of parents with annual incomes of less than $30,000 say their children participated in sports, and 41 percent say their children took lessons in music, dance, or art over that period (*Parenting in America,* 68).

Roughly a third of parents (31 percent) with children ages six to seventeen say they have helped coach their child in a sport or athletic activity in the past year. Fathers (37 percent) are more likely than mothers (27 percent) to say they have done this (*Parenting in America*, 14).

While most parents say their children participate in extracurricular activities, relatively few say that their children's schedules are too hectic.

- According to most parents (72 percent) with children ages six to seventeen, things are just about right when it comes to their children's day-to-day schedule.
- Eleven percent say their children have too much free time on their hands.
- Fifteen percent say their children's daily schedule is too hectic with too many things to do.
- Parents with higher incomes are more likely to say their children's day-to-day schedules are too hectic (*Parenting in America,* 69).

School–age children are heavily engaged with media.

- Parents report that their school-age children watch TV, movies, or videos (90 percent) or play games (79 percent) on an electronic device on a typical day.
- About half of these parents say their children spend too much time on these activities.
- About eight in ten parents with children younger than six also say their children have screen time on a typical day, but fewer say their children spend too much time watching videos or playing games on electronic devices (*Parenting in America,* 65).

Parents with school–age children are involved in their children's education.

- Eighty-five percent say they have talked to a teacher about their children's progress in school over past twelve months
- Two-thirds (64 percent) say they have attended a PTA meeting or other special school meeting.

- Sixty percent have helped out with a special project or class trip at their children's school.
- Parents' level of engagement in these activities is fairly consistent across income groups (*Parenting in America,* 9).

Reading aloud is one way parents can get involved in their children's education even before formal schooling begins. Among parents with children under the age of six, about half (51 percent) say they read aloud to their children every day, and those who have graduated from college are far more likely than those who have not to say this is the case (*Parenting in America,* 10).

Parent Worries: Local Concerns and Problems

What are parents worried about today? Here are the percentages of parents who say they worry that each of these might happen to their child or any of the children at some point.

- Be bullied—60 percent.
- Struggle with anxiety or depression—54 percent.
- Be kidnapped—50 percent.
- Get beat up or attacked—45 percent.
- Get pregnant/Get a girl pregnant as a teenager—43 percent.
- Having problems with drugs or alcohol—41 percent.
- Get shot—31 percent.
- Get in trouble with the law—27 percent.

Parental concerns vary across income groups.

- Those with an annual family income below $30,000 are far more likely than those with incomes of $75,000 or higher to worry about violence, teenage pregnancy, and legal trouble for their kids.
- More parents with family incomes below $30,000 than those with incomes of $75,000 or higher worry that their child or children might get pregnant or get a girl pregnant as a teenager or get in trouble with the law at some point (*Parenting in America,* 48–49).

Teaching Children: Responsibility, Hard Work, and Religious Faith

About seven in ten (71 percent) American parents say it is extremely important to them that their children be honest and ethical as adults, and at least six in ten place the same importance on having kids who grow up to be caring and compassionate (65 percent) and hardworking (62 percent). Financial independence is seen as extremely important by a narrower majority (54 percent) of American parents, while fewer than half (45 percent) say it is extremely important to them that their children be ambitious as adults (*Parenting in America*, 46–47).

When parents where asked which of the three values below were "important" to teach children, almost all parents (94 percent) say it is important to teach children responsibility, while nearly as many (92 percent) say the same about hard work. Helpfulness, good manners, and independence also are widely viewed as important for children to learn, according to the survey (see Display 2.1).

When parents were asked which traits they considered to be "most important" to teach children, the same ones topped the list, with one exception—while only 56 percent of parents say *passing on religious faith* is important, 31 percent say this is one of the *most* important things to teach children. That makes teaching religious faith the third most important trait, behind responsibility and hard work. And these values were widely shared across different family types and across families with toddlers to adolescents. For the religiously affiliated, 37 percent (and 60 percent of white evangelical Protestants) say that religious faith is among the most important qualities to teach children. By contrast, just 3 percent of those who are unaffiliated say religious faith is among the most important qualities to instill (see Display 2.1).

		DISPLAY 2.1
What parents say is important to teach children *(by percentage)*		
Values	"Most Important" only	Total of "Important" and "Most Important"
Being responsible	54	94
Hard work	44	92
Religious faith	31	66
Helping others	22	86
Being well-mannered	21	86
Independence	17	79
Empathy	15	67
Obedience	12	62
Persistence	11	67
Creativity	10	72
Tolerance	8	62
Curiosity	6	52

(Teaching the Children)

Digital Family: Consuming New Media and Connecting to Each Other and the World

Media

An overwhelming majority of young people are immersed in the new media world.

- Nine in ten parents with children ages six to seventeen say their kids watch TV, movies, or videos on a typical day, and 79 percent say they play video games. Parents whose children get daily screen time are split about whether their children spend too much time on these activities (47 percent) or about the right amount of time (50 percent) (*Parenting in America*, 14).
- Eight in ten (81 percent) parents with children younger than six say that their young children watch videos or play games on an electronic device on a daily basis. Roughly a third (32 percent) of these parents say their kids spend too much time on these activities; 65 percent say the amount of time is about right (*Parenting in America*, 14).

Social media

Pew Research studies have found that parents—75 percent of whom use social media—turn to social media for parenting-related information and social support. Mothers are heavily engaged on social media, both giving and receiving a high level of support via their networks. Parents, like non-parents, use a variety of social media platforms.

- Three-quarters of online parents use Facebook, as do 70 percent of non-parents. Mothers are more likely to use Facebook than fathers.
- In addition to Facebook, online parents use Pinterest (28 percent), LinkedIn (27 percent), Twitter (23 percent), and Instagram (25 percent). Younger parents (those under forty) also are more likely to use Instagram than older parents (*Parents and Social Media*).

Parents, particularly mothers, interact with their networks frequently. A typical parent has one hundred fifty Facebook friends. One-third of them are "actual" friends. Family (93 percent) and friends (88 percent) are the most common types of connections in users' Facebook networks (*Parents and Social Media*).

Mobile

Having a child changes everything, including parents' relationship with their mobile phone. Moms' and dads' mobile phones have become their lifeline to managing schedules, keeping tabs on teens, and sharing their kids' key milestones.

- Sixty-six percent of new parents say their mobile devices help them stay connected to family members.
- Forty-eight percent of parents of young children say mobile devices keep their child entertained.

- Thirty percent of parents of school-age children say mobile devices help them be a more productive parent.
- Sixty percent of parents of teens say mobile devices help them stay connected to their children ("Meet the Parents").

By observing behavior on Facebook, the "Meet the Parents" study found that parents globally spend 1.3X more time on Facebook mobile than non-parents. This is particularly true of new parents globally, who post 2.3X more photos, 2.9X more videos, and 1.8X more status updates. Parents' oversharing rallies friends and families and extends the modern "family" beyond the immediate household.

Facebook's research found that new parents in the United States are active on Facebook increasingly in the early hours, starting their first mobile sessions as early as 4:00 a.m. and peaking at 7:00 a.m. By 7:00 a.m., 56 percent of new parents have visited Facebook on their mobile devices. To help connect with these parents, Facebook recommends that organizations create bit-sized content and catchy videos on mobile that will appeal to parents, particular to those adjusting to a new schedule ("Meet the Parents").

With their attachment to mobile and to technology in general, parents today have greater access to more information and opinions on everything from breastfeeding to education, allowing them to validate, reinforce, or question their perspectives and actions.

- Most parents (83 percent) said they have access to more information than their parents did.
- Most (70 percent) say they're more informed than their parents were—this is particularly true for Boomers (76 percent), who gained access to the Internet and mobile devices later in life than their younger counterparts ("Meet the Parents").

Parents and Technology: Three Patterns of Digital Parenting

Alexandra Samuel spent two years conducting a series of surveys on how families manage technology, gathering data from more than ten thousand North American parents (see Display 2.2). Her findings revealed that parents could be roughly divided into three groups based on how they limit or guide their kids' screen time, each group with its own distinct attitude towards technology.

- *Digital Limiters* raise their children offline. Heeding widespread concerns about the impact of technology use on children's attention spans and interpersonal relationships, *Limiters* take every opportunity to switch off screens. They prefer to keep their children away from the Internet and often strictly limit screen time. Limiters' children are *Digital Exiles*. Once they get online, it's the children of *Limiters* who are most likely to get into patterns of repeated, problematic online behavior.

Styles of digital parenting by age groups *(by percentage)*

	Preschool	Elementary	Teen	All
Digital Enablers	14	24	43	35
Digital Limiters	47	36	22	32
Digital Mentors	39	40	35	33

(Alexandra Samuel/Springboard of America and Angus Reid Forum)

- *Digital Enablers* trust their own children online. Children have plenty of screen time and access to devices. They respect their children's ability to make their own choices online and take their cues from how other families use technology. They've given in to their kids' expertise and allow them to set the family's tech agenda. *Enablers'* children are *Digital Orphans*. They explore the online world without parents to guide them.
- *Digital Mentors* guide their children online. They enjoy spending time online with their children, cultivate their children's digital skills, and foster online learning. *Mentors'* children are *Digital Heirs*. They inherit their parents' online know–how and engagement. *Mentors* give their children online guidance. *Mentors* are much more likely to provide their children with resources and wisdom on how to use digital tools and how to behave online. *Digital Heirs* thrive online. *Mentors* raise children who are much less likely to run into trouble online.

The study also asked parents how much technology guidance they offer their young people at least once per week. Display 2.3 (see page 42) identifies percentages organized into the three digital parenting approaches.

Samuel found that *Digital Mentors*, in fact, may be the parents who are most successful in preparing their kids for a world filled with screens, working actively to shape their kids' online skills and experiences. A survey of more than seven hundred American parents from within her larger dataset found that mentors are more likely than limiters to talk with their kids about how to use technology or the Internet responsibly. They're also more likely to research specific devices or programs for their kids; and they're also the most likely to connect with their kids through technology, rather than in spite of it.

Percentage of parents who provide technology guidance at least once a week

	Digital Mentors	Digital Enablers	Digital Limiters
Talk with my child about how to responsibly use technology, the Internet, or a specific website	51	38	20
Research specific devices, programs, or apps I am considering for my child	44	31	14
Show my child a book, article, video, or program to help them learn about technology	48	35	20
Enroll my child in a class, camp, or workshop to improve their tech skills	35	25	4
Show my child how to use a new computer program, app, or website	44	32	19
Play a video game with my child	58	42	30

(Alexandra Samuel/Springboard of America and Angus Reid Forum)

Part 2: A Profile of Generation X and Millennial Parents

Generation X Parents

Generation X (born 1961/64–1979) parents have developed a parenting style that reflects their own upbringing in the 1970s and 80s and their perceptions about the world of today. Neil Howe, a generational expert and author, and Jon Miller, a researcher at the University of Michigan have conducted studies that have identified many of the unique characteristics of Gen X parents.

About their parenting style

- Gen X parents don't view childrearing as a way to save the world, make a perfect child, or self-actualize the parent. It's just a set of tangible practices that will keep their children safe, reasonably happy, well behaved, and ready to take on life's challenges (Howe).
- Gen X parents approach childrearing like any other technique—there must be a good way and a bad way to get the job done. They are also much more scientific—books and other resources need to show that there's empirical

evidence favoring one way over another, because skeptical Xers don't take advice on faith (Howe).

- Gen X parents practice protective parenting. They are concerned about shielding children from physical dangers that never used to be an issue before, such as ensuring that they never go outside unaccompanied (Howe).
- Gen X parents are practicing more traditional bedtimes and scheduled meal–times and playtimes. They want to create a family life with more order and structure (than they may have had when they were growing up) (Howe).
- Gen X parents tend to be much more prescriptive—lots of dos and don'ts (Howe).
- Gen X parents are focused on control. They often have an extreme distrust of institutions—really, of anyone and everything outside their inner circle of family and friends. Combine that with the tight bonds they have with their children, and you get parents who demand control, options, transparency, and oversight. When volunteering, they tend to choose roles that allow them to supervise what's happening directly. They advocate for whatever helps their own kid (Howe).

About their children

- Gen X parents are more focused on quantity of time with their children (Baby Boomers focused more on quality time) (Howe).
- Gen X parents are concerned about the academic achievement of their children and providing a quality education for them. Increasingly they are sending their children to preschool at earlier ages (Howe).
- Gen X parents have a focus on the social development of their children and teaching them social–emotional learning at home and in school. Social–emotional learning emphasizes self–control, social awareness, empathy, and respect (Howe).
- Gen X parents have a high level of involvement with their children and high educational expectations for their future (graduating college and even graduate school). There is a broad recognition of the value and importance of education and a parallel willingness to invest time and resources to enrich and enhance the education of their children (Miller).
- Gen X parents of *preschool children* encourage educational outcomes in the following ways:
  - Seventy–two percent read to their child three or more hours each week.
  - Half of the parents report that their youngsters watch "Sesame Street" or similar programs three or more hours each week.
  - Nearly 80 percent help their child play with Legos or similar toys at least once each week and play music or sing with their child at least once a week.

- Eighty percent took their child to a zoo or aquarium during the preceding year, and a majority took their child to a science museum or botanical garden or arboretum during the preceding year. Seventy percent take their child to a public library periodically (Miller).

- Gen X parents of *elementary school children* encourage educational outcomes in the following ways:
  - Three-quarters help with homework and 43 percent said that they provide five or more hours of homework help each week.
  - Sixty percent play music or sing with their child at least once a week and 91 percent attend at least one school event with their child each month.
  - Ninety-five percent talk to their child at least once a month about school problems and 76 percent say that they talk to their child once a week about school problems.
  - They use a wide array of community resources to enhance their child's education: visiting a zoo or aquarium (81 percent in the previous year), a science museum (62 percent), natural history museum (47 percent), and a planetarium (27 percent). Eighty-five percent of the parents of elementary school children took their child to a public library periodically (Miller).

- Gen X parents of *secondary school students* encourage education outcomes in the following ways:
  - Eighty-three percent help with homework and two-thirds spend five or more hours (about an hour per night during the school week) on homework help.
  - Forty percent reported singing or playing music with their child at least once a week. Three-quarters attended at least one school event each month and one-third said that they attended at least one school event each week.
  - Ninety-six percent of parents talk least once a month about school problems, and 90 percent said that they talked to their child about going to college at least once a month.
  - They use a wide array of community resources to enhance their child's learning: 55 percent take their student to a zoo or aquarium and 40 percent indicate visiting a science museum with their child. A third took their child to a natural history museum or a botanical garden or arboretum during the preceding year (Miller).

Millennial Parents

The emerging group of new parents are Millennials (born 1980–1999), and they bring a new generational perspective to parenting. Katy Steinmetz conducted a investigation for *Time* magazine that looked at pre-existing studies on changing parenthood mores and also polled two thousand parents with children under eighteen to come up with some fresh stats. In her article, "Help, My Parents Are Millennials," she introduces Millennial parents with this observation:

> This growing cohort of parents is digitally native, ethnically diverse, late-marrying and less bound by traditional gender roles than any generation before it. Millennials, many of whom entered the job market during one of the worst economic downturns in U.S. history, have helped shape a culture where everyone is expected to be on all the time—for their bosses, co-workers, family and friends. With a smartphone and a social network always at hand, they're charting a course through parenthood that opens moms and dads to more public criticism—as well as affirmation—than anything previous generations have ever experienced (*Time*, October 26, 2015).

Millennial parents number more than twenty-two million in the United States (as of 2015) with about nine thousand babies born to them each day. Here's a quick snapshot of Millennial parents from Steinmetz's research.

About the parents
- Sixty-three percent of Millennial parents ages twenty-five to thirty-four are married.
- Forty percent of Millennials ages twenty-five to thirty-four are already parents.
- The average age of a first-time mother is now twenty-six, up from twenty-one in 1970.
- More Millennials are "stay-at-home parents" than past generations (23.2 percent, compared to 16 percent of Gen X and 22 percent of Baby Boomers).
- There are roughly 10.8 million households with children now in the twenty-five to thirty-four age group.
- Half of all Millennial parents in the twenty-five to thirty-four age group are Hispanic, African American, Asian, or another non-Caucasian race.
- In the next ten to fifteen years, 80 percent of Millennials will be parents (*Time,* October 26, 2015).

About their children
- Their preschool-age children are mostly raised at home in one of three ways: cared for by one parent (59 percent), cared for by a relative in the relative's house (16 percent), or cared for by a relative in the child's home (10 percent). Twenty-two percent go to a licensed day care.

- The biggest parenting influences are their own mothers (75 percent), good friends (43 percent), and the pediatrician (41 percent).
- Childrearing responsibilities are shared with 64 percent of men feeling the responsibilities are equally shared and only 50 percent of the women feel the same way.
- Sixty-one percent of Millennial parents believe their kids need more unstructured playtime, and only 21 percent view their children as "over-scheduled" (*Time,* October 26, 2015).

About social media usage
- Nearly 90 percent of Millennials use social media (compared with 76 percent of Gen Xers and 59 percent of Boomers).
- Millennial parents are concerned with the pressure to appear a certain way, thanks to the images posted by their peers on social media. Thirty percent of Millennials are concerned with their friends judging what their kids eat (compared with 17 percent of Gen Xers and 11 percent of Boomers).
- Compared to Boomers, Millennials are twice as likely to look to Google for advice and half as likely to turn to books.
- Fifty-eight percent of Millennials found all of the parenting information out there to be "overwhelming" (compared to 46 percent of Gen-Xers and 43 percent of Boomers) (*Time,* October 26, 2015).

About their parenting approaches
- Helicopter parenting is frowned upon by Millennials, who are now developing a new technique as "drone parenting"—the parents still hover, but they're following and responding to their kids more than directing and scheduling them.
- Instead of hyperdirecting their kids, many researchers believe, there's a focus among today's Millennial parents on a democratic approach to family management—constantly canvassing their children for their opinions.
- "Open-minded," "empathetic," and "questioning" are the qualities Millennial parents most want for their children.
- Nearly 80 percent of Millennial mothers feel pressure to be "the perfect mom." They believe parenting is more competitive today than it used be.
- Millennial parents are twice as likely to go online (Google) for information and instruction about children and parenting than Boomers and half as likely as Boomers to say they look to books. While parents of all ages are most likely to turn to their own parents for advice, Millennials cast their net to Facebook, Twitter, blogs, and apps.
- Millennials are often overwhelmed by the information they receive—oftentimes none is authoritative and many contradict one another. Fifty-eight percent of Millennial parents find the information available to them somewhat, very, or extremely overwhelming (*Time,* October 26, 2015).

Katie Steinmetz comments on Millennials' parenting approach:

> Having been raised to count individuality and self-expression as the highest values, (Millennial parents) are attempting to run their families as mini-democracies, seeking consensus from spouses, kids and extended friend circles on even the smallest decisions. They're backing away from the overscheduled days of their youth, preferring a more responsive, less directorial approach to activities. And they're teaching their kids to be themselves and try new things—often unwittingly conditioning their tiny progeny to see experiences as things to be documented and shared with the world (*Time,* October 26, 2015).

It appears that Millennial parents are tailoring their parenting style to the needs of their family while challenging traditional societal norms. Shaped by an era dominated by post 9/11 security concerns, international conflicts, and a massive global recession, Millennials are focusing on a commitment to providing their kids with the best possible childhood. They are helping their children cultivate a strong sense of identity.

Part 3: A Profile of Family Religiosity Today

Over the past two decades we have witnessed dramatic changes in the religiosity of American Christians, especially in the younger adult generations. The religious landscape today is more complex with a variety of religious-spiritual profiles—from people whose faith is central to their lives and are actively engaged in an established church community to people who are no longer affiliated with any established church.

Increasing Numbers of Interfaith Marriages

Marrying within one's religious tradition is still common in the United States, with nearly seven in ten married people (69 percent) saying that their spouse shares their religion. But the changing patterns of religiosity are having an impact on the younger adults. Almost four in ten Americans (39 percent) who have married since 2010 have a spouse who is in a different religious group: 15 percent of Christians married a spouse from a different Christian tradition and 18 percent of Christians married an unaffiliated spouse. Interfaith relationships are even more common today among unmarried people living with a romantic partner than among those who are married. Nearly half (49 percent) of unmarried couples are living with someone of a different faith.

Increasing Numbers of Unaffiliated Millennials and Generation Xers

As of 2015 Pew Research reports that 23 percent of the US adult population is not religiously affiliated—a 7 percent increase in only seven years. The growth of the religiously unaffiliated is the major headline in religious research. Display 2.4 show how it breaks down by generation from 2007 to 2014.

Religiously unaffiliated by generations *(by percentage)*

	2007	2014
Silent Generation (b. 1928–1945)	9	11
Baby Boomers (b. 1946–1964)	14	17
Generation X (b. 1965–1980)	19	23
Older Millennials (b. 1981–1989)	25	34
Young Millennials (b. 1990–1996)	n/a	36

(*America's Changing Religious Landscape*)

We know that religiously unaffiliated people are more concentrated among young adults than other age groups—35 percent of Millennials are "Nones." The unaffiliated as a whole are getting even younger. The median age of unaffiliated adults is now thirty-six, down from thirty-eight in 2007 and significantly younger than the overall median age of US adults, forty-six years old. And the "Nones" have become even more secular in their beliefs and practices.

- Sixty-one percent believe in God (down 9 percent in seven years).
- Twenty percent pray (down 2 percent).
- Thirteen percent say religion is very important (down 3 percent).
- Nine percent attend services at least monthly (down 1 percent) (*America's Changing Religious Landscape*).

Reinforcing this research is a 2014 study by the Barna Group on the unchurched population in the United States, drawing on more than two decades of tracking data. They found that nearly two-fifths of the nation's adults (38 percent) now qualify as post-Christian (as measured by fifteen different variables related to people's identity, beliefs, and behaviors). This includes 10 percent who qualify as highly post-Christian and another 28 percent as moderately post-Christian. There are generational differences—the younger the generation, the more post-Christian:

28 percent are elders; 35 percent are Boomers; 40 percent are Gen Xers; and 48 percent are Millennials. This helps to explain why America has experienced a surge in unchurched people—and why this predicts a continuing rise in this population.

While traditional measures of religiosity are down, some measures of spirituality are up.

- Roughly six in ten Americans (59 percent) say they feel a deep sense of spiritual peace and well-being at least once a week (up from 52 percent in 2007).
- Nearly half (46 percent) report often feeling a deep sense of wonder about the universe (a 7 point jump over seven years).
- More than four in ten of these younger adults (46 percent) say they feel a deep sense of wonder about the universe at least once a week.
- Most also say they think about the meaning and purpose of life on a weekly basis (55 percent).
- Roughly three-quarters of Millennials feel a strong sense of gratitude or thankfulness at least weekly (76 percent) ("Millennials Are Less Religious than Older Americans, but Just as Spiritual").

Generation X and Millennial parents have increasing rates of disaffiliating from established religion. Will marriage, having children, and growing older change this trend? The researchers at the Pew Research Center don't think this will happen. They observe, "It is possible that growing numbers of Millennials who were raised unaffiliated will begin to identify with a religion as they get older, settle down, get married, and have children. However, previous research suggests that generational cohorts do not become more religiously affiliated as they get older. Indeed, the current study suggests that most generational cohorts are becoming *less* religiously affiliated as they age" (*America's Changing Religious Landscape*, 41).

We now have a more complex picture of religiosity in the families of Millennial and Generation X parents. We have parents for whom faith is central to their lives who are transmitting this faith to their children and are actively engaged as a family in a church community. We have parents who participate only occasionally in church life—in seasonal celebrations, major events, and programs involving their children—and for whom transmitting a religious faith primarily means bringing their children to educational programs at church.

We have parents who identify themselves as Christians and still practice their Christian faith, but with no connection to a church community. We have parents who identify themselves as spiritual—they pray, read the Bible, serve others—but don't identify themselves as Christian. These parents and families can be described as spiritual but not religious, and by "religious" we mean engaged with an established Christian church or denomination. We have parents who are nonaffiliated and for whom religion and spirituality are not important elements of their family life. They may believe in God (most "Nones" do), but religious faith or spiritual practices are not present in their family life. It is not only the parents who are not affiliated; the whole family is not affiliated.

We now see that the first generations of not religiously affiliated parents (Generation X and Millennial) are raising their children to become the second generation of not religiously affiliated. Families can transmit the importance of religion—the Christian faith and practices, and belonging to a church community—but they can also transmit nonaffiliation and how religion and faith are not important in daily life. What we are seeing today is large numbers of parents transmitting nonaffiliation. As the number of "Nones" grows among the younger generations, we can expect this trend to continue.

Declining Religious Transmission from Generation to Generation

The decline of religiosity and the increase in the diversity of religious belief and practice among Generation X and Millennial parents has resulted in declining participation in all aspects of church life—Sunday worship, marriages in the church, children and youth sacramental and ritual celebrations, children and youth programming. We see declining participation of families in church life and Sunday worship. We may see parents bringing their young people to educational programs and milestone celebrations (first communion, confirmation), but they are not participating in Sunday worship or any other church activities. Religion and spirituality may be important to families today, but it is not usually expressed by participation in churches. These trends are resulting in declining levels of family religious transmission and faith practice at home; they are having a direct impact on developing Christian identity and a Christian way of life today. And the changes within the family—the rise of interfaith marriages, the impact of divorce, and the transmission of nonaffiliation from generation to generation—are also major contributors toward the decline in religious transmission.

We see a decline in religious traditions and practices at home. There are a variety of reasons for this, such as the complexity and busyness of everyday life, but one of the major reasons is the religious literacy and religious experience of today's parents. Many Gen X and Millennial parents did not grow up in families where they experienced religious traditions and practices. Many were away from a church for ten or more years before returning with their children for baptism or the start of Sunday school or first communion. They lack fluency with the Christian faith tradition or the confidence to share it with their children.

Family religious transmission and socialization are the foundation for the development of faith and faith practices in children and for participation in church life and worship. As Christian Smith observes:

> Teenagers with seriously religious parents are more likely than those without such parents to have been trained in their lives to think, feel, believe, and act as serious religious believers, and that that training "sticks" with them even when the leave home and enter emerging adulthood. Emerging adults who grew up with seriously religious parents are through

socialization more likely (1) to have internalized their parents religious worldview, (2) to possess the practical religious know–how needed to live more highly religious lives, and (3) to embody the identity orientations and behavioral tendencies toward continuing to practice what they have been taught religiously (Smith and Snell, 232).

The decline in family religious transmission and socialization in the families of Generation X and Millennial parents has serious implications for the future of family faith and congregational life. We are seeing the first generations of not religiously affiliated parents (Generation X and Millennial) raising their children to become the second generation of not religiously affiliated. If these trends continue, we can forecast declining levels of the importance of religion and the Christian faith, faith practice at home, and participation of families in church life.

Works Cited

Anne. E. Casey Foundation. *Creating Opportunity for Families: A Two Generation Approach*. 2014. http://www.aecf.org/m/resourcedoc/aecf-CreatingOpportunityforFamilies-2014.pdf.

Barna Group. "Year in Review: Barna's Top 10 Findings from 2014." https://www.barna.org/barna-update/faith-spirituality/701-year-in-review-barna-s-top-10-findings-from-2014.

Children's Defense Fund. *Ending Child Poverty Now*. 2015. http://www.childrensdefense.org/library/PovertyReport/EndingChildPovertyNow.html#sthash.lZQLkd23.dpuf.

Howe, Neil. "Introducing the Homeland Generation—Part 1." Forbes.com. October 27, 2014. http://www.forbes.com/sites/neilhowe/2014/10/31/introducing-the-homeland-generation-part-2-of-2/#196710ae67d6.

————. "Introducing the Homeland Generation—Part 2." Forbes.com. October 31, 2014. http://www.forbes.com/sites/neilhowe/2014/10/27/introducing-the-homeland-generation-part-1-of-2/#3129c1364fdc.

KidsHealth.org and *TIME for Kids*. "KidsHealth.org and *TIME for Kids* Survey." March 2016. http://kidshealth.org/media/kidspoll/ParentChildRelationships.html

"Meet the Parents—A Facebook Study." Ipsos Media CT. https://insights.fb.com/2016/01/11/meet-the-parents.

Miller, John D. "Active, Balanced, and Happy." *The Generation X Report*. Volume 1, Issue 1, Fall 2011. http://www.lsay.org/GenX_Rept_Iss1.pdf.

————. *Parenting in America: Outlook, Worries, Aspirations Are Strongly Linked to Financial Situation*. December 17, 2015. http://www.pewsocialtrends.org/files/2015/12/2015-12-17_parenting-in-america_FINAL.pdf.

Pew Research Center. "Millennials Are Less Religious than Older Americans, but Just as Spiritual." November 23, 2015. http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2015/11/23/millennials-are-less-religious-than-older-americans-but-just-as-spiritual.

Pew Research Center. *Parents and Social Media*. July 16, 2015. http://www.pewinternet.org/2015/07/16/parents-and-social-media.

Pew Research Center. *America's Changing Religious Landscape*. May 12, 2105. http://www.pewforum.org/2015/05/12/americas-changing-religious-landscape.

Pew Research Center. *Teaching the Children*. September 2014. http://www.people-press.org/files/2014/09/09-18-14-Child-Rearing-Values-Release.pdf.

Samuel, Alexandra. "Parents: Reject Technology Shame." *The Atlantic.* November 4, 2015. http://www.theatlantic.com/technology/archive/2015/11/why-parents-shouldnt-feel-technology-shame/414163.

Smith, Christian with Patricia Snell. *Souls in Transition: The Religious and Spiritual Lives of Emerging Adults.* New York: Oxford University Press, 2009.

Steinmetz, Katy. "Help, My Parents Are Millennials." *Time.* October 26, 2015. http://time.com/help-my-parents-are-millennials-cover-story.

Reimagining Family Faith Formation: Families at the Center

John Roberto

● ● ● ● In Chapter One, Gene Roehlkepartain identifies six shifts to transform our guiding narratives about families and faith formation, and create a new narrative that can more effectively guide how we understand and engage families as the center of faith formation in the twenty-first century (see Display 3.1 on page 54).

In the last transition from congregation-centered to community-centered ministries, Gene imagines what it would be like if the narrative shifted to emphasize what happens in families and communities, away from faith formation that is centered primarily at church. He asks, "What if the ministries that were announced and celebrated when the community gathers reflect how its members are living out their faith in their daily lives? How might congregations' ministries with families be different if the center shifted?"

What might a new approach to family faith formation look like that seeks to embody the transformed narrative about families? This chapter proposes a new approach to family faith formation, guided by the conviction that *families need to be the center of faith formation.* We begin with a look at the evolution of family faith formation approaches over the past century.

DISPLAY 3.1

Shifts in faith formation

From an emphasis on . . .

- Programs
- Parenting as a strategy
- Pathologizing or idealizing families
- "Passing on" the faith
- Serving families
- Congregation-centered ministries

Toward an emphasis on . . .

- Relationships
- Parenting as a relationship
- Tapping their strengths and resilience
- "Living into" the faith
- Empowering families
- Community-centered ministries

The Evolution of Family Faith Formation Approaches

Over the past century the relationship between families and the congregation in making disciples and nurturing lifelong faith growth can be described in three distinct approaches. Each approach developed within a particular context that was shaped by historical events, the culture of the day, and social and religious trends. All of the following approaches to family faith formation can be seen in the church today, in one form or another. Each approach was a response to the times and carries with it assumptions about the world and about the family's role in faith formation.

The Extended Family Approach to Faith Formation

In the first half of the twentieth century, faith formation was primarily a home experience. It was comprised of multigenerational family faith practice and religious transmission at home, supported by strong congregational community relationships and church life. Most Christian traditions relied heavily on the ethnic faith traditions of their people to transmit faith from generation to generation—at home and at church. In the late 1800s and early 1900s families came to the "new world" and brought with them the ethnic religious traditions and practices from their "old world." Grandparents transmitted these traditions and practices to the new generations born in the United States. Ethnic identity was merged with religious identity. They were mutually reinforcing. Today we see the power of ethnic religious traditions and practices most clearly in families who have settled in the United States from Central and South America. This approach to faith formation can best be described as *immersive*—young people grew in faith through direct experience by listening to and reading Bible stories, engaging in devotions, eating together (especially Sunday meals and holidays), praying together (bedtime rituals and prayer, grace before meals), having family conversations, being surrounded

by sacred objects and religious images, celebrating holidays, seeing role models of moral integrity, and much more.

In short, the Extended Family Approach developed in an era conducive to and supportive of faith transmission at home. It was an organic, natural process from generation to generation that was enhanced and strengthened by strong ethnic culture and congregational community life.

The Age-specific Approach to Faith Formation

By the early 1960s the Extended Family Approach, as the dominant model of faith formation, began to decline. At the heart of the decline was the decreasing role of ethnicity as family members were now three or four generations removed from the experience of the first generation who came to America and secondly, the dramatic changes in American families. The American family began to experience fundamental change: an increase in the number of "mixed faith" marriages, the rise of divorce and single-parent families, a greater diversity in family structures, an increase in dual career parents and "latchkey kids," greater geographic distance between families with children and grandparents, and much more.

As a result families became a less reliable transmitter of religious tradition and practices. At the same time, congregations began developing age-graded educational programming—reflective of broader trends in education and a developmental understanding of growth, and placing more emphasis on expanding children's ministries and youth ministries. All of these new initiatives moved the focus to church-based faith formation programming.

As the role of the church in faith formation took center stage, the role of the family and parents began a steady decline. The family, which had already seen its role in society diminished in the first half of the 1900s as its economic and educational roles were taken over by the workplace and schools, began to lose its faith-forming responsibility to the church. Churches still assumed a level of faith practice at home to sustain the religious learning and experiences that children and youth were having at church, but the parents' primary responsibility was supporting the church's efforts and bringing their children to Sunday worship and appropriate church activities. Church-based, age-specific faith formation remains the dominant model today, with parents involved occasionally in special programs around religious milestones such as baptism and first communion. Most age-graded curriculum provides "take-home" activities that seek to extend the learning from the class or program into the home in the form of prayers, devotions, Bible reading, ritual, family conversation, and more. These are usually seen as supplemental to the church-based program.

This shift in faith formation from home to church and in the role of parents in faith formation reflected a broader social trend. Families were being offered a much greater diversity of organized activities outside the family. The "pick-up" baseball or basketball game in the neighborhood gave way to sports leagues, practices,

and games. Over the past forty years, there has been an acceleration of activi-ties—sports, art, music, dance, and much more—outside the home and outside the neighborhood. Parents have increasingly become managers of their children's time and activities and their primary means of transportation. It's no wonder that almost all parents today say their biggest concern is a lack of time, especially "fam-ily together" time. In this environment it's easy to see why parents are relieved to "outsource" religious formation to the church.

In short, the Age-specific Approach reflected an era in which significant changes were happening in the society and family. Many family functions were being out-sourced to schools and community organizations that provided age-appropriate programs and activities for children and adolescents—and churches followed this pattern. New age-graded curriculum and textbooks were created and a renewed emphasis on church-based educational programs moved the responsibility from parents and the home to church programs.

The Family Involvement Approach to Faith Formation

With a renewed recognition of the role of the family in faith formation and in response to the overly age-segmented approach of most congregations, a Family-centered Faith Formation Approach emerged. A variety of models was created to involve families more fully in the faith formation of their children and adolescents. Here are four examples.

The parent–family parallel model

Parents or the whole family are involved in programs that are offered in addition to the age-graded faith formation program, as well the children's ministry and youth ministry. One example of this model is offering parent classes at the same time (but in a different room) as the children's program. Another example is offering a family program several times throughout the year to replace a session of the children and adolescent program. In this model the parent or family program operates indepen-dently from the other faith formation programming.

Family small groups model

In the 1970s and 80s Margaret Sawin developed the Family Cluster Model where four or five family units meet for an agreed period of time for several weeks or more. The families contract to meet together for activity, eating, study, and shar-ing. The focus of the time together can be structured around life issues, family life issues, and/or religious/spiritual topics. The Family Cluster Model provides an environment where everyone can grow, participate, and experience support, and families can discover and develop their strengths.

At the same time Kathleen Chesto developed the Family-centered Intergen-erational Religious Education Model (FIRE) built around home groups of five to seven households with a total of eighteen to thirty members. Members in FIRE

include all ages, single, married with children, married without children, and friends of children whose families are in the group. The ideal setting for FIRE groups is the home where parents and children feel most comfortable. The FIRE program provides a complete curriculum for (Catholic) faith formation organized around core faith themes. Home groups usually meet sixteen times a year: six times in the Advent season, six times in the Lenten season, and three to four times during the Easter season. A typical meeting lasts one and one-half to two hours. The format for FIRE meetings includes 1) an icebreaker or community building activity, 2) a prayer ritual, 3) the experience, which often happens in smaller groups by family or by age or intergenerationally, 4) the explanation where people share their learning, 5) closing prayer, and 6) social.

The Family Small Group Model can replace age-graded programming or serve as a second option for families in a congregation's faith formation plan

Family connected model

In this model age-specific faith formation, and often worship and other ministries, work collaboratively to develop family faith at home and especially the role of parents (and grandparents) as faith formers of their young people. In the Family Connected Model each ministry and program makes an intentional effort to equip parents for their role at home and to provide resource to develop family faith practices at home. For example, there is an intentional effort to connect Sunday worship to the home with continual references throughout worship on how to "bring this home," with guidance for parents (and grandparents) on how to share the Bible and experience worship at home, and with resources that extend Sunday worship—learning, ritual, prayer, action—into the home. This same approach is applied to age-specific learning session for children or youth or adults, as well as to a variety of church events. The Family Connected Model brings a family perspective to all church life, ministries, and programming.

Family–intergenerational whole community model

In this model a congregation eliminates or dramatically reduces its reliance on age-segmented programming and becomes a more intentional family-intergenerational community where all or nearly all programs and events are multigenerational with a strong focus on nurturing family faith and equipping parents (and grandparents) as faith formers of young people. At the heart of Family-intergenerational Model is an all-ages learning program—weekly, biweekly, or monthly—as the core experience, oftentimes with a multiyear curriculum for the whole community that can include themes from the Bible, the cycle of Sunday lectionary readings, church year feasts and seasons, Christian practices, service and social justice, prayer and spiritual disciplines, core Christian beliefs, and moral teachings. Sunday worship is designed as an intentionally family-intergenerational experience that appeals to and engages all generations in the worship experience. (See the books *Intergenerational Christian Formation* and *Generations Together* for more information about this model.)

In short, the Family Involvement Approach, in its many different models, sought to make parent and whole family involvement central to faith formation. Most of the models focused on engaging the whole family in large group or small group programs and activities at church and preparing them for at-home faith experiences. While this emphasis remains, the Family Involvement Approach prepares the way for a imagining a new approach to family faith formation tailored to the needs of the twenty-first century family.

The Changing Context of Family Faith Formation

Faith formation is contextual. Our world is different, in significant ways, from the world in which the three family faith formation approaches described previously were created. The three faith formation approaches we examined—along with their programs, resources, and technologies—were suited to particular eras. Today many churches find that the current models of family faith formation are either inadequate to the current challenges *or* provide only a partial solution. They are seeking a broader approach that is better suited to the challenges and opportunities of the twenty-first century.

When the context changes, the approaches we use must change. We need new knowledge, models, skills, resources, and technologies to address the challenges of the current context. This is what is known as *adaptive change*. Ronald Heifetz and Martin Linsky in their work on leadership are helpful in this regard. They contrast the difference between a technical fix and an adaptive challenge. *Technical problems* (even though they may be complex) can be solved with knowledge and procedures already in hand. We see leaders trying to apply technical fixes—new resources, new schedules, and more—to older models of faith formation, usually with little long-term success. *Adaptive challenges* require innovation and experimentation, and new patterns of behavior.

We need to develop family faith approaches that begin in the world of twenty-first century families—making their life situations, interests and concerns, faith and spirituality, and parenting approaches central to faith formation. Consider the following research insights from Chapter Two.

- Children and adolescents live in a variety of family arrangements that change and evolve over the course of a child's life.
- Parents are busier than even—and often "overwhelmed"—managing and balancing work, education, family life, young people's activities, and their own personal lives. Today's family is far more complex than in prior decades as parents deal with constant and accelerating change.
- The income levels of families make a difference in many aspects of family life—parenting style, quality of education, access to and involvement in activities for children and adolescents, parents' concerns about the well-being and safety of their children, and more.

- The overwhelming majority of mothers and fathers say that being a parent is extremely or very important to their overall identity and a rewarding experience.
- Parents want their children to be honest and ethical as adults, caring and compassionate, and hardworking. The top values that are important for them to teach include (in order): being responsible, hard work, religious faith, helping others, being well-mannered, independence, empathy, obedience, persistence, creativity, tolerance, and curiosity.
- Generation X parents and Millennial parents have distinct parenting styles. In general Gen X parents approach child-rearing as a set of tangible practices that will keep their children safe, reasonably happy, well-behaved, and ready to take on life's challenges. They practice protective parenting. In general, Millennial parents, reflecting their values of individuality and self-expression, focus more on a democratic approach to family management, encouraging their children to be open-minded, empathetic, and questioning—and teaching them to be themselves and try new things. They are moving away from the overscheduled days of their youth, preferring a more responsive, less directorial approach to activities.
- Parents and their children are immersed in media and the new digital tools. There is a widespread adoption of new digital technologies and mobile devices that are transforming the way parents and children relate, communicate, work, and learn. Parents can be divided into three groups based on how they limit or guide their children's screen time with each group representing about one-third of all parents: *Digital Limiters*, *Digital Enablers*, and *Digital Mentors*.
- Generation X and Millennial parents reflect an increasing diversity in religious beliefs, practices, and affiliation. A growing number of parents and whole families are now religiously unaffiliated and/or spiritual but not religious. Twenty-three percent of Generation Xers and more than 34 percent of Millennials are not religiously affiliated and the number of unaffiliated Millennials is growing.
- Families of Generation X and Millennial parents are participating less in church life and Sunday worship. Parents may bring their young people to educational programs and milestone celebrations (first communion, confirmation), but they are not participating in Sunday worship or other church activities. Religion and spirituality may be important to families today, but for many it is not usually expressed by participation in churches.
- Generation X and Millennial parents are providing religious socialization and religious transmission in declining numbers. There is also a decline in religious traditions and practices at home. Gen X and Millennial parents often lack the religious literacy and religious experiences necessary for faith transmission. Many did not grow up in families where they experienced religious traditions and practices. Many were away from a church for ten or

more years before returning with their children for baptism or the start of Sunday school or first communion. They lack the fluency with the Christian faith tradition or the confidence to share it with their children.

The Family-at-the-Center Approach: Foundational Insights

What might a new approach to family faith formation look like that starts with the life experience of twenty-first century families? What insights should inform us and guide the development of a new family faith formation *approach* and the creation of *strategies* to implement the approach? How do we promote discipleship and faith growth in *all* parents and families—engaging them in a process of experiencing, learning, and practicing the Christian faith and following Jesus and his way in today's world? And how can we develop an approach that provides a platform for reaching *every* family in our faith communities and in the wider community?

We are naming this new approach the "Family-at-the Center." Simply put, the Family-at-the Center Approach recognizes that parents and the family are the most powerful influence for virtually every child and youth outcome—personal, academic, social, and spiritual-religious; and that parents are *the* most important influence on the social and religious lives of children, youth, and emerging adults. Given the central role of families in shaping the lives of children and youth, the value of engaging, supporting, and educating families should be self-evident to all of us.

Embracing the Family-at-the Center Approach means adopting a new set of attitudes and assumptions about families and faith formation, including:

- Seeing the home as the essential and foundational environment for faith nurture, faith practice, and the healthy development of young people.
- Reinforcing the family's central role in promoting healthy development and faith growth in children and youth, and enhancing the faith-forming capacity of parents and grandparents.
- Building faith formation around the lives of the today's families and parents, rather than having the congregation prescribe the programs and activities that families will participate in.
- Addressing the diversity of family life today by moving away from one-size-fits all programs and strategies toward a variety of programs and strategies tailored to the unique life tasks and situations, concerns and interest, and religious-spiritual journeys of parents and families.
- Overcoming the age-segregated nature of church and its programming by engaging parents and the whole family in meaningful intergenerational relationships and faith formation that involves all ages and families.
- Building upon the assets, strengths, and capacities present in parents and families, rather than focusing on their deficits and solving problems.

• Partnering with parents in working toward shared goals and aspirations for their young people by supporting, equipping, and resourcing them.

Embracing the Family-at-the Center Approach means letting go of outdated attitudes and practices that tend to dominate congregations' approach to families. It means letting go of control over families—which congregations really don't have anyway—and becoming family friendly and family responsive in everything we do. It means moving away from spending time, energy, and resources to get parents and families to comply with congregational priorities and expectations ("what we want them to do") toward becoming responsive to what is happening in the lives of parents and families, and engaging with them wherever they may be.

We are proposing a new comprehensive approach to family faith formation that realizes the vision of *families at the center of faith formation* and is better suited to the challenges and opportunities of the twenty-first century. We are proposing an approach that promotes growth in faith and discipleship, develops the family as a community of faith and school of discipleship, and equips parents (and grandparents) to transmit the religious tradition at home. This new approach is grounded in solid research on what promotes growth in faith and healthy individual and family development, and addresses the family as a whole, its individual members (children, teens, emerging adults), parents/grandparents, and the faith community. It builds a connection between families and the congregation and provides congregations with a plan for how they can engage and equip families toward the goals of deeper faith and discipleship.

We introduce the Family-at-the Center Approach by describing seven insights that guide the vision of the new approach.

1. God is actively present in family life.
2. The family is a community of faith and a "school of discipleship."
3. Faith is formed through eight essential processes.
4. Faith is formed in intergenerational faith communities
5. Faith is formed in developmentally appropriate ways.
6. Parents and the family are the most important religious influence on religious transmission.
7. Parents and families have a diversity of religious-spiritual identities.

Insight 1. God Is Actively Present in Family Life

We begin with the conviction that God is truly present to us, woven into the fabric of our lives, present and waiting to be perceived and celebrated. "And the Word was made flesh; he had his tent pitched among us, and we have seen his Glory, the Glory of the only Son coming from the Father: fullness of truth and loving-kindness" (John 1:14, Christian Community Bible). God is truly present and active in the lives of families, even if families are not aware of the gracious presence.

Diana Butler Bass in her book *Grounded* writes,

> There is a widespread sense that God is *with us*, *within* creation, culture, and the cosmos. If anything, recent decades have revealed not a dreadful, distant God, but have slowly illuminated that an intimate presence of mystery abides with the world, a spirit of compassion that breathes hope and healing. And with it faith is shifting from a theology of distance toward a theology of nearness, from institution to unmediated experience (15).

She reflects on why this is happening:

> At the same moment when massive global institutions seem to rule the world, there is an equally strong countermovement among regular people to claim personal agency in our own lives. We grow food in backyards. We brew beer. We weave cloth and knit blankets. We shop local. We create our own playlists. We tailor delivery of news and entertainment. In every arena, we customize and personalize our lives, creating material environments to make meaning, express a sense of uniqueness, and engage causes that matter to us and the world.

> It makes perfect sense that we are making our spiritual lives as well, crafting a new theology. And that God is far more personal and close at hand than once imagined (21).

In *An Altar in the World* Barbara Brown Taylor offers her experiences of discovering God and the sacred in her daily life. In these selected quotes from her book, you can catch the conviction that God is available to us in and through our life experiences in the world.

> To make bread or love, to dig in the earth, to feed an animal or cook for a stranger—these activities require no extensive commentary, no lucid theology. All they require is someone willing to bend, reach, chop, stir. Most of these tasks are so full of pleasure that there is no need to complicate things by calling them holy. And yet these are the same activities that change lives, sometimes all at once and sometimes more slowly, the way dripping water changes stone. In a world where faith is often construed as a way of thinking, bodily practices remind the willing that faith is a way of life (xvi).

> People encounter God under shady oak trees, on riverbanks, at the tops of mountains, and in long stretches of barren wilderness. God shows up in whirlwinds, starry skies, burning bushes, and perfect strangers. When people want to know more about God, the son of God tells them to pay attention to the lilies of the field and the birds of the air, to women kneading bread and workers lining up for their pay. . . .

Whoever wrote this stuff believed that people could learn as much about the ways of God from paying attention to the world as they could from paying attention to scripture. What is true is what happens, even if what happens is not always right. People can learn as much about the ways of God from business deals gone bad or sparrows falling to the ground as they can from reciting the books of the Bible in order. They can learn as much from a love affair or a wildflower as they can from knowing the Ten Commandments by heart (12–13).

I can set a little altar, in the world or in my heart. I can stop what I am doing long enough to see where I am, who I am there with, and how awesome the place is. I can flag one more gate to heaven—one more patch of ordinary earth with ladder marks on it—where the divine traffic is heavy when I notice it and even when I do not. I can see it for once, instead of walking right past it, maybe even setting a stone or saying a blessing before I move on to wherever I am due next. . . .

Human beings may separate things into as many piles as we wish—separating spirit from flesh, sacred from secular, church from world. But we should not be surprised when God does not recognize the distinctions we make between the two. Earth is so thick with divine possibility that it is a wonder we can walk anywhere without cracking our shins on altars (15).

It may be true today that many families seem not to feel their family life as sacred. They fail to name their most profound moments of shared memory—birth, death, sexual intimacy, estrangement, forgiveness, gathering, the daily struggles to be with and for each other—as part of a spiritual life. But God is still very much present in their lives ready to be discovered. John Shea in *An Experience Named Spirit* reflects on how people come to recognize the sacred in everyday life.

Religiously significant experiences are those times when we become aware of this omnipresent relationship and sense that some of the effects within us and within our situation have been stimulated by this relationship. . . . The practical demands of staying alive are the usual contents of consciousness. But there are moments which, although they occur within the everyday confines of human living, take on large meaning. They have a lasting impact; they cut through to something deeper; they demand a hearing. It may be the death of a parent, the touch of a friend, falling in love, a betrayal, the recognition of what has really been happening over the last two years, the unexpected arrival of a blessing, the sudden advent of curse. But whatever it is, we sense we have undergone something that has touched upon the normally dormant but always present relationship to God (97).

He observes that any interaction in life has the potential of becoming religious significant and reflects on what triggers religiously significant experiences.

> Church and Tradition have an enshrined set of triggers. Through hearing the story of Jesus, participating in the sacraments, attending Mass, meditating, engaging certain prayer practices people enter explicitly into their relationship with God. But a second and more extensive set of triggers are the multiple life situations in which people find themselves. In situations of sickness and vitality, of questing for truth and struggling for justice, of loving and reconciling, of pondering the vastness of space and of traveling the inner psyche people come upon the reality of God. In fact, this seems to be the more traveled path to religious awareness today. The trigger power of the creations of the Christian tradition is seriously questioned. The presence that people used to find in the dark back of Gothic churches they now claim they find in the bright light of the secular world (98–99).

We believe God is actively present to us in our world, our experiences in life, our relationships, and much more. We believe that everyone is already spiritual. As Thomas Groome writes, "Given our creation in the divine image and our aliveness by the very breath of God, all humans are essentially spiritual beings. Instead of identifying people as human beings with a spiritual aspect, it is better to think of us as spiritual beings with a human aspect" (67).

We do not have to worry about "bringing God" to families or "making" people spiritual; they are already spiritual beings.

Family faith formation seeks to guide parents and the whole family in recognizing, understanding, and responding to God's presence in their midst. This will also entail developing ways for helping people find God in church and tradition *and* in everyday life experiences in the world.

Insight 2. The Family Is a Community of Faith and a "School of Discipleship"

A family is the first community and the most basic way in which God gathers us, forms us, and acts in the world. As Richard Gaillardetz observes in "The Christian Household as School of Discipleship":

> It is in the domestic household that we eat, sleep, bathe, get dressed, relax and converse with others. In the context of the household we learn basic social conventions, from table manners to the demands of hospitality toward guests. In the household we learn how to be accountable for our lives; we learn when we are expected for dinner (or to prepare dinner); we learn what chores and other miscellaneous responsibilities are assigned to us and how the smooth functioning of the household depends on the fulfillment of those chores and responsibilities. More importantly, in many

households we learn about the possibilities for committed, appropriately vulnerable relationship with others and the privileges and responsibilities that those relationships bring. It is in this nexus of patterned relationships which constitutes the household that we can better understand the image of the Christian household as a "school of discipleship."

Jesus presented faith as a whole way of life. Discipleship means to follow the way of Jesus—how he lived, what he taught, what he made possible. Family faith formation is guided by a holistic vision of the Christian faith as a way of the head, the heart, and the hands. "By focusing on each element of this way—head, heart, and hands—we will recognize the sort of comprehensive faith to be embodied in discipleship to Jesus" (Groome, 111).

Christian faith as a *way of the head* (inform) demands a discipleship of faith seeking understanding and belief with personal conviction, sustained by study, reflecting, discerning, and deciding, all toward spiritual wisdom for life. This requires that we educate people to know, understand, and embrace with personal conviction Christianity's core belief and values.

Christian faith as a *way of the heart* (form) demands a discipleship of right relationships and right desires, community building, hospitality and inclusion, trust in God's love, and prayer and worship. This requires that we foster growth in people's identity through formation and the intentional socialization of Christian family and community.

Christian faith as a *way of the hands* (transform) demands a discipleship of love, justice, peacemaking, simplicity, integrity, healing, and repentance. This requires that we foster in people an openness to a lifelong journey of conversion toward holiness and fullness of life for themselves and for the life of the world (see Groome, 111–119).

The conviction that the Christian faith is a whole way of life and that the family is a "school of discipleship" needs to guide the development of family-appropriate goals for faith formation—*goals that are viewed through the lens of family life*. The following goals can guide the development of a congregational plan for faith formation that begins with families at the center and cultivates the family as a faith community and school of discipleship.

The family lives as a faith community and school of discipleship by:

- Believing in God and that God cares about them, and turning to God for support, guidance, and strength.
- Loving and believing in the value of another person.
- Fostering intimacy between spouses, among family members, and with God.
- Caring for one another and being willing to sacrifice for each other.
- Initiating the young into a living relationship with God.
- Educating the young through teaching knowledge of the Bible and Christian tradition and how to live that faith in daily life.
- Reading and reflecting on the Bible and its message and meaning for their lives.

- Being witnesses to their faith in God and setting an example of Christian living for each other and the community.
- Living with moral integrity guided by Christian values and ethics.
- Praying together, thanking God for blessings, asking for strength and guidance, especially during difficult times.
- Forgiving and seeking reconciliation.
- Celebrating life's passages and milestones throughout life as moments of grace and faith growth.
- Serving people in need in the local community and around the world.
- Acting justly to alleviate oppressive conditions.
- Caring for creation and affirming life.
- Participating in Sunday worship and the life of their church community.
- Living as disciples of Jesus Christ at home, at school, in the workplace, in the community, and in the world.

Insight 3. Faith Is Formed through Eight Essential Processes

Diana Butler Bass reflects on the role of the home as a "training ground for spiritual and ethnic habits."

> The home is the training ground for spiritual and ethical habits that we take out into the world as adults. Because households nurture habit, they can be schools of intentional spiritual practice. Things like sharing, eating together, praying, conversation, critical thinking, acceptance, forgiveness, and charity can become habitual. Home can be a genuine community, where love overcomes isolation. In recent years researchers have discovered that people and families who engage in spiritual practices at home are generally happier, more involved in the community, and healthier. Thus churches, synagogues, temples, and mosques have placed great emphasis on spiritual practices in the last two decades, encouraging the faithful to assume domestic responsibility for the moral formation of their families.
>
> This may sound old-fashioned, like family Bible reading or saying grace around a table. But the new awareness of domestic spiritual practice does not focus solely upon familial devotions. Instead, in many faith communities, the emphasis is on moral practices. And two locations have emerged as particularly sacred: the front door, and the table, the physical places at home where we form the spiritual habits of hospitality and gratitude (180–81).

We can discern at least eight essential processes of forming faith, informed by scripture, theology, research, and contemporary reflection that promote faith growth and discipleship with age groups, families, and the whole faith community. The eight essential faith-forming processes—involving knowledge and practices of the Christian faith—facilitate faith growth *and* make a significant difference in

the lives of children, youth, adults, and families. These eight faith-forming processes are central to Christian lifelong faith formation. They provide a foundation to address the challenge of religious transmission from generation to generation, and promote lifelong growth in faith and discipleship. The eight processes include:

1. *Caring relationships.* Growing in faith and discipleship through caring relationships within the family, across generations, and with other families/parents at home and church.
2. *Celebrating the liturgical seasons.* Growing in faith and discipleship by experiencing the feasts and seasons of the church year as they tell the story of faith through the year in an organic and natural sequence of faith learning.
3. *Celebrating rituals and milestones.* Growing in faith and discipleship by celebrating rituals, sacraments, and milestones that provide a way to experience God's love through significant moments in one's life journey and faith journey.
4. *Learning the Christian tradition and applying it to life.* Growing in faith and discipleship by learning the Christian tradition (Trinity, Jesus, church, beliefs, morality and ethics), reflecting upon that tradition, integrating it into one's faith life, applying it to life today, and living its meaning in the world.
5. *Praying, devotions, and spiritual formation.* Growing in faith and discipleship through personal and communal prayer, and being formed in the spiritual disciplines.
6. *Reading the Bible.* Growing in faith and discipleship by encountering God in the Bible, and by studying and interpreting the Bible—its message, its meaning, and its application to life today.
7. *Serving and working for justice.* Growing in faith and discipleship by living the Christian mission in the world—engaging in service to those in need, caring for God's creation, and working for justice.
8. *Worshipping God.* Growing in faith and discipleship by worshipping God with the community of faith—praising God; giving thanks for God's creative and redemptive work in the world; bringing our human joys and dilemmas to God; experiencing God's living presence through scripture, preaching, and Eucharist; and being sent forth on mission.

These eight faith-forming processes provide a foundation and framework for developing faith at home through the year and for equipping parents with the knowledge and resources to practice their faith at home. They provide a framework for guiding congregations in aligning church life and events to support and encourage family faith practice, and in designing activities for parents and the whole family (such as family-intergenerational programs) that provide opportunities to experience caring relationships, celebrating rituals, celebrating the church year, learning the tradition, praying, reading the Bible, serving and working for justice, and worshipping. These experiences not only enrich family faith, but they model the type of faith practice and experiences that families can live at home.

Insight 4. Faith Is Formed in Intergenerational Faith Communities

"Throughout Scripture there is a pervasive sense that all generations were typically present when faith communities gathered for worship, for celebration, for feasting, for praise, for encouragement, for reading of Scripture, in times of danger, and for support and service. . . . To experience authentic Christian community and reap the unique blessings of intergenerationality, the generations must be together regularly and often—infants to octogenarians" (Allen and Ross, 84).

Participating in the intergenerational life and experiences of a congregation is an essential environment for developing discipleship and nurturing faith growth. Joyce Mercer in "Cultivating a Community Practice" writes,

> *We invite people into the way of life that embodies God's love, justice, compassion, and reconciliation, by being, doing, and thinking about it together.* The best curriculum for forming children, youth, and anyone else in Christian faith is *guided participation in a community of practice* where people are vibrantly, passionately risking themselves together in lives of faith in a world crying out for the love of Christ.

> *Guided participation in a community of practice* puts a premium on both participation and practice. Watch children in play imitating the adults around them to see how even the youngest among us hunger to participate in the way of life they see enacted before them. That's a good instinct to follow, because people—children or otherwise!—don't become Christian by learning *about* what Christians do, say, or think (although at some point, particularly in adolescence and beyond, doing so can be an important part of deepening one's faith identity). We become Christian, taking on the identity of one who is a disciple of Jesus, by acting the way Christians act, and by talking the way Christians talk. Over time through practice, even our hearts and minds are formed in this way of life.

Charles Foster in *From Generation to Generation* proposes seven themes to guide our "our educational imagination" about "what the education of congregations might look like in forming and transforming the faith of children and youth (as well as their families and all adults) within the agency of their religious traditions." His themes clearly resonate with an intergenerational congregational culture of faith formation. Briefly summarized his themes include the following (see Foster, 125–142).

1. *An education that forms the faith of children and youth builds up and equips congregations (and their religious traditions) to be the body of Christ in the world.* This involves engaging young people (and their families and all adults) in the disciplines of developing proficiency in the ecclesial practices of worshipping God and serving neighbor; involving them in the practices and perspectives, sensibilities, and habits associated with being the body of Christ in ministry in the world; and preparing them to participate in and celebrate Christ's ministry as the focus of a congregation's education.

2. *To engage children and youth in building up and equipping the church as the body of Christ in ministry in the world plunges a congregation (and the agencies of its religious tradition) necessarily into ecclesial-grounded educational practices of forming and transforming faith.* This involves focusing on Christian practices and, especially, the two sets of practices that establish the context for all others: loving God and neighbor (the Great Commandment).

3. *A faith-forming education requires the interdependence of the generations.* This involves developing sustained patterns of intergenerational learning, relationships, and mentoring that develop young people's identification with the faith community, give them memories of hope to enliven their future, and create their sense of responsibility for the well-being of the community and the earth.

4. *The responsibility of mentoring the faith of children and youth belongs to the whole congregation in the full range of its ministries.* This involves highlighting the community as mentor/teacher in which no one, yet everyone, may move in and out of the interplay of teaching and learning, of forming and being formed. The clearest way of learning to be Christian is to participate with others in the practices of bring Christian. Each member of a faith community may potentially mentor someone at the threshold of expertise in some shared community practice.

5. *As congregations engage in practices of mentoring to build up and equip the church as the body of Christ in ministry in the world, the diversity of the gifts and graces of young people (and the whole community) is nurtured.*

6. *A faith-forming education must be contextually relevant to people of all ages today.*

7. *A faith-forming education relevant to the challenges of contemporary experience engages congregations in the preparation of their children, youth, and adults to participate in the events central to their identity as Christian communities.* A faith-forming education centered on events includes the practices of *anticipation* through stories from the past associated with the event, of *preparation* in which we develop knowledge and skill for participating in the event, of *rehearsal* of the event, of *participation* in the event, and of *critical reflection* upon our participation in the event.

There is the recognition that congregations themselves teach. People learn by participating in the life of a community. Practices of faith are taught through the interrelationships of worship, learning, service, ritual, prayer, and more. Among the events central to the Christian community are the feasts and seasons of the church year, Sunday worship and the lectionary, sacramental and ritual celebrations, holidays and holydays, works of justice and acts of service, times of prayer, spiritual traditions, and events that originate within the life and history of a individual congregation. A faith-forming education that is centered in the life of the Christian community is intrinsically an intergenerational experience.

Through the intergenerational faith community, Christian commitment is formed and strengthened as persons develop relationships and actively participate in a community that teaches, models, and lives out the community's beliefs. People learn the ways of the community as they participate authentically and relationally with more experienced members of the community.

Intergenerational experiences strengthen and create new relationships among people of all ages, enhance their sense of belonging in the faith community, and increase participation in church life. Intergenerational experiences provide "up close and personal" formation in faith as children, teens, young adults, middle-aged adults, and older adults engage in sharing faith, teaching, learning, serving, celebrating, and praying for one another.

An intentionally intergenerational congregation supports families by surrounding them with a community of faith and engaging the whole family in caring, celebrating, learning, praying, and serving together; and providing parents with opportunities to learn from Christians who are practicing their faith and raising faithful children. Participation in intergenerational experiences helps to develop the faith of parents and grandparents and increases their confidence and competence for engaging in faith practices at home. Intergenerational participation creates a shared experience—often missing from everyday life—of families learning together, sharing faith, praying together, serving, and celebrating rituals and traditions. Families learn the knowledge and skills for sharing faith, celebrating traditions, and practicing the Christian faith at home and in the world; and they receive encouragement for continued family faith practice at home.

Insight 5. Faith Is Formed in Developmentally Appropriate Ways

The way we transmit faith in families and nurture faith at home and in the congregation is accommodated to the stages of life from young children through emerging adults. Understanding the way young people think and assimilate information and values at each stage is critical for their faith formation. We can envision growth at each stage—young children (0–5), older children (6–10), young adults (11–14), older adolescents (15–18), and emerging adults (19–29)—through the lens of ten faith factors. (See Chapter Four for a description of the ten factors for each stage.)

1.   Feeling valued and accepted.
2.   Developing caring relationships.
3.   Engaging in learning.
4.   Celebrating milestones.
5.   Praying and meditating.
6.   Serving, volunteering, and helping.
7.   Attending worship services.
8.   Finding meaning and purpose.
9.   Examining a personal religion and spirituality.
10.   Developing an integrative faith.

The way young people experience, explore, and integrate each factor varies depending on their age, their personality, and their circumstances. Understanding the child and adolescent development of how each age group explores (or resists) certain aspects of each faith factor makes a big difference in their faith journey.

Age-focused faith formation happens at home and in the congregation. It is important to recognize that the family is a "school of discipleship," and the work of forming faith in young people is a shared responsibility between the home and the church. Congregations empower parents, grandparents, and other significant family members with the knowledge and skills to transmit and form faith in developmentally appropriate ways at home; and they provide resources, in all forms, for use at home. Congregations also provide developmentally appropriate faith formation from childhood through emerging adulthood through church-based programs, activities, and experiences in a variety of formats and environments (individualized, mentored, small group, large group, and in the wider community).

Insight 6. Parents and the Family Are the Most Important Influence on Religious Transmission

The family is the single most important influence on religious transmission and faith practice—a truth demonstrated in research studies, the Christian tradition, and pastoral experience. Parents (and grandparents) have a powerful influence on the faith of their children and adolescents. They can transmit a religious tradition and practice to their children and engage the family in living that faith in daily life and in the congregation. It is also important to note that parents who have no religious tradition or engagement in a faith community also can transmit this to their young people.

The faith of parents and grandparents, their role modeling, their teaching, and their warm and affirming parenting style are key factors in religious transmission and developing highly religious children, youth, and young adults. We know from research studies that the religious tradition of parents, their religious involvement, and whether the parents were of the same religious faith at marriage have a huge impact on how a faith tradition is transmitted to the next generation. Parental behaviors influence religious development through role modeling—what parents do in setting examples for religious practice and belief, such as attending church regularly, participating in church activities, and encouraging faith development at home through prayers, scripture reading, and religious stories. It is important that parents show consistency between belief and practice: "walking the walk and not just talking the talk" (Bengston, et al., 185).

The parent-child relationship—"intergenerational solidarity"—influences religious transmission. Parents who are warm and affirming are more likely to have children who follow them; parents who are cold or authoritarian, ambivalent or distracted, are less likely to do so. Parents who are perceived as open and accepting

of their child's religious choices are more likely to achieve transmission (Bengston, et al., 185).

Grandparents and great-grandparents are having an increasing influence on religious transmission, support, and socialization. One way they do this is by reinforcing or accentuating parents' religious socialization. A second way is by providing, replacing, or substituting for parents' religious socialization by becoming the moral and religious models and teachers for their grandchildren (Bengston, et al., 185).

Christian Smith and Patricia Snell believe that strong parental religion is linked to higher emerging adult religion through at least two social causal mechanisms—*religious socialization* and *the avoidance of relational breakdown.*

> One obvious possibility is simple religious socialization—that teenagers with seriously religious parents are more likely that those without such parents to have been trained in their lives to think, feel, believe, and act as serious religious believers, and that that training "sticks" with them even when the leave home and enter emerging adulthood. Emerging adults who grew up with seriously religious parents are through socialization more likely (1) to have internalized their parents religious worldview, (2) to possess the practical religious know-how needed to live more highly religious lives, and (3) to embody the identity orientations and behavioral tendencies toward continuing to practice what they have been taught religiously. At the heart of this social causal mechanism stands the elementary process of teaching—both formal and informal, verbal and nonverbal, oral and behavioral, intentional and unconscious, through both instruction and role modeling. We believe that one of the main ways by which empirically observed strong parental religion produced strong emerging adult religion in offspring is through the teaching involved in socialization. We think of this socialization as the "positive" side of the dynamic. But we also believe it is only part of the story.

> A second social causal mechanism that we think connects strong parental religious to strong emerging adult religion is the more "negative" one of the avoidance of relationship breakdown. Most parents and children enjoy relationships—however imperfect—that they value and want to sustain. Parents and children in highly religious families, in fact, enjoy even closer and happier relationships than those of the national average. When it comes to parents, children, and religion, when religious faith and practice are particularly important to parents, it is usually the case that they want it to also be important in the lives of their children. When the children accept, embrace, and practice that religious faith, therefore, the relationship tends to be affirmed and sustained. When their children neglect or reject that religious faith, the relationship tends to be threatened. Children of seriously religious parents who are generally invested

in avoiding relational breakdown therefore have an incentive not to disre-
gard the religious faith and practice that they (usually accurately) believe
their parents want them to continue. Unless some other overriding factor
comes into play, therefore, the consequence of not believing and of living
as a nonreligious person is too costly to accept. So we think that in part in
this way, too, religious commitment and practice is reproduced from one
generation to the next (231–233).

Smith and Snell conclude that the lives of many teenagers who are transitioning
into the emerging adult years reflect a lot more religious stability and continuity
than is commonly realized. "The past continues to shape the future. This is impor-
tant to know, because it means that *religious commitments, practices, and investments
made during childhood and the teenage years, by parents and others in families and religious
communities, matter—they make a difference*" (256).

Congregations engage parents and grandparents in formational experiences that
empower them to grow in faith and discipleship and practice a vital and informed
Christian faith—understanding the Christian faith, participating in worship, pray-
ing, living an ethical life, and engaging in service and mission. They engage par-
ents and grandparents in developing knowledge and skills to nurture faith growth
in their young people and become Christian role models for them. They engage
parents in developing the knowledge, skills, and confidence for parenting children
and teens.

Insight 7. Parents and Families Have a Diversity of Religious–Spiritual Identities

We have a more complex picture of religiosity in the families of Millennial and
Generation X parents today. We know from research that Generation X and Mil-
lennial parents reflect an increasing diversity in religious beliefs, practices, and
affiliation. A growing number of parents and whole families are now religiously
unaffiliated and/or spiritual but not religious. Twenty-three percent of Generation
Xers and more than 34 percent of Millennials are not religious affiliated, and the
number of unaffiliated Millennials is growing. We know that families of Genera-
tion X and Millennial parents are participating less in church life and Sunday wor-
ship. Parents may bring their young people to educational programs and milestone
celebrations (first communion, confirmation), but they are not participating in
Sunday worship or other church activities. Religion and spirituality may be impor-
tant to families today, but for many it is not usually expressed by participation in
churches. (See Chapter Two for more information.)

We now see that the first generations of not religiously affiliated parents (Gener-
ation X and Millennial) are raising their children to become the second generation
of not religiously affiliated. Families can transmit the importance of religion—the
Christian faith and practices, and belonging to a church community—but they can

also transmit nonaffiliation and how religion and faith are not important in daily life. What we are seeing today is large numbers of parents transmitting nonaffiliation. As the number of "Nones" grows among the younger generations, we can expect this trend to continue.

Four spiritual–religious types

We can identify at least four spiritual–religious types of parents (and families). The *Engaged* are parents/families for whom faith is central to their lives, who are transmitting this faith to their children, and are actively engaged as a family in a church community. They are spiritually committed and growing in their faith. They have found their spiritual home within an established Christian tradition and a local faith community that provide ways for them to grow in faith, worship God, and live their faith in the world.

The *Occasionals* are parents/families who participate only occasionally in church life—in seasonal celebrations, major events, and programs involving their children, and for whom transmitting a religious faith primarily means bringing their children to educational programs at church. Some may even attend worship regularly and send their children to religious education classes. Their spiritual commitment is low, and their connection to the church is more social and utilitarian than spiritual. While receptive to an established church, these parents/families do not have a faith commitment that would make their relationship with God and participation in a faith community a priority in their lives. Their occasional engagement in church life does not lead them toward spiritual commitment.

The *Spirituals* are parents/families who identify themselves as spiritual, and even Christian and practicing their Christian faith, but with no connection to a church community. They identify themselves as spiritual—they pray, read the Bible, serve others—but don't necessarily identify themselves as Christian. These parents and families can be described as spiritual but not religious, and by "religious" we mean *not* engaged with an established Christian church or denomination. They may be spiritually hungry and searching for God and the spiritual life, but are not affiliated with organized religion and an established Christian tradition. Some may join a nondenominational Christian church focused on their spiritual needs or focused on their family, providing engaging experiences for children and youth and/or the whole family.

The *Unaffiliated* are parents/families who are nonaffiliated and for whom religion and spirituality are not important elements of their family life. They may believe in God (most "Nones" do), but religious faith or spiritual practices are not present in their family life. It is not only the parents who are not affiliated; the whole family is not affiliated. They tend to reject all forms of organized religion.

While we don't have exact numbers of how many people are in each group, we can get a general picture using national research. It is certainly worth using this research to determine how many parents and families are reflected in these four types in your congregation.

Beliefs and religious practices of Gen X and Millennials
(by percentages)

	Generation X	Older Millennials	Younger Millennials
Pray daily	56	46	39
Attend services weekly	34	27	28
Believe in God	89	84	80
Believe in God with absolute certainty	50	54	50
Believe scripture is word of God	61	50	50
Say religion is important to them	53	44	38

For the *Engaged* (and many *Occasionals*) we can look at research on the strength of religious identity that is associated with higher levels of religious commitment (more frequent attendance at worship services, belief in God, praying, identifying as a religious person, believing the Bible is the word of God). According to a 2012 Pew Research study, 69 percent of black Protestants affirmed a strong religious identity, 57 percent of evangelical Protestants, 35 percent of mainline Protestants, and 27 percent of Catholics ("'Strong' Catholic Identity at a Four-Decade Low in U.S."). We also know that the vast majority of Americans (77 percent of all adults) identify with some religious faith. Two-thirds say that religion is important to them and say that they prayer every day. Six in ten say they attend religious services at least once or twice a month. Nearly all believe in God ("U.S. Public Becoming Less Religious").

For those who are not religiously affiliated with organized religion, the numbers look different (the *Spirituals* and the *Unaffiliated*). Thirty-four percent of Millennials born from 1981–89 (27–35 as of 2016) and 36 percent born from 1990–1996 (26 and under as of 2016) are now unaffiliated; and 23 percent of Generation X (born 1965–1980) are unaffiliated. We know that the younger generations are less religious than older generations (see Display 3.2).

The younger generations also participate in religious programs (prayer groups, scripture study groups, or religious education programs monthly or more often) less frequently than older generations (see Display 3.3 on page 76) ("U.S. Public Becoming Less Religious").

Participation in religious programs *(by percentages)*

	18–29 year olds	30–49 year olds
Evangelical Protestants	55	58
Mainline Protestants	29	27
Historically Black Protestants	45	58
Catholics	25	29

Unaffiliated parents raising their children religiously

In her book, *Losing Our Religion: How Unaffiliated Parents Are Raising Their Children,* Christel Manning presents her research into the worldviews that are included within the term "none" and how those beliefs are reflected or not reflected in the way parents raise their children. She identifies four distinct worldviews among unaffiliated parents: *Secular* (believes there is no God that influences the world or human life), *Spirituality Seeker* (believes there is no God but there is a higher power or life force), *Unchurched Believer* (believes in a personal God who listens and can intervene in human affairs; prays or attends services), and *Indifferent* (no beliefs or practices).

Manning identifies five different strategies that parents use to incorporate religion in the lives of their children.

1. *Nonprovision:* These are parents who do not incorporate religion into their children's lives. They do not intentionally include religion or spirituality in the home life (no "God talk," religious books, meditation, or prayer; holidays are cultural; religious meaning is not explained). They do not enroll their children in institutional religious or alternative worldview education programs, and they remain unaffiliated.

2. *Outsourcing:* These are parents who rely on other people to incorporate religion into their children's life. They do not intentionally incorporate religion or spirituality in the home, enroll the child in formal program like CCD or Hebrew school or Sunday school, and decline to become members of that religious institution. There was a common theme—they felt a duty as a parent to provide religion, regardless of their personal ambivalence about it, because their child "had a right" to this information. Sometimes this was because religion (usually Judaism or Catholicism) was a family heritage; sometimes because it reflected an interest/inclination of their child.

3. *Self-provision:* These are parents who try to incorporate religion into their children's upbringing without institutional support. They remain unaffiliated, do not enroll their child in formal religious education program, and intentionally incorporate religion or spirituality into home (talk to child about God or higher power; pray or meditate with child, read religious stories; incorporate religious or spiritual explanations into holidays).

4. *Alternative:* These are parents who were unaffiliated before they had children and reported searching for and eventually affiliating with an organization that welcomes doubters and the nonreligious such as the Unitarian Universalist Association (UUA) or the American Humanist Association (AHA). They enroll their child in a "worldview education" program, which typically teaches children about many different religions rather than socializing them into one of them; intentionally incorporate religion/spirituality in the home but do so in consciously pluralistic way, for example, by combining imagery from both Buddhism or Judaism, or celebrating the holidays of various religions; or, over time, is led by having children to affiliate with a community that they perceive as tolerant of being nonreligious.

5. *Traditional:* Some unaffiliated parents decided to return to the religion they were raised in and enroll their child in a conventional religious education program (CCD, Sunday school, or Hebrew school). Parents are considered *Traditional* if having children leads them to return to the community they were raised in and they reaffiliate, a child is enrolled in conventional religious education program, and they incorporate religion in the home (Manning 2013, 13–19).

Manning found that in most cases, there was a great deal of consistency between the parent's religious or secular identity and how they raised their children. She observes, "The fact that most parents in the study took steps to incorporate religion into the lives of their children is surprising only if we take None to mean the absence of any religious, spiritual, or philosophical worldview. Once we discover the more substantive dimensions of unaffiliated parents' worldviews, we see that they transmit those beliefs and practices to their children much as affiliated parents do" (Manning 2013, 19).

This more complex and nuanced portrait of religiosity calls for family faith formation to become more responsive to the needs, interests, and concerns of parents and families in each of the four spiritual–religious types—*Engaged, Occasional, Spiritual, Unaffiliated*—and to offer a variety of experiences, programs, and activities tailored to connect with and engage the unique religious–spiritual identities of parents and families. Congregations can assess their current programming to see who is being served and who is not being served. New initiatives can be designed with a better understanding of the target audience and their spiritual–religious needs.

The five approaches to how unaffiliated parents are raising their children religiously provide a much-needed understanding of what drives parents to engage

(or not to engage) their children in religious education and congregational life. This new understanding calls congregations to be cognizant of parent motivations as they communicate with parents, assess current programming, and design new initiatives to reach and engage parents.

We believe that the Family-at-the-Center Approach is a comprehensive response to the challenges and opportunities of faith formation with twenty-first century families and congregations. We believe it provides a way to promote discipleship and faith growth in *all* parents and families—engaging them in a process of experiencing, learning, and practicing the Christian faith and following Jesus and his way in today's world. It builds a connection between families and the congregation and provides congregations with a plan for how they can engage and equip families toward the goals of deeper faith and discipleship.

The next chapters in the book explore more deeply the six elements of the Family-at-the Center Approach, provide insights and strategies to guide churches in developing a comprehensive plan for faith formation with *all* families. In Chapter Four, Leif Kehrwald focuses on how families grow in faith at home and the practices that facilitate that growth. In Chapter Five, Jolene Roehlkepartain focuses on the processes of growing in faith from childhood through the early years of young adulthood and the role of the family (parents and grandparents) and the congregation in nurturing this growth. Chapter Six explores essential practices for developing the Family-at-the Center Approach to faith formation in congregations.

Works Cited

Allen, Holly Catterton, and Christine Lawton Ross. *Intergenerational Christian Formation*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, Academic, 2012.

Amidei, Kathy, Jim Merhaut, and John Roberto. *Generations Together*. Naugatuck, CT: LifelongFaith, 2014.

Bass, Diana Butler. *Grounded: Finding God in the World, A Spiritual Revolution*. New York: HarperOne, 2015.

Bengston, Vern with Norella M. Putney and Susan Harris. *Families and Faith: How Religion Is Passed Down across Generations*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2013.

Chesto, Kathleen O'Connell. *FIRE—A Way of Being Church (For the Director)*. Liguori, MO: Liguori Publications, 1999.

Foster, Charles. *From Generation to Generation: The Adaptive Challenge of Mainline Protestant Education in Forming Faith*. Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2012.

Gaillardetz, Richard. "The Christian Household As School of Discipleship: Reflections on the Ecclesial Contributions of the Christian Household to the Larger Church." *In The Household of God and Local Households. Revisiting the Domestic Church*, edited by T. Knieps-Port le Roi, G. Mannion, P. De Mey, Lueven, Belgium: Peeters Publishing, 2013.

Groome, Thomas. *Will There Be Faith: A New Vision for Educating and Growing Disciples*. New York: HarperOne, 2011.

Heifetz, Ronald, and Martin Linsky. *The Practice of Adaptive Leadership: Tools and Tactics for Changing Your Organization and the World*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard Business, 2009.

Manning, Christel. *Losing Our Religion: How Unaffiliated Parents Are Raising Their Children*. New York: New York University, 2015.

————. "Unaffiliated Parents and the Religious Training of their Children." *Sociology of Religion*, 0:0 (2013): 1–27.

Mercer, Joyce Ann. "Cultivating a Community Practice." Patheos.com, August 13, 2013. www.patheos.com/Topics/Passing-on-the-Faith/Community-Practice-Joyce-Ann-Mercer-08-14-2013.html.

Pew Research. "'Strong' Catholic Identity at a Four-Decade Low in the U.S." March 13, 2013. Accessed from http://www.pewforum.org/2013/03/13/strong-catholic-identity-at-a-four-decade-low-in-us/.

Pew Research Center. "U.S. Public Becoming Less Religious." November 3, 2015. Accessed from http://www.pewforum.org/2015/11/03/u-s-public-becoming-less-religious.

Sawin, Margaret. *Family Enrichment with Family Clusters*. Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press, 1979.

Shea, John. *An Experience Named Spirit*. Chicago: Thomas More Press, 1983.

Smith, Christian with Patrica Snell. *Souls in Transition: The Religious and Spiritual Lives of Emerging Adults*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2009.

Taylor, Barbara Brown. *An Altar in the World: A Geography of Faith*. New York: HarperOne, 2009.

Growing in Faith as a Family

Leif Kehrwald

● ● ● ● We seek to understand, acknowledge, and lift up the attitudes, postures, and particular practices of families as they grow in faith at home. In addition to our study of the research and current literature, we also went directly to parents and grandparents and asked them about their family faith practices. We received nearly one thousand responses to our survey, and we conducted four separate interviews with 1) parents of children, 2) parents of youth, 3) parents of young adults, and 4) grandparents. Our findings point to what families ought to do to grow in faith at home, as well as what parish and congregational leaders ought to do to empower and support them in these practices. By way of introduction, let me simply say that family living at home is filled with moments of meaning.

Most are ordinary and mundane centered around the ordinary things that have to be done at home: sleeping, waking, eating, cleaning, leave-taking, returning, working, relaxing, and tending. These moments often provide a rhythm and pattern to daily and weekly family living that lend healthy consistency and predictability amid the often tumultuous and chaotic lives lived "out there" in the world. It is through

mundane patterns and routines that family members can rest, replenish, and truly feel "at home" when at home.

Recognizing God's presence amid the mundane and routine of family living requires intention and spiritual discipline. The peaceful presence of the Holy Spirit can be revealed when the family member gives full awareness to the basic activities of human living: folding clothes, doing dishes, tending a child's wound, saying goodnight, reciting a meal or bedtime prayer, listening to a teenager's woes, making eye contact with one's beloved, and so forth.

But, of course, too much of the mundane becomes tedious, makes people stir-crazy and difficult to live with. Fortunately, they can almost always count on and anticipate occasional moments that lift them out of the mundane: a birthday, an anniversary, a holiday, a vacation, a time of separation, a time of reunion, and so forth. They know these events are coming; they anticipate them and plan for them. And hopefully, they live into them well.

Recognizing God's presence in the anticipated moments of celebration also requires intention and the acknowledgement that God is part of the proceedings. Here, ritual plays a helpful role in the proper celebration of the moment. Happy occasions call for joyful rituals, and sad occasions call for solemn rituals. Either way, God can be acknowledged as an invited guest.

Amid the mundane peppered with anticipated moments that suspend the ordinary routine, every so often the family is confronted with unanticipated significant moments of meaning that stop them in their tracks, focus their complete attention in a direction unseen and unheard of a minute ago: a death, a birth, a new job, an accident, an unexpected guest, an extraordinary accomplishment, or an unexpected failure. For good or ill, these moments shake the family to the core and test their ability to come together as loved ones and fully embrace one another's feelings and emotions.

Recognizing God's presence in the unanticipated moments that interrupt their lives and shake them to the core can at times be so obvious that all involved will readily proclaim "That was a God moment!" At other times, however, the interruption is so devastating that it seems impossible that God was anywhere nearby. Still, it is their lasting faith that helps them through the aftermath.

If families can learn to recognize God's gracious presence in the moments of their lives together, particularly at home, then surely they will grow in faith together.

Consulting the Research

Anchored in the research cited in Chapter Two showing that parents and family are most influential in religious transmission, and stemming from the notion that the family is a "school of discipleship," we are at the point of asking the basic question of just what should families actually *do*.

There is no one definitive list of family practices to grow in faith and to trans-
mit faith to the next generation or to live into faith (as Gene Roehlkepartain
poignantly suggests in Chapter One). Yet the literature and the research suggest
a lot of similarity.

In his study *Growing Up Religious*, Robert Wuthnow wrote, "Effective religious
socialization comes about through embedded practices; that is, through specific,
deliberate religious activities that are firmly intertwined with the daily habits of
family routines, of eating and sleeping, of having conversations, of adorning spaces
in which people live, of celebrating the holidays, and of being part of a community"
(xxxi–ii). Several common family activities continually surfaced in his research.

1. Eating together, especially the power of Sunday meals and holidays.
2. Praying: bedtime rituals and prayer, grace before meals, family Seder.
3. Having family conversations.
4. Displaying sacred objects and religious images, especially the Bible.
5. Celebrating holidays.
6. Providing moral instruction.
7. Engaging in family devotions and reading the Bible (Wuthnow, xxxi–ii).

In another study, David Dollahite and Loren Marks have discovered eight pro-
cesses that families engage in as they seek to fulfill their sacred purposes:

1. Turning to God for support, guidance and strength.
2. Sanctifying the family by living religion at home.
3. Resolving conflict with prayer, repentance, and forgiveness.
4. Serving others in the family and faith community.
5. Overcoming challenges and trials through shared faith.
6. Abstaining from proscribed activities and substances.
7. Sacrificing time, money, comfort, and convenience for religious reasons.
8. Nurturing spiritual growth through example, teaching, and discussion, and
   encouraging spiritual development by teaching religious values (537).

In his article, "The Joy of Practice in Families," J. Bradley Wigger muses on the
relationship between practice, learning, and meaning. He maintains that practice
not only sustains learning, but it actually generates learning as well as meaning.
He goes on to lift up family faith practices that continually emerge in the world
of faith.

1. Prayer
2. Reading of sacred texts
3. Service
4. Talk of God
5. Meals
6. Celebrations
7. Rituals of atonement, anointing, and healing

Finally, Bonnie J. Miller-McLemore gets down closer to the nitty-gritty of family living in her article "The Rule of Family Faith: Practicing the Presence of God in our Outward Lives." She points out, as have others, that neither monastic nor mystical spirituality are particularly compatible with family living. Such practices of prolonged solitude and sustained scripture reflections are often disrupted by the ordinary chaos of household life and the demands of paid employment.

Yet she holds up the notion of a spiritual "rule" as being just as valuable to a family member as one who lives in a monastery. Think "rule" as practices and patterns that sustain a way of life centered in the love of Christ. She seeks to extend the rule of religious life to family faith. What would that look like? She says that these ordinary practices can form faith in our outward family lives: cleaning, playing, working, eating, talking, learning, fighting, making up, arriving, departing, and otherwise making a home.

In particular, she explores these four practices.

1. Doing laundry—the discipline to notice the distinctive grace of Christ in the ordinary.
2. Playing—faith-filled play involves pleasure of a holistic sort; mind, body, and spirit—all are engaged together.
3. Reading—reading aloud together is one of the most satisfying and mutually transformative experiences adults and children can share.
4. Doing justice—how families model justice internal to the home powerfully shapes children's understanding of justice in the wider world.

Listening to Families

With this research and literature in mind, we set out to ask parents and grandparents about their family faith practices. Our survey was informed and influenced by these studies. Still, we wondered if the faith-forming efforts of those we surveyed and interviewed would mirror what we're reading or tell us something different? A bit of both, actually.

Before getting into those results, and by way of introduction to our listening process, I want to share a bit of my own journey over the last twenty-five years wrestling with this question: What should families *do*?

Nearly a generation ago, in 1993, Gene Roehlkepartain and Search Institute published *The Teaching Church: Moving Christian Education to Center Stage*. It was a groundbreaking book at the time, filled with research-based conclusions and insights for how Christian faith should be transmitted to the next generation. The book essentially reports out the findings of what Search Institute called *Effective Christian Education: A National Study of Protestant Congregations*.

I was working in family ministry at the time (and a parent of two young sons), so I immediately gravitated to the chapter "Nurturing Faith in Families." What

I read in that chapter has had a great influence on both my professional life as a teacher/trainer in family ministry and on my personal family life as a father. This was the first time I had come face-to-face with solid research that provided a glimpse of what parents and families ought to do to nurture lasting faith in their children. I was particularly drawn to the text that offered these findings:

> Family religious experience has more influence on young people's faith than does Christian education, which also has a strong relationship to faith maturity. Furthermore, the study found the three following elements have the greatest impact on young people's faith maturity.

> • Talking with mother or father about faith.
> • Participating in family devotions, prayer, or Bible reading.
> • Being involved in family service projects.

> The more young people experience these family activities, the more likely they are to develop a mature faith. Unfortunately, relatively few families do each of these things (Roehlkepartain, 168–170).

I quickly incorporated these three activities—family faith conversation, family ritual and prayer, and family outreach and service—into my teaching and training points, as well as at home with my own family. I still believe these activities are crucial for family faith development today, although (I note several paragraphs down) there are at least three additional activities that are also crucial.

Yet the mistake I made in my teaching, training, and living was to reduce the rich research to simplistic, formulaic steps: *If you do these things, your child will launch into young adulthood with faith and religious practice in tow.* Of course it's not that simple or that easy. What I missed, or glossed over, are two essential factors that must accompany the practices: 1) the authentic, genuine nature of faith expression on the part of parents and grandparents, and 2) the quality of the overall relationship between parent (or grandparent) and child. These factors make all the difference.

By the time children are eight, nine, or ten they know if faith and religious practice in the family is truly meaningful to their parents and/or grandparents or if it's done just for the "sake of the children." If children perceive that it's only for their sake, that's when they begin to check out.

To put my missive in a theological context, I failed to allow room for domesticity in the equation. I needed to put more faith and trust in the "profound and ordinary moments of daily life—mealtimes, workdays, vacations, expressions of love and intimacy . . . all the threads from which you can weave a pattern of holiness" (*Follow the Way of Love*).

Any family that reflects the character of a "domestic church" must go beyond grace at meals and allow the active and gracious presence of God to permeate their basic household activities.

The research has continued to show us what families ought to do to grow in faith. Since 1993 and the groundbreaking insights from *The Teaching Church*, there have been numerous studies about faith transmission and faith maturity (studies by Bengtson, Martinson, and Smith). In my reading of these studies, and in my collaborative work with ministry colleagues from a host of denominations, I have landed on six key categories of practice that families ought to do to grow in faith. In addition to the three mentioned above:

1. Talk about faith by sharing insights, doubts, questions, and wonderments.
2. Pray together in ways that are comfortable and comforting.
3. Reach out in service and support of others.

add these three:

4. Ritualize important family moments and honor milestone experiences.
5. Share Bible stories in ways that connect to the family story.
6. Learn about one's faith in ways that are interesting and relevant.

With no desire to reduce these to simplistic formulaic steps, and with full recognition that the complexities of family living in the twenty-first century have a great impact on how these are expressed, I still believe these practices lie at the core of family faith transmission. And our listening to parents and families bears that out.

Who We Listened To

In November 2015 we surveyed 926 parents and grandparents from across the United States. We followed up our survey with four online, live group interviews with parents of children, parents of teenagers, parents of young adults, and grandparents.[1] (See the Appendix on page 100 for the survey form that was used.)

Seventy-four percent indicated that they are active members of a Christian church community. This high percentage of church affiliation was not a surprise to us because we surveyed people who are connected to our various projects in ministry and faith development. While not representative of the American population as a whole, we wanted to survey parents and grandparents who were likely to be active in sharing faith at home. When we put out the survey to our lists, we were amazed and pleased with the instant and voluminous response. People of faith clearly wanted to share about their family faith practices.

Here's the breakdown in terms of their parenting role(s). (Survey responders could indicate multiple roles, which is why the percentage total is greater than 100.)

- 35 percent—Parenting children (birth–12)
- 30 percent—Parenting adolescents (13–19)
- 43 percent—Parenting a young adult or adult
- 30 percent—Grandparents

The survey contained four questions.

1. Please select up to ten practices from the list below that you consider the most important family practices for helping children and teens grow in faith.
2. Thinking about yourself as a parent of children or teenagers today (or when you were a parent of children or teens), please rate how often you engage (or engaged) in the following family practices in a typical month.
3. Are there other faith practices that your family engages in (or engaged in) that were not listed above?
4. What are the two or three biggest challenges your family faces (or faced) in trying to live these faith practices?

Family/Home Faith Practices

In our survey, respondents chose from a list of twenty-seven faith practices. They were asked to select the practices that they engage in and indicate how frequently they do it.

There were four practices that rose to the top, practiced by 71–79 percent of responders.

- 79 percent—Praying as a family
- 77 percent—Participating in Sunday worship as a family
- 76 percent—Eating together as a family
- 71 percent—Celebrating rituals and holidays at home

Not only were these four activities practiced by a large majority of responders, the reported frequency of practice is also quite high. Here is the percentage of those who engage in the practice *at least once a week or more*.

- 80 percent—Praying as a family
- 80 percent—Participating in Sunday worship as a family
- 91 percent—Eating together as a family
- 74 percent—Celebrating rituals and holidays at home

These four practices set themselves apart from the rest. The next highest items were practiced by 51–58 percent of responders.

- 58 percent—Serving people in need as a family (23 percent once a week or more)
- 55 percent—Having family conversations (77 percent once a week or more)
- 51 percent—Taking time to grow in your own faith as a parent (74 percent once a week or more)

At the other end of the spectrum, these three items were practiced the least, by only 8–11 percent of responders, and with corresponding low frequency.

- 8 percent—Watching videos, movies, or TV shows with religious content or themes (55 percent rarely or never)
- 10 percent—Encouraging teens to read the Bible alone or with their peers (62 percent rarely or never)
- 11 percent—Inviting friends of your teenager to join in family faith practices, such as going to church, serving others, celebrating holidays (48 percent rarely or never)

Survey responders were not restricted to the twenty-seven faith practices that we identified. They were invited to write in practices and activities that they engage in that were not included in the original list. There was a wide range of practices described. Here is a list of practices that were mentioned by multiple responders.

- Small groups
- Learn about other faith practices
- Bedtime devotions
- Serving others and social justice activities
- Mission trips
- Praying with social media
- Encourage questions
- Nature
- Symbols, icons, and sacramentals
- Relationships outside of home—extended family and others
- Devotions and Bible reading
- Milestone moments
- Vacations, holidays, and other outings
- Reading books to/with children
- Music—listening and singing
- Learning about other faith practices and discussions
- Camp, family camp

The following direct quotes from the survey responders put a bit of human touch to these added practices.

Taking time for prayer at bedtime has been an incredible gift with my grandchildren. I don't believe they do it at home, but their eagerness when they are with me to do so leads me to believe it has been a very important aspect/experience for them. A true blessing.

We regularly tried to reach out to those in need with our labor, our time, our finances . . . making sure to involve all three of our children. Even the simple service

of going to a care center and singing Christmas carols, or playing card games, or just visiting. Baking "treats" for a shut-in or mowing their lawn.

Nightly sharing of highs and lows, family prayer and blessing each other. Each morning being sent with a prayer and blessing.

Celebrating baptism birthdays and key life events, having special one-on-one time with godparents and other significant mentors and adults. Using art as a way to express faith.

I encourage my children to be open and ask questions. When I grew up it was hush-hush to ask anything about religion. I always make sure that my children know it's an open book and that they can ask any questions. Sometimes they get sick of me talking about what's right and what isn't.

I ask the following question daily: "Where did you see or experience God in your day today?" This has been a great way to discover many things about our kids' interactions and challenges in their day.

Family nights with the focus on fun projects that illustrate a spiritual principle. Vacation Bible Schools each summer, sometimes several of them! Lenten and Advent activities at home as a family, and encouraging individual responses. Reading books with each child that illustrated good moral and spiritual practices and principles. Camping together, with campfire talks about choices, moral dilemmas, and so forth.

Challenges and Struggles

We know that life in the twenty-first century is crazy-busy for most families. Regardless of age or stage, today's family is bombarded with external pressures and expectations from the likes of school, work, community, and church. These external pressures increase the internal anxiety that can permeate the family on a chronic basis, reducing their functionality and relational harmony.

Among the nine hundred plus responders to our survey, one of the key reasons why they engage in faith practice as a family and in the home is because it helps them lower that internal anxiety, find ways to prioritize the myriad external expectations, and simply function better as a family.

Yet their responses are quite revealing to the question: *What are the two or three biggest challenges your family faces (or faced) in trying to live these faith practices?* Among the hundreds of comments shared, here is a list of items shared by multiple responders.

- Busy
- Outside pressures
- Leave after confirmation
- Finding time together

- Finding quiet time
- Finding a good church
- Lousy sermons
- Bad church experiences
- Husband/Dad not a churchgoer
- Awkward—hard to talk about
- Lack of enthusiasm from kids
- Judgment from extended family
- Lack of intentional routine/habit/pattern
- Teens pulling away, questioning religion
- Parent fatigue

Far and away, the factor expressed most was "busy." While expressed in a host of different ways, many responders indicated that the demands on their time from external pressures hinder their ability to engage in faith and religious practice. Here are just a few quotes.

> *Even though we are not over scheduled with extra curricular activities, with two parents working and the homework load, time together is hard to come by.*

> *Balancing the opportunities that are always presenting themselves. Finding time in our schedule.*

> *Time flies by—we are so busy living moment to moment we forget to do the slow things.*

> *Schedules. Mealtimes and bedtimes are compromised by differing work, sports, church, and meeting schedules.*

Another factor mentioned often had to do with their lack of satisfying relation-ship with their congregation or parish. While the majority of our responders (74 percent) are actively affiliated with a congregation, many expressed a desire for their church to be more supportive of family life, engage better with their children and teens, and offer more relevant assistance to them in their role as parents and grandparents. Here are a few of those quotes.

> *Unfortunately, our church worship service that we attend coincides with Sunday school. Therefore, we do not have the opportunity to worship together as a family very often. . . . It is upsetting to see that attendance declines on these family worship days. I believe we are doing a huge disservice to our families. In addition, we also see a huge decline in attendance once we confirm our ninth-grade students in November.*

> *Finding a church community with good worship and a strong education/youth pro-gram. Most of the churches by us are small and dying out. They are always trying the newest "gimmick" to bring people in.*

> *Church worship (rituals and music) boring our children. Homilies that don't connect with real family life.*

My children struggle to engage in Sunday school because they find (have found) it boring. I'm working with a group within the church now to change our Sunday school program, but I worry that my son will "check out" of faith formation.

As a correlation to this lack of effective partnership between family and congregation, consider this recent study of Roman Catholic families. In 2015 the Center for Applied Research (CARA) and Holy Cross Family Ministries interviewed just over one thousand self-identified Catholic parents about their faith and religious practice at home as well as their relationship with and participation in the Catholic church (see Gray). While focused solely on Catholics, we believe these findings are indicative of faith and religious practice across the mainline Protestant denominational spectrum as well.

While most Catholic parents consider Mass attendance and reception of sacraments "very important," most do not have their children enrolled in parish- or school-based religious education (i.e. Sunday school). In response to the question: *Do any of your children currently attend . . .?* here are the percentages of those responding "yes":

- 8 percent—Catholic elementary or middle school
- 3 percent—Catholic high school
- 21 percent—Parish-based religious education program
- 5 percent—Youth ministry program
- 68 percent—None of the above

The study found that Millennial Generation parents are less than half as likely as post–Vatican II generation parents (i.e. Generation X and Millennial) to have a child enrolled in parish-based religious education.

It is our sense that this lack of engagement with the congregation among families today is a sign that the partnership between the home and church is strained, even among those who are committed to and active in their congregation. We wonder if this is a result of many churches continuing to implement faith formation efforts based on outdated assumptions that do not reflect the realities of twenty-first century families. We wonder if this is a result of perpetuating a one-size-fits-all approach to congregational faith formation in a culture that expects and demands customization and personalization.

We do see promising results in some congregations that are attempting to:

- Provide a myriad of digitally enabled options for all ages and stages.
- Focus as much or more energy on adults as they do on children and youth.
- Offer well-designed intergenerational programs where *everyone* learns and grows (not just children).
- Do all this in a way that integrates faith formation with the other key ministries of the congregation, especially worship.

Analysis

There is clearly a convergence between the activities practiced by our responders and the six categories of practice identified from the research (see Display 4.1).

Convergence between research-identified practices and actual activities

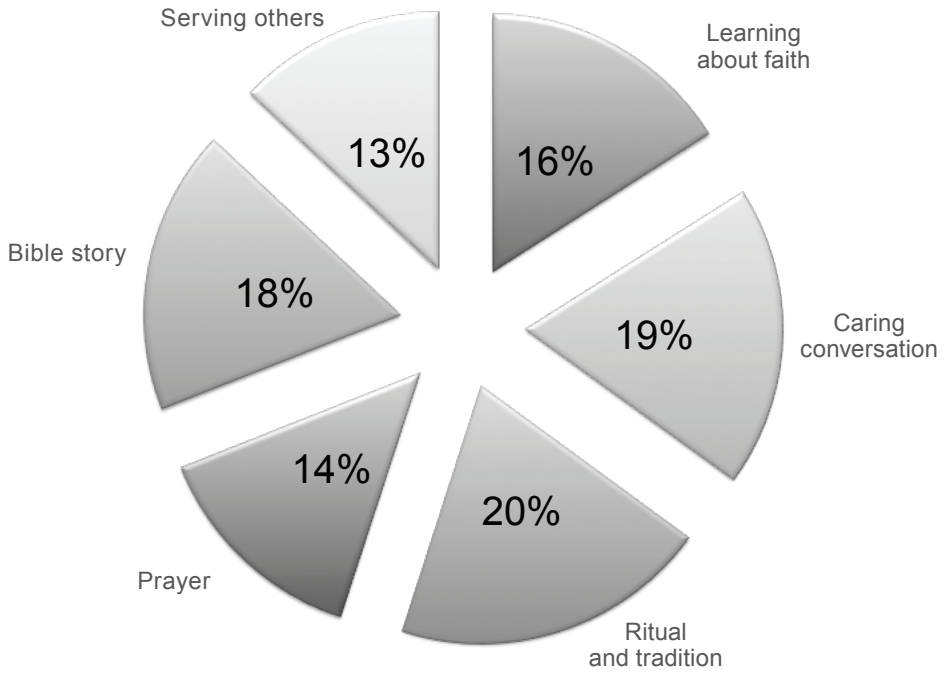| Research	Responders
Talk	Eating together as a family Having family conversations
Pray	Praying as a family
Serve	Serving people in need as a family
Ritualize	Celebrating rituals and holidays
Bible	Participating in Sunday worship
Learn	Growing in faith as a parent

As mentioned, the research led us to identify six categories of faith-forming activities that we believe are conducive to faith transmission at home and in the family: talk, pray, ritualize, serve, Bible, and learn. This is what the research reveals as what families *ought* to do to grow in faith at home. But what are they *willing* to do?

In March 2012 Vibrant Faith launched a new content-rich website for families called Vibrant Faith @ Home (www.vibrantfaithathome.org). From the start, the goal of this website has been to support families who are intentional about their faith and religious practice as they raise the next generation of committed Christians. The site is populated with more than six hundred simple, but provocative faith-forming activities, all intended for use at home by families and households of all ages and stages. Each activity falls into one of the six categories described above: talk, pray, ritualize, serve, Bible, and learn.

The analytics of user activity on the site tell us how the site is used, what activities are popular, and what activities are underutilized. For example, the pie chart (see Display 4.2) shows the percentage of use according to the six categories of activities.

Breakdown of faith-forming activities

Serving others

13%

Learning
about faith

16%

Bible story

18%

19%

Caring
conversation

14%

20%

Prayer

Ritual
and tradition

The spread across all six categories is relatively even. People at home are willing to engage in any of the six categories as long as the particular activity engages their interest and meets their needs.

Another interesting insight shows how the top thirty activities—the thirty most used activities—break out in terms of audience group (see Display 4.3 on page 94).

It is probably no surprise that activities for young families comprise just over half of the top thirty. Yet the other audiences are not inactive.

The analytics are beginning to show a few things about what families are actually *willing* to do. From my twice-yearly analysis of the top thirty activities, I have developed the following list of characteristics of a faith-forming activity that families will actually use at home. When a faith-forming activity contains some of these characteristics, it is more likely to be used rather than discarded.

1.   K I S S . . . keep it simple and short. The activity must be easily and quickly understood, and should last no more than ten minutes.
2.   Give it legs. The activity can be designed to do a short bit everyday for a week, or month, or season.

Top 30 activities by audience
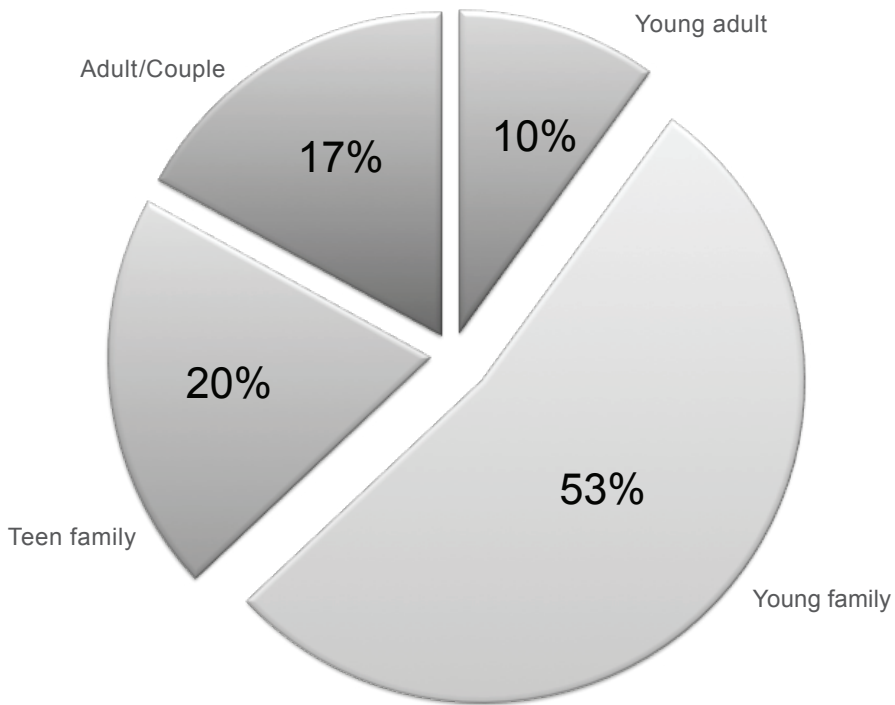
3. If they build it . . . they'll use it. The activity has a creative component that is developmentally appropriate and not too complicated.
4. Season/event connected. It must effectively harness existing energy and enthusiasm for the season or event in the home.
5. Family moment connected. The activity is designed to integrate with key family pressure moments such as mealtime, bedtime, car time, leave-taking, homecoming, and so forth.
6. Life stage connected. The activity is more than developmentally appropriate; it responds directly to a felt developmental need and helps them manage a developmental change.
7. Learn something new. The activity offers religious information that is compelling, honors learning styles, connects to family living, and connects to deeper issues of life, death, and deep meaning.
8. Model in gathered setting. The activities are more likely to be done at home when modeled and practiced in an intergenerational gathered setting.

9. Depth. Whether for head, heart, or hands, the activity takes users to a deeper level of growth.

10. Hits home. The activity is more than just relevant; it touches heart and soul with just the right thing at the right moment.

No matter how busy and stressed they are, if families perceive that certain faith practices can help them function better and grow closer as a family, they are quite willing to give them a try.

Applying the Insights to Church and Home

What are we to make of this data? There are implications for families and for congregations.

Families

Four factors seem to emerge for families. Each is briefly described here followed by a couple of quotes from survey responders.

Intention

Growing in faith as a family requires a purposeful desire to tap the presence of the Spirit among them. Someone at home—usually parent or grandparent—must take the initiative to invite the family into faith-forming practice. It's a risk, of course, and it leaves that person vulnerable to rejection. Can you picture the eleven-year-old rolling his eyes at the mention of a faith ritual at the Thanksgiving table? Perseverance beyond initial reluctance is crucial.

> *When they were little, we practiced a weekly Family Home Evening Devotions that I developed, based on the Mormon weekly devotions, but with a Lutheran twist. I wrote the stories and developed my own lesson plans. My kids loved it!*

> *Very important for us: Reading devotional books daily together as parent and child and also doing artwork together as parent and child, often with spiritual or meditative themes.*

Routine becomes ritual

Over time, expressions of faith practice can become an expected part of the routine of daily, weekly, and seasonal family life. The initiative on the part of one person spreads to others and permeates into the fabric of family and household living. Without question, and sometimes even without thinking, the family just moves into faith practice. Meal prayers are a common example, but the same could be said for bedtime and morning time routines as well as family discussions, and for some even family acts of mercy or works of justice.

We bless the kids as they go out the door by placing the sign of the cross on their forehead. Sharing highs and lows each day.

I ask the following question daily: "Where did you see or experience God in your day today?" This has been a great way to discover many things about our kids interactions and challenges in their day.

Do what works

Families find expressions and activities that work for them, and do them in a manner and with a frequency that suits *them.* This manner and frequency will be unique to each household, and it will surely shift and change over time. When they experience better harmony, deeper peace, more honest communication, and conflict resolution by engaging in faith practices, they will continue to do them. These practices have real meaning and impact in their lives. And as the family grows and changes and moves into new stages, their faith expressions need to evolve and mature as well.

We like to tell Bible stories to the kids in our own words. We talk through events in their lives through a scriptural lens, relating things at school to the Gospels, and so forth.

Now that they are in college, I send our kids weekly letters, encouraging them, sharing how God is working in my husband's and my life and the challenges I am facing and what God is teaching me. I think it's important that once they are adults, to continue to encourage them in faith.

We blessed each other regularly. Mostly parents to children but occasionally the boys saw a parent in need and did the blessing, albeit very informal.

Connect with others

Families realize that they cannot go it alone. Their faith practice drives them to connect with others. They are part of something bigger than themselves, and so they want to connect with others on a similar journey. Most are connected to a local parish or congregation. Many also participate in some form of a faith-sharing group or Bible study. Families—parents and grandparents in particular—need others to lean on for support, trade ideas, and share their experiences.

Family pizza night at our home once a month—whole families from church and friends come along. Kids muck around inside and outside and parents share wonderful stories around the kitchen bench and dinner table. We have a ninety-second seasonal "message," for example on All Saints we light candles in remembrance and then all say grace together. Numbers fluctuate from twenty to forty. Hugely special and accessible for nonchurch families as introduction to faith practices.

We also try to teach our children about the faith life of other Christians as well as non-Christian faiths. They have been to services at many other places besides our Catholic church.

Congregation

What can congregational leaders do to empower family faith growth at home?

Raise awareness with the whole community

Share the research widely that shows how important home/family faith practice is. Raise expectations for all members to engage in these practices, but at the same time pledge ongoing support, never-ending resources, and unwavering affirmation of their efforts.

Relationships

Get to know parents and families personally. If your primary area of ministry is with children or youth, hop out of your designated silo and reach out to their parents. Ask them a lot of questions about themselves, about their kids, about their lives. Using your best pastoral ministry skills, pay attention to their struggles and tension points. Offer as much support, affirmation, and encouragement as you can.

Like to like

As you listen to the issues, struggles, joys, and events of families, think of ways to connect parents and families who are encountering similar challenges, or on a similar journey. If you know of one family that has overcome a particular problem, can you connect them with another family in the midst of a similar challenge?

Facilitate mutual connection and support

Create multiple avenues for parents and families to support and share with one another. A gathered group might work for some, while a virtual support network might work for others. An ongoing group may be just right for some, while a one-time or short-term commitment may suit others. Once you create the mechanism for relationship building, step out of the way and let it take its course.

Curate good resources

Do your homework. Point parents and families to quality resources, both online and in hand, that save them time wading through all the unhelpful stuff to find the gems. Be specific with your recommendations. Don't just recommend a homepage of a good website saying, "lots of good stuff there!" Rather, lift out and highlight three or four particular activities, resources, or articles that you know pertains to their needs.

Teach the basics of faith

Not just to children and youth, but to parents and grandparents as well. Use all your channels of communication to constantly teach parents and grandparents through one- or two-line explanations of Christian basics related to prayer, worship, Bible, doctrine, feasts and seasons, and so forth. Always link to more in-depth information. Adults will rarely admit their inadequacy about faith basics. Rather, they just won't go there. A little bit of content at the right time can lower anxiety and open the way for family faith sharing.

Teach family faith practices

Use all the communication channels available: email, bulletin, website, social media, and the rest to share simple "lessons" on family faith practice. For example: three key ingredients to a meaningful family ritual, or five pieces of advice to overcome reluctance to family service and outreach, or how to share a Bible story during supper, or six discussion starters for you and your teen. Consider making simple short videos that teach the practices, two minutes each.

Leverage gathered programs

Whenever you gather families or parents or grandparents, take a short amount of time to model and demonstrate a home faith practice. Design your prayers and devotions for meetings in such a way that they can be replicated at home. Give copies to all participants.

Conclusion

To close this chapter, I want to share a rather profound statement we received from one parent reflecting on the challenge of faith transmission and the need for partnership between the church of the home and the church of the congregation.

> *The one aspect that concerns me the most is the decline in religious transmission from one generation to the next. In order to reach generations where the church may seem irrelevant, the "church" has to be very intentional about reaching out to the generations in relevant ways. I think this is especially difficult in churches . . . with many people who are in the older generations and are comfortable with "their church" and less willing to adapt to cultural changes and younger generations. . . .*
>
> *I used to sit with either set of grandparents in worship on Sunday morning. I learned the stories of faith with both my grandparents and parents. We prayed together. We went to church every Sunday. My own kids don't have that. We live in a different state from my own family and a different community from my in-laws.*

In my mind, this statement emphasizes the need for ministry that reaches across the generations—to provide opportunities for families with children to be in relationship with older adults in the faith community, regardless of where their biological grandparents live.

Works Cited

Bengtson, Vern, Norella M. Putney, and Susan Harris. *Families and Faith: How Religion Is Passed Down across Generations.* New York: Oxford University Press, 2013.

Dollahite, David, and Loren Marks. "How Highly Religious Families Strive to Fulfill Sacred Purposes." In *Sourcebook on Family Theories and Methods*, edited by Vern L. Bengston, David M. Klein, Alan C. Acock, Katherine R. Allen, and Peggye Dilworth-Anderson. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2005.

Gray, Mark M. *Practice of Faith in the Catholic Family.* Washington: Center for Applied Research and Holy Cross Family Ministries, 2015.

Martinson, Roland, Wesley Black, and John Roberto. *The Spirit and Culture of Youth Ministry: Leading Congregations Toward Exemplary Youth Ministry.* St. Paul, MN: EYM Publishing, 2010.

Miller-McLemore, Bonnie J. "The Rule of Family Faith: Practicing the Presence of God in Our Outward Lives." *Lifelong Faith Journal.* Summer, 2007.

National Conference of Catholic Bishops. *Follow the Way of Love.* Washington: USCCB, 1993.

Roehlkepartain, Eugene C. *The Teaching Church: Moving Christian Education to Center Stage.* Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1993.

Smith, Christian Smith with Patricia Snell. *Souls in Transition: The Religious and Spiritual Lives of Emerging Adults.* New York: Oxford University Press, 2009.

Smith, Christian Smith with Melinda Lundquist Denton. *Soul Searching: The Religious and Spiritual Lives of American Teenagers.* New York: Oxford University Press, 2005.

Wigger, J. Bradley. "The Joy of Practice in Families." *The Power of God at Home: Nurturing Our Children in Love and Grace.* San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2003.

Wuthnow, Robert. *Growing Up Religious: Christians and Jews and Their Journeys of Faith* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1999).

End Note

1. In our survey, respondents chose from a list of twenty-seven faith practices. They were asked to select the practices that they engage in, and indicate how frequently they do it. Here is the list.

- Praying as a family (meal time, bedtime).
- Praying as a family during times of struggle or crisis.
- Encouraging teens to pray alone or with peers.
- Reading the Bible as a family.
- Encouraging teens to read the Bible alone or with their peers.
- Celebrating rituals and holidays at home.
- Serving people in need as a family.
- Serving people in need as individuals (parents, teens).
- Eating together as a family.
- Having family conversations.
- Watching videos, movies, or TV shows with religious content or themes.
- Talking about faith as a family.
- Encouraging teens to talk about their doubts and questions about faith.
- Talking about faith and your religious tradition with your children and teens.
- Asking your teenager's perspectives on faith, religion, social issues, and so forth.
- Providing moral instruction.
- Demonstrating a warm and affirming parenting approach.
- Taking time to grow in your own faith as a parent.
- Engaging in positive communication with children and teens.
- Encouraging children and teens to pursue their talents and interests.
- Spending one-on-one time with children and teens.
- Participating in Sunday worship as a family.
- Inviting friends of your teenager to join in family practices (going to church, serving others, celebrating holidays).
- Celebrating the church year seasons at church (e.g., Advent, Christmas, Lent, Easter).
- Celebrating rituals and sacraments at church as a family.
- Participating in church life activities as a family.
- Encouraging and supporting your teenager to participate in church activities with peers.

APPENDIX

Family Practices Survey

1. Tell us about a little about yourself. (Answer as many as apply.)

- I am currently a parent of children (birth to age 12)
- I am currently a parent of teens (ages 13-19)
- I am currently a parent of a young adult or adult
- I am a grandparent
- I am an active member of a Christian church community

2. Please select up to 10 practices from the list below that you consider the most important family practices for helping children and teens grow in faith. You can select less than 10 practices, but please don't select more than 10.

1. Praying as a family (meal time, bedtime)
2. Praying as a family during times of struggle or crisis
3. Encouraging teens to pray alone or with peers
4. Reading the Bible as a family
5. Encouraging teens to read the Bible alone or with their peers
6. Celebrating rituals and holidays at home
7. Serving people in need as a family
8. Serving people in need as individuals (parents, teens)
9. Eating together as a family
10. Having family conversations
11. Watching videos, movies, or TV shows with religious content or themes
12. Talking about faith as a family
13. Encouraging teens to talk about their doubts and questions about faith
14. Talking about faith and the tradition with your children and teens
15. Asking your teenager's perspectives on faith, religion, social issues, etc.
16. Providing moral instruction

17. Demonstrating a warm and affirming parenting approach
18. Taking time to grow in your own faith as a parent
19. Engaging in positive communication with children and teens
20. Encouraging children and teens to pursue their talents and interests
21. Spending one-on-one time with children and teens
22. Participating in Sunday worship as a family
23. Inviting friends of your teenager to join in family practices (going to church, serving others, celebrating holidays)
24. Celebrating the church year seasons at church (e.g., Advent, Christmas, Lent, Easter)
25. Celebrating rituals and sacraments at church as a family
26. Participating in church life as a family
27. Encouraging and supporting your teenager to participate in church activities with peers

3. Thinking about yourself as a parent of children or teenagers today (or when you were a parent of children or teens), please rate how often you engage (or engaged) in the following family practices in a typical month. Rating: Never, Rarely (once a month), Occasionally (a few times a month), Frequently
(1 or 2 times a week), and Regularly (3 or more times a week)

1. Praying as a family (meal time, bedtime)
2. Praying as a family during times of struggle or crisis
3. Encouraging teens to pray alone or with peers
4. Reading the Bible as a family
5. Encouraging teens to read the Bible alone or with their peers
6. Celebrating rituals and holidays at home
7. Serving people in need as a family
8. Serving people in need as individuals (parents, teens)
9. Eating together as a family
10. Having family conversations
11. Watching videos, movies, or TV shows with religious content or themes
12. Talking about faith as a family
13. Encouraging teens to talk about their doubts and questions about faith
14. Talking about faith and the tradition with your children and teens
15. Asking your teenager's perspectives on faith, religion, social issues, etc.
16. Providing moral instruction
17. Demonstrating a warm and affirming parenting approach
18. Taking time to grow in your own faith as a parent
19. Engaging in positive communication with children and teens
20. Encouraging children and teens to pursue their talents and interests
21. Spending one-on-one time with children and teens
22. Participating in Sunday worship as a family

23. Inviting friends of your teenager to join in family practices (going to church, serving others, celebrating holidays)
24. Celebrating the church year seasons at church (e.g., Advent, Christmas, Lent, Easter)
25. Celebrating rituals and sacraments at church as a family
26. Participating in church life as a family
27. Encouraging and supporting your teenager to participate in church activities with peers

4. Are there other faith practices that your family engages in (or engaged in) that were not listed above in question #3? Please share with us these practices.

5. What are the two or three biggest challenges your family faces (or faced) in trying to live these faith practices? Please share with us these challenges in the box below.

Nurturing the Faith of Young People through the Family

Jolene Roehlkepartain

● ● ● ● Fostering faith development would be easier if young people stayed the same, but children, teenagers, and young adults are always growing and changing. Understanding child, adolescent, and young adult development, particularly in how it impacts transmitting faith, is key to making faith stick for young people.

Five Major Age Groups

The way you transmit faith to a three-year-old varies greatly from the way you transmit faith to a twelve-year-old or a twenty-year-old. Understanding the way young people think and assimilate information and values at each stage is critical for their faith formation.

The following five parts of this chapter explore five major age groups:

- Young children from birth to age 5
- Older children from ages 6–10
- Young adolescents from ages 11–14

- Older adolescents from ages 15–18
- Young adults from ages 19–29

Most churches work with these age groups through different people and different ministries. Some have Christian education for children. Some have youth groups. Some have confirmation. Some have young adult ministries. Very few churches have one adult (or a group of adults) who work with all five of these age groups. Because of this, transmitting the faith can become uneven and not strategic, particularly if some ministries emphasize certain philosophies (such as having fun instead of educa- tion or keeping young children occupied instead of transmitting faith).

The Gesell Institute of Human Development has conducted research that shows that young people don't grow up in a smooth way. In fact, young people tend to go through cycles. As a society, we're familiar with the terrible twos, the trying teens, and the quiet years in between, but child and adolescent development is more than that.

The Gesell Institute has found that young people go through six cycles that repeat (but expand and show up in different ways). Here is what these six cycles look like for typical young people between the ages of two and fifteen (Ilg, Bates Ames, and Baker, 12–46). See Display 5.1.

These cycles explain why some age groups seem easier to work with (such as 3-year-olds, 6 ½-year-olds, and 12-year-olds), why other age groups can be more challenging (such as 2 ½-year-olds, 5 ½-year-olds, and 11-year-olds), and why some groups tend to be more reflective (such as 3 ½-year-olds, 7-year-olds, and 13-year-olds). Of course, a child's personality also impacts this as well (along with the behaviors that the child is learning from his or her family), but child develop- ment reveals a lot of information that's helpful for parents and church leaders for passing along the faith.

DISPLAY 5.1

Cycles of behavior for young people between two and fifteen

Smooth and consolidated	2 years	5 years	10 years
Breaking-up behavior	2 ½ years	5 ½ to 6 years	11 years
Rounded and balanced	3 years	6 ½ years	12 years
Inward behavior	3 ½ years	7 years	13 years
Vigorous, expansive behavior	4 years	8 years	14 years
Conflicted behavior	4 ½ years	9 years	15 years

The Ten Faith Factors

Each of the five parts of this chapter examines how every age group views and integrates various aspects of faith formation. Each part explores these ten faith factors:

1. Feeling valued and accepted
2. Developing caring relationships
3. Engaging in learning
4. Celebrating milestones
5. Praying and meditating
6. Serving, volunteering, and helping
7. Attending worship services
8. Finding meaning and purpose
9. Examining a personal religion and spirituality
10. Developing an integrative faith

Although each of these faith factors is important, the way young people experience, explore, and integrate each factor varies depending on their age, their personality, and their circumstance. Understanding the child and adolescent development of how each age group explores (or resists) certain aspects of each faith factor makes a big difference in their faith journey. The chart "The Ten Faith Factors Shaping Each Stage of Life from Birth to Age 29" highlights the developmental progression for each of these faith factors for these five major age groups (see Display 5.2 on page 108).

Each of the five parts of this chapter not only gives information about the developmental tasks of each age group, they each also give concrete ways to transmit the faith to a particular age group. In essence, these five parts provide a foundation of child and adolescent development while also giving practical tips on faith formation.

The Seven Stages of Parents of Faith

Adults and parents greatly impact the way faith is transmitted to children and teens. Not only are young people going through stages, but so are parents. "Understanding parental growth does not circumvent it," writes Ellen Galinsky, the author of *Between Generations: The Six Stages of Parenthood*. "However, it does help parents manage their confusions so that instead of being entrapped or swept along, we can see where we have been, where we are, and make more deliberate and careful choices about where we want to go" (12).

Examining how parents grow and change through a faith lens adds another dimension to their journey. The following stages show the progression that parents go through as their children grow up. Some stages are easier for parents, but others

create a great deal of conflict and uncertainty. The more parents understand what's happening to them and around them, the more effective they can be in passing along faith to their children.

The more we understand what young people are going through developmentally and what parents face, the more we can help families transmit the faith, the values, and the traditions they cherish most to future generations while keeping their families at the center of their lives.

Stage 1: Wondering and Imagining

During the waiting process (of adoption or pregnancy), adults wonder what it will be like to be parents and to have a child join them. It's the Advent time of parenting. Many parents see this as a sacred experience, spending time in wonder and prayer (prebirth).

Stage 2: Caring and Nurturing

During the first two years of a child's life, parents meet the child's needs and provide great care and nurture, which lays the foundation for spiritual formation. By giving young children a lot of faith experiences at home and away from home, children develop the critical foundation they need for their faith journey (birth to 2 years).

Stage 3: Testing and Treasuring

When children begin to resist and explore limits, parents become tested themselves. How will they respond to these displays of power while treasuring their child from a faith perspective? Parents can talk with children about God, pray with them, take them to worship services, introduce children to people of faith, and love their children deeply while setting clear boundaries, all what children need for their faith journey (2 to 5 years).

Stage 4: Supporting and Strengthening

During the elementary-school years, parents support their child's spiritual and overall development, strengthening ties to other people and to important institutions, such as church and school. When parents pray, eat together as a family, attend worship services, and have conversations about faith, they help strengthen their child's faith journey (6 to 10 years).

Stage 5: Experimenting and Encouraging

While young adolescents experiment with different identities, parents discover that they, too, need to experiment with new ways to interact with their young adolescent while encouraging him or her to develop a personal faith. Parents continue to model their faith by attending worship services regularly, doing service projects, praying, reading scripture, and talking about faith (11 to 14 years).

Stage 6: Guiding and Questioning

High school–age young people need parents who help them make sense of their world and their future. While older teenagers question various aspects of faith, parents need to question how they can continue to model and talk about faith issues that bring them closer to their teenager rather than drive them apart. Parents need to continue showing that their faith matters to them by talking about it, attending worship services, and doing other faith practices, such as prayer and meditation (15 to 18 years).

Stage 7: Launching and Fostering

As young adults leave home and find their way in the world, they need parents who remain connected to them while letting them go. Parents continue to serve as faith models for their young adults, providing a safe place for young adults to grapple with faith issues. When parents have a strong religious commitment (meaning they attend worship services regularly and talk about the importance of their faith), the more likely young adults will find a religious grounding (19 to 29 years).

Works Cited

Galinsky, Ellen. *Between Generations: The Six Stages of Parenthood*. New York: Times Books, 1981).

Ilg, Frances L., Louise Bates Ames, and Sidney M. Baker. *Child Behavior: The Classic Child Care Manual from the Gesell Institute of Human Development*. New York: Harper Perennial, 1981).

The ten faith factors shaping each stage of life from birth to age 29

Note: These factors are rooted in child development, adolescent development, adult development, and faith development.

Young children (ages 0 to 5)	Older children (ages 6 to 10)	Young adolescents (ages 11 to 14)	Older adolescents (ages 15 to 18)	Young adults (ages 19 to 29)
1. Feels valued and accepted	1. Connects to safe and stimulating adults and peers	1. Yearns to be part of a group that matters	1. Discovers a balance between acceptance and independence	1. Finds a unique place in the world with value and acceptance
2. Develops caring relationships	2. Thrives with consistent support and care	2. Craves support and fights it	2. Redefines meaningful support	2. Discovers an adult support system
3. Follows a curiosity for learning	3. Engages in learning and discovery	3. Feels conflicted about learning	3. Yearns to learn and succeed in meaningful ways	3. Explores curiosities and masters deeper learning
4. Celebrates milestones	4. Enjoys milestones	4. Celebrates milestones while resisting them	4. Enjoys meaningful milestones	4. Redefines and celebrates milestones
5. Tries meditation and prayer	5. Explores meditation and prayer	5. Wonders about meditation and prayer	5. Meditates and prays with questions	5. Meditates and prays
6. Serves and helps others	6. Develops fairness, justice, and compassion	6. Balks at some service; deepens on others	6. Creates a commitment to service	6. Becomes more compassionate
7. Attends worship services	7. Participates in worship services	7. Attends worship services with resistance	7. Participates in worship in ways that reflect a personal faith journey	7. Worships in ways that fit a personal value system
8. Observes adults who have purpose and meaning	8. Mimics adults who have purpose and meaning	8. Longs for meaning while wondering about it	8. Explores meaning and purpose	8. Searches for deeper purpose and meaning
9. Experiments with a personal spirituality	9. Becomes exposed to more religious and spiritual experiences	9. Desires religious and spiritual belonging	9. Questions religious and spiritual beliefs	9. Tinkers and challenges religion and spirituality
10. Explores how faith and life interact	10. Discovers how faith and life interact	10. Experiments with ways to integrate faith into life	10. Deepens faith integration while continuing to question	10. Develops an integrative faith independent of others

Part 5A. Nurturing the Faith of Young Children: Birth to Age 5

Helping young children grow spiritually entails surrounding them with rich religious experiences. The trick, however, is that so much happens under the radar during early childhood that it can be difficult to see results. "Religious development is like the building of a college," writes R. S. Lee, author of *Your Growing Child and Religion*. "There is a long period when the foundations are being laid, when what is going on does not look at all like the finished product" (13).

This foundational time is critical. "This is the most important period in the whole of a person's life in determining his later religious attitudes," Lee writes (14). "The greater the building that has to be erected, the greater the need that the foundation be good. Religion is the most inclusive and most far-reaching aspect of life, and requires adequate foundations" (15).

A strong religious foundation cannot be erected without building the overall healthy development of a young child. A plethora of information exists on helping young children develop well, and this information focuses on the religious, spiritual, physical, cognitive, social, moral, and emotional development of young children. All of these aspects of development interact with each other (Leffert, Benson, and Roehlkepartain, 15). You cannot build one without the other.

Young children encompass an age range of birth to age five. Some experts define this group into newborns (birth to age four weeks), infants (four weeks to one year), toddlers (one to two years), and preschoolers (starting at age two) (Kail, xxi). The American Academy of Pediatrics defines young children as children from birth to age five (ii).

Through the rich literature on the healthy development of young children, ten broad faith factors arise as critical aspects of development. These ten factors attempt to synthesize a large body of critical developmental information, abundant in insight.

Ten Faith Factors of Young Children

Factor 1: Feels valued and accepted

Young children need to feel valued and accepted for who they are. Each child is a child of God, and every child should not only hear that but also experience that perspective as well (Fowler, 121).

"Nurturing young children certainly requires giving them special attention, warmth, and closeness," says Karen VenderVen, who developed the Early Childhood Developmental Asset Framework. "It also means supporting their strivings toward independent personhood and providing a secure base as they move out in the world" (29).

This deep sense of value and acceptance goes beyond a warm, fuzzy feeling. It's essential to a child's well being and to a child's faith development. "What the

brain, and therefore the body, needs for survival is attuned attention, engagements, smiling, holding, rocking, and singing—all behaviors that say, 'You are loved'" (Senter, 143).

This factor of feeling valued and accepted lays the foundation for children to feel secure in their unique personhood—and also in their faith. Children need adults they can count on and who value them so that they feel safe and secure (Scales, Sesma, and Bolstrom, 61). This emotional security helps children see the world around them as a safe place to explore, rather than a scary place to avoid or fight back against. It provides them a grounding to begin their faith journey and to grow and develop spiritually over time.

Factor 2: Develops caring relationships

One of the essential processes of forming faith is developing caring relationships. Young children thrive as children—and later as teenagers and adults—when they have a strong attachment to their parents and caregivers from a young age. "The 'recipe' for secure attachments includes caregivers who are generally sensitive and responsive to the baby's needs," writes Terri Smith of the Center for Early Education and Development. "When a baby cries, a responsive caregiver tries to discover what the baby needs—to be fed, held, or to have a diaper changed. These babies see the world as predictable and sensible" (5).

Not only does a secure bonding and attachment help young children grow up well, these aspects of development give young children an important foundation in their faith life as well (Yust, 2004, 11). Children may be more likely to attach to a faith tradition that reminds them of the attachment they have to their parents. The more positive the attachment to parents, the more stronger the likelihood that a child will have a positive attachment to faith and religion.

Young children need the experience of trust from trustworthy adults. James W. Fowler, the author of *Stages of Faith,* says basic trust is a key element in developing a secure faith. Fowler highlights two faith stages for young children: Pre-stage: Undifferentiated Faith and Stage 1: Intuitive-Projective Faith (119–34).

Fowler's Pre-stage: Undifferentiated Faith shows that children from infancy to twenty-three months need to trust their environment and the people around them. The biggest threat to children at this age is a perceived (or actual) threat of abandonment. Infants and toddlers also don't thrive when they experience inconsistencies, such as changing rules, changing expectations of parents and caregivers, and changing environments (119–21).

"We all begin the pilgrimage of faith as infants," Fowler says. "At birth, we are thrust into a new environment for which we have potential but not yet fully viable abilities" (119–20). When parents, caregivers, and other caring adults create a deep, predictable sense of trust for a young child, that young child receives the seeds to grow up well and to embark on a lifelong faith journey.

Factor 3: Follows a curiosity for learning

So much about faith formation involves learning, such as discovering the liturgical seasons, reading the Bible, and learning Christian traditions. Children are naturally born curious. They want to explore. This sense of curiosity is a foundation for a lifetime of learning about faith. Unfortunately, young children tend to receive a lot of negative reactions to exploration ("don't do that" or "you'll get hurt") that many disengage from their sense of wonder and curiosity.

Adults can do a lot to create safe, stimulating environments where children can explore and learn about faith. Parents can do this at home. Churches can do this through church nurseries and other safe and educational spaces for children.

Activity-rich homes, child-care centers, churches, and preschools give young children ample time to explore a variety of activities, such as physical activity, creative activity, intellectual activity, reading, the arts, outdoor activities, indoor activities, solitary activities, interactive activities, and field trips. Adults who parent and work with young children also know the importance of pacing. Young children need quiet times, nap times, snack times, and transitional times.

A key way young children learn is through play. Unfortunately, many adults don't value the power of play. When children play, they're exploring their world, they're discovering what it's like to interact with other people, they're using their imaginations, and they're learning. "Rather than detracting from academic learning, play appears to support the abilities that underlie such learning and thus to promote school success," says the National Association for the Education of Young Children (15).

Young children explore the world through their imagination. "The gift or emergent strength of this stage is the birth of imagination, the ability to unify and grasp the experience-world in powerful images," writes James Fowler in *Stages of Faith* (134). Children's imagination and curiosity can fool adults into thinking that young children grasp theological concepts and religious symbols more than they do. When young children ask questions about God and church, they need loving, caring adults who answer with care. If a child "finds that his questioning is taken seriously and with respect, it helps him to overcome the fears that too readily attach to the image he has formed of God, and he is encouraged to go on seeking an objective approach to God instead of the subjective one that marks the period" (Lee, 163).

Factor 4: Celebrates milestones

Growing in faith and discipleship by celebrating rituals, sacraments, and milestones provides a way to experience God's love through significant moments in one's life journey and faith journey. Young children master milestone after milestone during early childhood, from the first smile to the first steps to the first words (Leffert, Benson, and Roehlkepartain, 80). Churches celebrate milestones of young children such as infant dedication, baptism, a child's first Bible, a child's first religious education class, and many more.

Celebrating milestones helps nurture children in their personal development (giving them a sense of pride in their accomplishments) and also grounds them in faith. Marking milestones helps young children see progress along their spiritual journey. For young children, what's evident is their dependence "on their adult caregivers and their religious community to supply the religious vocabulary and rituals necessary for articulating and enacting their God-given spiritual nature" (Yust, 2015, 171).

Factor 5: Tries meditation and prayer

A key aspect of faith formation is helping young children learn how to pray and meditate. Although part of prayer involves talking to God, it's also about teaching young children how to sit in silence (Yust, 2014, 93). That's why a number of parents, adults, and church leaders not only teach prayers for children to recite, such as table prayers and bedtime prayers (93), but also teach and model meditation (Kabat-Zinn, 198–200).

Young children have short attention spans. They easily become bored, and they tell you (often loudly) about their boredom. That's why it's essential to teach prayer and meditation in small doses and to adapt to children's moods and shifts in energy (Kabat-Zinn, 198), allowing young children different ways to try meditation and prayer.

Karen-Marie Yust, an expert on children and spirituality, provides guidance on teaching silence to young children and different forms of prayer. In her book, she gives step-by-step advice on how to teach centering prayer, meditative prayer, guided meditation, and the seven biblical forms of prayer: lament, praise, confession, petition, intercession, thanksgiving, and discipleship (Yust, 2004, 93–120).

Factor 6: Serves and helps others

Helping and serving others in need is another way to build the faith formation of young children. By doing simple acts of service and helping, young children discover that what they do and how they interact with others makes a difference (Roehlkepartain, 2000, 10).

Children learn about serving when they receive opportunities to serve in different aspects of their lives: at home with their families, at church in their Christian education classes, in preschool or childcare, and in community family volunteering projects (Friedman and Roehlkepartain, vii–x).

What type of service projects work well with young children? Short, one-time projects that allow children to help without overloading them with too much responsibility. One book lists volunteer projects that are appropriate for three-year-olds, four-year-olds, and five-year-olds, all under the guidance of caring adults (Friedman and Roehlkepartain, 224).

Factor 7: Attends worship services

For young children to grow up in the faith, attending worship services is an important component of their faith journey. "A congregation that is committed to children's

full belonging in the community of faith works conscientiously to create intergenerational worship and learning opportunities, reinforcing the idea that adults and children sojourn together in the spiritual life," says Karen-Marie Yust (2004, 166).

Worship helps young children grow spiritually by giving them a sense of ritual. Most worship services have a predictable order of worship with a welcome, songs, a message, sacraments, and times for congregants to connect with each other. Although young children can become antsy and noisy, learning how to worship with others teaches them another dynamic of faith formation.

Too many churches now segregate people by age, creating children's church and children's education experiences away from the adult worship experience. "This may seem like a comfortable way to meet everyone's needs for peer interaction," says Karen-Marie Yust, "yet it also reinforces implicit rules about who belongs where and whose norms shape particular aspects of community life" (2004, 166).

Factor 8: Observes adults who have purpose and meaning

One of the key tenets of faith for all individuals is to find purpose and meaning (Roehlkepartain, Benson, Scales, Kimball, and King, 21). Young children begin the process of finding purpose and meaning by observing adults around them who have purpose and meaning. Young children can quickly discern when adults feel lost and rudderless—or depressed. They also can sense when adults have a passion for purpose and live a life of meaning and faith (Leffert, Benson, and Roehlkepartain, 82–83).

Although young children begin the process of finding purpose and meaning by observing the adults around them, they also engage in purpose and meaning by playing. "Play is a child's work," says Maria Montessori, a leader in early childhood education (Shrier, 1). One study found that 98 percent of children said play was their favorite activity (Hendrick and Weissman, 50–54).

Play is a fundamental way that children process what's happening in their faith journey. "Play is the child's symbolic language of self-expression and can reveal (a) what the child has experienced; (b) reaction to what was experienced; (c) feelings about what was experienced; (d) what the child wishes, wants, or needs; and (e) the child's perception of self" (Landreth, 17). By observing and playing with young children we can learn a great deal about how they are processing their faith journey.

Factor 9: Experiments with a personal spirituality

For young children to grow up as people of faith, they need religious and spiritual care from the time they're born. Children in cultures outside of the United States tend to receive more spiritual and religious care as infants (Gottlieb, 122–35), but a number of American faith traditions place a great emphasis on the religious and spiritual care of young children through caring church nurseries, encouraging families to bring infants and other young children to worship together, offering religious education classes to young children, and reinforcing and reassuring families that the way they spiritually nurture their young children at home matters.

This religious and spiritual care lays the essential foundation that young children need to develop a personal spirituality. This foundation helps young children focus on discovering themselves, their family, and the world. "By fulfilling this task [young children] acquire the means necessary to go on to the further discovery, that of God" (Lee, 15).

What trips up many families is when young children begin to resist and test the limits. "The aggression of children can unleash powerful aggressive feelings in adults," writes Ellen Galinsky, the author of *Between Generations: The Six Stages of Parenthood* (123). "Parents confront the issue of 'power' in a way that they have probably never experienced before," Galinsky writes. "The child will probably test any strictures to see how steadfast they are, if they'll sway. The child wants and needs to know what the real ground rules are and how his or her parents react to pressure" (120).

Child development experts suggest that parents and adults help young children integrate their healthy responses of aggression, not by eliminating aggression or suppressing it but by expressing it appropriately (Lee, 112). "The problem of handling aggression is of extreme importance for religion," writes Lee (106). "The young child's need of parents whose love is unshaken and to whom he can turn for help in overcoming his sense of unlovableness is repeated in the adult's need for a God whose love is unfailing" (111).

How do young children view God? For a child three years old and younger, "God is a real person who lives in a place called heaven or at one's house of worship," says Karen-Marie Yust. "God provides comfort (like a blankie) and cares for one like a parent" (2004, 125).

Factor 10: Explores how faith and life interact

Young children thrive when adults teach them about Christian traditions and how to apply them to life. Adults who create predictable routines where young children explore different, stimulating activities in the presence and interaction of caring adults (National Association for the Education of Young Children, 16, 20–21) give young children a sense of grounding that helps them integrate faith into their lives over time.

For young children, faith is action. It's more than sitting and learning about faith, it's experiencing it. Churches that encourage children to move around and make their faith active often create a culture where children (and their parents) want them to come back for more (2008, i).

Young children need to know how to act and how not to act, how to talk to others and how not to talk to others, how to treat themselves and how not to treat themselves. They need consistent messages about right and wrong from their parents and the other adults they interact with at church, preschool, and in their extended families (Leffert, Benson, and Roehlkepartain, 43). This process of moral development is a key aspect of integrating faith into life (Kelcourse, 78).

Nurturing, Caring Parents

"Fortunate are the parents with a strong religious faith," writes Dr. Benjamin Spock in his classic book *Dr. Spock's Baby and Child Care*. "They are supported by a sense of conviction and serenity in all their activities. Usually they can pass on their faith to at least a majority of their children" (13).

Parents are "the most influential adults in children's lives" (National Research Council and Institute of Medicine, 226). Parents have the power to influence their children's faith formation. They can tap into the many resources around them, many of which are underutilized. In essence, parents have more power than they think (Scales, Benson, Mannes, et. al., 17–19).

Becoming and being a parent of a young child can tax any adult. "There is little preparation, an abrupt transition, and a need for substantial change and skill," writes Ellen Galinsky. "In our society most jobs have clear expectations—parenthood doesn't" (118). When you add in the essential role that parents have in developing the faith formation of their children, we need to give parents helpful guidance and feedback.

Parents of young children rapidly move through three stages of being parents of faith. This begins with Stage 1: Wondering and Waiting, which happens during the adoption or pregnancy process. Once the child is born (or joins the family through adoption), parents enter Stage 2: Caring and Nurturing, which lays the foundation for spiritual formation. Around age two, parents enter Stage 3: Testing and Treasuring. How will parents respond to the child's displays of power while treasuring their child from a faith perspective?

The way an adult parents greatly affects a child's faith. Researcher Diana Baumrind identified three major parenting styles: the Permissive style (where a parent is nonpunitive, accepting, and affirming, which gives the child too much power), the Authoritarian style (where a parent controls and punishes a child, which gives the parent too much power), and the Authoritative style (where a parent sets boundaries but encourages more of a give-and-take approach to set and enforce boundaries). The best approach, the Authoritative style, emphasizes the power of both the parent and the child (Baumrind 43–88). When a parent adopts the authoritative parenting style, children feel valued. They develop a loving relationship with their parents, and they develop a strong attachment and trust, all which young children need to grow up well in their faith. These aspects of faith, which we don't talk about often enough, are core pillars that keep the foundation of faith strong and secure.

Parents are the key providers of the ten faith factors discussed in the preceding pages. By giving young children a lot of positive faith experiences at home and away from home, children develop the critical foundation they need for their faith journey (Lee, 13–15). Parents can talk with children about God, pray with them, take them to worship services, introduce children to people of faith, and love their children deeply, a key foundation that young children need to start their faith

journey (Fowler, 119–121). Churches can offer a lot to support parents—and to partner with parents—so that parents see churches as allies and resources.

Nurturing, Caring Grandparents

More than three out of four older adults in the United States are grandparents (Lyon, 286). "Studies show that grandparents continue to serve important symbolic and socializing roles for younger generations," says K. Brynolf Lyon (286).

Grandparents are important people to help young children develop their spirituality and to expose young children to religious rituals. Grandparents have a different relationship with young children compared to the parents of the young children, and this role is vital for the healthy development of young children. Grandparents have a way of cherishing and valuing children that helps children to see they're worthwhile people.

The way parents and grandparents interact greatly affects how adults model and teach faith practices to young children. "Grandparents can hasten or retard this process," writes Ellen Galinsky. "If the grandparents are complimentary, this usually gives the new parents sustenance, it seems to fill them up with an emotional nourishment. If, on the other hand, grandparents are critical, displeased, it can be difficult, an added source of tension for the new parents" (104).

Grandparents are key adults in the life of a young child. "Grandparents will have an increasing influence on religious transmission, support, and socialization in the twenty-first century," writes John Roberto. "Grandparents provide religious influence by replacing or substituting for parents' religious socialization—the 'skipped generation' effect, and by reinforcing or accentuating parents' religious socialization."

Nurturing, Caring Extended Family Members

The way other extended family members interact with young children (aunts, uncles, siblings, cousins, and other extended family members) also helps young children grow up in the faith. Although each relationship may vary, a special aunt, a special uncle, or another extended family member who takes interest in a child and builds a relationship with that child can greatly impact the child's faith journey—and the whole family's faith journey. Too often, we overlook these other important relationships because of the importance of parents and grandparents, but these relationships also matter.

The same is true for other adults outside the family. Sometimes a neighbor, a colleague at work, a childcare provider, a babysitter, or an adult friend of the family plays a significant role in the nurturing of a child's faith development. So much of our society places a great deal of stress and pressure on parents, and parents cannot parent children well alone (Roehlkepartain, Scales, Roehlkepartain, et. al., 2–3).

Parents need the support of other adults, adults in their extended family, adults in their neighborhoods and community, adults in their churches, adults in their workplaces. By working together, we can all bring out the best in young children so that they begin an enriching faith journey—not only during early childhood—but through the rest of their lives.

———————————————————

Works Cited

American Academy of Pediatrics. *Caring for Your Baby and Young Child: Birth to Age 5.* New York: Bantam, 1998, revised edition.

Baumrind, Diana. "Child Care Practices Anteceding Three Patterns of Preschool Behavior," *Genetic Psychology Monographs*, 75, no.1 (1967): 43–8.

Fowler, James W. *Stages of Faith: The Psychology of Human Development and the Quest for Meaning.* San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1981.

Friedman, Jenny and Jolene Roehlkepartain. *Doing Good Together: 101 Easy, Meaningful Service Projects for Families, Schools, and Communities.* Minneapolis, MN: Free Spirit Publishing, 2010.

Galinsky, Ellen. *Between Generations: The Six Stages of Parenthood.* New York: New York Times Books, 1981.

Gottlieb, Alma "Do Infants Have Religion?" *American Anthropologist*, 100, no. 1 (March 1998): 122–35.

Hendrick, J. and Weissman, P. "Purposes of Play." In *The Whole Child: Development Education for the Early Years and Early Childhood Settings and Approaches*, 50–4. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 2006.

Kabat-Zinn, Jon and Myla Kabat-Zinn. *Everyday Blessings: The Inner Work of Mindful Parenting.* New York: Hyperion, 1997.

Kail, Robert V. *Children and Their Development.* Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Education, 2012, sixth edition.

Kelcourse, Felicity Brock. "Find Faith: Life-Cycle Stages in Body, Mind, and Soul." In *Human Development and Faith: Life-Cycle Stages of Body, Mind, and Soul*, edited by Felicity B. Kelcourse, 66–101. St. Louis, MO: Chalice Press, 2015.

Landreth, Garry. *Play Therapy: The Art of the Relationship.* New York: Taylor & Francis, 2012, third edition.

Lee, R. S. *Your Growing Child and Religion.* New York: MacMillan, 1963.

Leffert, Nancy, Peter L Benson, and Jolene L Roehlkepartain. *Starting Out Right: Developmental Assets for Children.* Minneapolis, MN: Search Institute, 1997.

Lyon, K. Brynolf. "Faith and Development in Late Adulthood." In *Human Development and Faith: Life-Cycle Stages of Body, Mind, and Soul*, edited by Felicity B. Kelcourse, 276–91. St. Louis, MO: Chalice Press, 2015.

National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC). "Developmentally Appropriate Practice in Early Childhood Programs Serving Children from Birth through Age 8." Position Statement, Washington, DC: NAEYC, 2009.

National Research Council and Institute of Medicine. *From Neurons to Neighborhoods: The Science of Early Development.* Edited by Jack P. Shonkoff and Debroah Phillips, 226, Board on Children, Youth, and Families, Commission on Behavior and Social Sciences and Education, Washington, DC: National Academy Press, 2000.

Roberto, John. *Reimagining Faith Formation for the 21st Century.* Naugatuck, CT: Lifelong Faith Publications, 2015.

Roehlkepartain, Eugene, Peter L. Benson, Peter C. Scales, Lisa Kimball, and Pamela Ebstyne King. *With Their Own Voices: A Global Exploration of How Today's Young People Experience and Think about Spiritual Development*. Minneapolis, MN: Search Institute, 2008.

Roehlkepartain, Eugene, Peter C. Scales, Jolene Roehlkepartain, Carmelita Gallo, and Stacey P. Rude. *Building Strong Families: Highlights from a Preliminary Survey from YMCA of the USA and Search Institute on What Parents Need to Succeed*. Chicago: YMCA of the USA, 2002.

Roehlkepartain, Jolene L. *101 Games that Keep Kids Coming*. Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2008.

Roehlkepartain, Jolene L. *Teaching Kids to Care and Share*. Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2000.

Scales, Peter C., Art Sesma, and Brent Bolstrom. *Coming Into Their Own*. Minneapolis, MN: Search Institute, 2004.

Scales, Peter C., Peter L. Benson, Marc Mannes, Eugene C. Roehlkepartain, Nicole R. Hintz, and Theresa K. Sullivan. *Other People's Kids: Social Expectations and American Adults' Engagement with Children and Adolescents*. New York: Kluwer/Plenum, 2003.

Senter, Denise A. "Infancy: Faith Before Language." In *Human Development and Faith: Life-Cycle Stages of Body, Mind, and Soul*, edited by Felicity B. Kelcourse, 138–54. St. Louis, MO: Chalice Press, 2015.

Shrier, Carrie. "The Purpose of Play: Why Play Matters." East Lansing, MI: Michigan State University Extension, February 28, 2013.

Smith, Terri, "A Look at Recent Research on Attachment," Early Report. St. Paul, MN: Center for Early Education and Development (CEED), College of Education and Human Development, Winter 1991.

Spock, Benjamin and Michael Rothenberg. *Dr. Spock's Baby and Child Care*. New York: E. P. Dutton, 1985, revised edition.

VanderVen, Karen. *Promoting Positive Development in Early Childhood*. New York: Springer Science, 2008.

Yust, Karen-Marie. *Real Kids, Real Faith: Practices for Nurturing Children's Spiritual Lives*. San Francisco: Jossey–Bass, 2004.

Yust, Karen-Marie. "The Toddler and the Community." In *Human Development and Faith: Life-Cycle Stages of Body, Mind, and Soul*, edited by Felicity B. Kelcourse, 155–71. St. Louis, MO: Chalice Press, 2015.

Part 5B. Nurturing the Faith of Older Children: Ages 6 to 10

Nurturing the spiritual growth of older children (ages 6 to 10) tends to be an easier time of faith development compared to other ages of development. Children are growing rapidly at this age, and they're often enthusiastic and full of wonder. They've developed a number of skills that younger children don't have (such as sitting still for longer periods of time and following directions better), and they haven't entered the stage of early adolescence where young people begin to resist and question things.

Older children who have been given the firm faith foundation in early childhood often seem like sponges—soaking up everything they come into contact with. Lead them in prayer, and they jump in. Bring them to worship, and they participate. Ask them to read a scripture aloud, and they'll start reading.

"Spiritual development usually begins to find individual expression at 6 years of age," write Vivian Thompson and Jacqueline Braeger. "Until age 5 ½ to 8, the child has accepted the mores and values of his or her parents. During the years of 8 to 11, he or she begins to examine this parental belief system" (196). The examination during childhood, however, tends not to rock the boat too much, which is why churches often find it easier to recruit volunteers to work with this age group and why parents often enjoy spending more time with their children during this age range.

Yet we may be overly complacent about the faith journey of this age group. Usually we worry more about teenagers than older children, but major changes are happening for this age group. The danger to watch out for is boredom. During this age, children often are expected to do much more at school and much less at church, and this dichotomy often leads children to disconnect from church, even though they're often present within the walls of the church. When faith leaders keep older children curious and engaged, children are more likely to see that faith is relevant.

Transmitting faith and values to children cannot happen without also emphasizing the healthy development of each child's physical, cognitive, social, moral, and emotional development. All parts of development interact with each other (Leffert, Benson, Roehlkepartain, 15). That's why it's critical to nurture all aspects of child development.

Ten broad faith factors emerge as important aspects of childhood development. These ten factors attempt to bring together a large body of research.

Ten Faith Factors of Older Children

Factor 1: Connects to safe and stimulating adults and peers

Older children need to feel valued and accepted by connecting to safe and stimulating adults and peers. While young children spend most of their time with parents and primary caregivers, older children go to school, church, clubs, and homes of their friends. They get to know other children and adults outside of the family.

After-school clubs, extracurricular groups, and church activities become important for this age group in order to connect with safe and stimulating adults and peers (Thompson and Braeger, 192).

When children feel ostracized or isolated, it's critical to intervene immediately. Parents and adults can teach older children the important social skills they need to connect with their peers and other adults. A child who feels alone will often turn away from the church. "The peer group, in addition to family and community values, is a significant influence in the child's moral development" (Thompson and Braeger, 196).

Jean Grasso Fitzpatrick, the author of *Something More: Nurturing Your Child's Spiritual Growth,* contends that religious education and religious groups can greatly help children when adults are warm and loving toward children and when children have a friend in the class or group (100–01). All these vital connections help older children develop a strong, secure faith.

Factor 2: Thrives with consistent support and care

Older children need supportive, caring relationships to grow in their faith. For older children, these relationships expand as they step out more into the world. They need supportive, caring relationships at home, at school, at church, and every place they go.

"Becoming Christian is a lifelong process," writes Karen-Marie Yust. "At every age and stage of childhood, girls and boys need adults in their lives who will encourage them to notice and respond to God's presence and activity in the world" (2007, 8–9).

Older children thrive when they encounter adults and peers who support and care for them. When they're at church, they notice when they're valued and nurtured, when they're supported and cared for. Churches that make a big deal out of welcoming children, noticing them when they're absent, and reaching out to them, make a strong impact in a child's faith journey. Children are drawn to people and places that care about them.

Factor 3: Engages in learning and discovery

A lot of faith formation involves learning, such as reading the Bible, learning Christian traditions, and celebrating the liturgical seasons. Younger elementary-age children have an egocentric view of the world that "has tremendous power to shape their interpretations of the gospel and Christian living" writes Karen-Marie Yust. "They are developing the critical thinking skills necessary to genuinely question ideas, comprehend the logic of religious practices, and investigate the implications of being faithful for all of their actions" (2007, 6).

Children between the ages of seven and ten tend to be in Stage 2 of Faith Development (called Mythic-Literal faith) of James W. Fowler's *Stages of Faith* (135–50). The key ways children at this age think tends to be concrete and literal, and children at this age are concerned about fairness and justice (135–50).

How does this thinking affect a child's faith? "Stage 2 Mythic-Literal faith is the stage in which the person begins to take on for him- or herself the stories, beliefs, and observances that symbolize belonging to his or her community," Fowler writes. "Story becomes the major way of giving unity and value to experience. This is the faith stage of the school child" (149).

What's the best way to teach children about religion at this age? "It needs to be factual and concerned with action as much as possible, with the aim of teaching the child the contents of the Bible, the history of its formation, what the Church believes by the way of doctrine, what the various services of the Church means," writes R. S. Lee, author of *Your Growing Child and Religion.* "All this needs to be graduated to what the child can understand" (204).

Factor 4: Enjoys milestones

Celebrating rituals, sacraments, and milestones helps children grow in faith and experience God's love and the care of a Christian community. Depending on the church and its theology, older children tend to have a rich experience in church rituals—or find them lacking.

For older children, the Christian faith is experiential. When they're handed their first Bible or take a sacrament (although some churches wait until children are older for their first communion), it's vital for children to be included in milestones, rituals, and sacraments. One church that didn't allow children to take communion until they were confirmed as teenagers decided that they wanted children to still feel included in communion, so they gave children grapes and crackers to symbolize how everyone is invited to the table.

Parents mark milestones when children achieve new reading levels, new athletic levels, or earn certain grades. Every milestone matters—even when it's small. Parents often feel stumped, however, about marking religious milestones for this age group. This is where the church can step in and provide easy ways for parents to incorporate religious milestones at home. Some examples include having an older child lead a mealtime prayer, reading a Bible passage aloud, collecting coins to give to a special offering, and participating in a service project that helps others.

Factor 5: Explores meditation and prayer

Children develop a richer faith when they pray and meditate. Some prayers involve talking to God, but others can be about sitting in silence and meditating (Yust, 2014, 93).

Younger elementary-age children often benefit by thinking of centering prayer as a way of taking a spiritual timeout (Yust, 2007, 6). "Younger elementary-age children appreciate the simple structure of this ancient prayer practice. They are capable of selecting a simple word or phrase as a centering device and repeating that word or phrase slowly over and over again as they let their bodies relax" writes Karen-Marie Yust, an expert on children and spirituality (6).

Yust provides a helpful, four-part movement to teaching children a centering prayer. These include: 1) Preparing: Choose a word or phrase to welcome God's presence, 2) Centering: Repeat the word or phrase to focus on God, 3) Dealing with distraction: Move back to your word or phrase when you get distracted, and 4) Returning: Slowly finish the prayer and open your eyes to return to the world around you (2004, 99).

Factor 6: Develops fairness, justice, and compassion

Older children grow in faith by serving others and developing a sense of fairness, justice, and compassion. "Those in Stage 2 [of faith development] compose a world based on reciprocal fairness and an immanent justice based on reciprocity," writes James W. Fowler (149). That's why it's critical that adults emphasize the reciprocity of fairness and justice so that these attributes cement and harden in children.

Children learn about fairness, justice, and compassion by serving and helping others in the different places where they spend time: at home with their families, at church in their Christian education classes, at school, and in community family volunteering projects (Friedman and Roehlkepartain, vii–x).

Older children benefit by getting involved in service projects that are short, easy, and help them make a difference. One resource, *Doing Good Together,* gives concrete, easy volunteer projects that are appropriate for six-year-olds, seven-year-olds, eight-year-olds, nine-year-olds, and ten-year-olds that children can do with their parents or with church or school groups (Friedman and Roehlkepartain, 224).

Factor 7: Participates in worship services

Attending worship services is a key component of older children's faith journey. Churches that work hard to incorporate children into worship and make it an interesting experience for children help children grow in faith.

Unfortunately, too many children experience worship as something less than desirable. "The greatest danger to the child is boredom," writes R. S. Lee. "Church services may be too long, too obscure, and too lacking in action for children, so that attendance at them is little short of torture. In that case, churchgoing comes to be regarded as a most unpleasant occupation" (207).

Some congregations create worship bags for children to explore during worship services. Others create a children's bulletin that simplifies the adult bulletin so that children can follow along. Families can also make worship interesting by helping children sing during hymns or songs, participate in responsive prayers, and do a quiet activity (such as drawing a picture) during the longer message. The older children become, the more they can participate in a worship service. What's key is to make worship an activity that interests children and helps them feel included and part of the community.

Factor 8: Mimics adults who have purpose and meaning

Finding purpose and meaning is an important part of a person's faith journey (Roehlkepartain, Benson, Scales, Kimball, and King, 21). Older children not only observe the adults around them for meaning and purpose, but they also find meaning and purpose by mimicking those around them (Leffert, Benson, Roehlkepartain, 82–3).

Part of what children mimic is the passion and excitement people have toward purpose and meaning. Adults don't need to be overly enthusiastic, but children notice when adults are engaged in their faith and when they're involved in a sense of purpose. They take note when adults enjoy leading religious education—or whether they dread it and are just putting in their time.

For older children, finding purpose and meaning not only is about finding activities they enjoy but also finding friends and adults they like to spend time with. "Participation, not isolation, fuels successful negotiation of the life cycle," writes Edward P. Wimberly (124). Children find meaning in their faith when they connect with others around faith issues, whether that's at home or church.

Factor 9: Becomes exposed to more religious and spiritual experiences

As children grow, they deepen in their faith when they're given more religious and spiritual experiences. Introduce them to new forms of prayer. Invite them to explore other parts of the Bible. Create new religious rituals that they find fascinating.

"Children can be natural philosophers," writes Tobin Hart psychology professor at the State University of West Georgia. "Much to our amazement, they often ponder big questions. They ask about life and meaning, knowing and knowledge, truth, and justice, reality and death. For many the spiritual quest is focused and explored through pondering, puzzling over, and playing with such questions" (168).

We need a faith development that grows with children as they age and grow. "That perhaps is the first point we should emphasize about the religious training of children in this period," writes R. S. Lee. "They are more likely to be given too little than too much information" (203-04).

This is particularly true for older children at the upper end of this age range. "The mind of the ten-year-old is an amazing instrument," Fowler writes. "It can virtually memorize the *Guinness Book of World Records*. It can guide a pair of hands to victory in a game of chess, sometimes over more experienced adult competitors. It can take an hour and a half to tell, in vastly inclusive detail, what the movie *Star Wars* is about" (135). How are we tapping into this vast knowledge and interest of older children in their faith journey?

Factor 10: Discovers how faith and life interact

When older children learn how to apply Christian traditions and teachings into their own life, they're more likely to develop the necessary steps for creating a life-long faith. This is about integrating all parts of their development at their age level by teaching kids important aspects of faith, showing them how faith affects their relationships, and also how faith is about action.

Children learn best when they can experience what they learn, rather than merely sit around and try to soak it in. Churches and families that engage older children in service, in movement, and in using their hands to create things help children see that faith is relevant to ever aspect of their lives (Roehlkepartain, i)

When children have useful roles in Christian rituals, they see that they matter and that their participation matters. These rituals are more than the ones that encompass the liturgical season and holidays. They're also about the daily rituals we provide for children, such as asking them to read scripture aloud, having them lead a simple prayer, and giving ideas on how to serve others.

Supportive, Faithful Parents

"Parents are the real forming agents of their children. No matter how well we may do in religious education with that third-grade child, if he or she goes home where the faith is not cherished or understood, our best efforts can't produce formation that will last a lifetime," writes Bill Huebsch, director of the online Pastoral & Continuing Education Center. "The parents—by their actions, words, and house-hold habits—form their children for life, either with faith or without it" (46).

Not only do parents affect a child's faith but they're also key in helping a child grow up well. Researcher Diana Baumrind says the way an adult parents makes a big difference. A parent who is warm and caring while also setting firm boundaries and expectations is the type of parent who parents well (43-88). This style of parenting has big implications for teaching faith practices. When parents listen to their children, are warm and supportive, and also set clear expectations about which faith practices children and their families do, the better it is for the child.

During the elementary-school years, parents are immersed in Stage 4 of being parents of faith: Supporting and Strengthening. At this stage, parents support their child's spiritual and overall development, strengthening ties to other people and to important institutions, such as church and school. "The major task . . . is for parents to decide how they are going to interpret their children's existence to them; what facts they want to share, what behavior and manners they want to teach, and what values they want to impart," writes Ellen Galinsky in her parenting book (199).

Parents are key people in helping older children develop the ten faith factors listed in this chapter. "Parents praying, families eating together, conversations focusing on what is proper and improper, and sacred artifacts are all important

ways in which family space is sacralized," says Robert Wuthnow, author of *Growing Up Religious*. "They come together, forming an almost imperceptible mirage of experience" (8).

Supportive, Faithful Grandparents

Active grandparents play a key role in the faith formation of older children, particularly if they have frequent contact with their grandchildren. "Grandparents and great-grandparents are precious treasures in the life of the church for they are the repository of stories, customs and practices that today's children, youth, and parents need to hear, hear about, and experience" (Forming Faith, 3).

When grandparents and grandchildren have a strong relationship, they greatly influence each other and their faith journey. Grandparents have a faith wisdom of years that they can transmit to their grandchildren, and grandchildren often reintroduce grandparents to wonder and new perspectives.

While parents need to take a disciplinary role (in addition to many other roles), grandparents can often create a space for grandchildren to ask questions they don't want to ask their parents and to explore other aspects of faith. Grandparents who are open to this inquiry can help older children grow deeper in their faith.

Supportive, Faithful Extended Family Members

Siblings, aunts, uncles, cousins, and other family members greatly influence the lives and faith of older children. The way they interact with children matters, as do the conversations they have with them and the way they model their faith.

We often place too much stress only on parents and overlook the power and support of other extended family members. Where do parents turn to for help, advice, or support? The number one place is their immediate or extended family (Roehlkepartain, Scales, Roehlkepartain, et. al., 2–3). Extended family members provide an anchor for parents and also their children, and they can be vital people to help children grow in faith.

We need to enlarge families, not shrink them. When we embrace all aspects of family, such as parents, grandparents, aunts, uncles, siblings, cousins, and more, we can provide a strong network of support in helping children grow up in faith—and to grow deeper in the faith.

When families are fragmented or separated by geography, we can create extended networks around families that fill this role. All children need not only supportive, faithful parents and grandparents, but other supportive, faithful people in their lives. By modeling, talking about faith, and helping children make sense of their faith (and act on their faith), we can help older children discover faith practices and a theology that allows them to flourish.

Works Cited

Baumrind, Diana. "Child Care Practices Anteceding Three Patterns of Preschool Behavior." *Genetic Psychology Monographs*, 75, no. 1 (1967): 43–88.

Forming Faith. *Grandparents and the Faith Formation "Tent."* June 2, 2015, formingfaith.wordpress.com/2015/06/02/grandparents-and-the-faith-formation-tent/.

Fowler, James W. *Stages of Faith: The Psychology of Human Development and the Quest for Meaning.* San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1981.

Friedman, Jenny and Jolene Roehlkepartain. *Doing Good Together: 101 Easy, Meaningful Service Projects for Families, Schools, and Communities.* Minneapolis, MN: Free Spirit Publishing, 2010.

Galinsky, Ellen. *Between Generations: The Six Stages of Parenthood.* New York: New York Times Books, 1981.

Grasso Fitzpatrick. Jean. *Something More: Nurturing Your Child's Spiritual Growth.* New York: Viking, 1991.

Hart, Tobin. "Spiritual Experiences and Capacities of Children and Youth." In *The Handbook of Spiritual Development in Childhood and Adolescence*, edited by Eugene Roehlkepartain, Pamela Ebstyne King, Linda Wagener, and Peter L. Benson. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2006.

Huebsch, Bill. "Coaching Parents to Form Their Own Children." *Lifelong Faith Journal*, (Winter 2008) 46–8.

Lee, R. S. *Your Growing Child and Religion.* New York: MacMillan, 1963.

Leffert, Nancy, Peter L. Benson, and Jolene L. Roehlkepartain. *Starting Out Right: Developmental Assets for Children.* Minneapolis, MN: Search Institute, 1997.

Roehlkepartain, Eugene, Peter L. Benson, Peter C. Scales, Lisa Kimball, and Pamela Ebstyne King. *With Their Own Voices: A Global Exploration of How Today's Young People Experience and Think about Spiritual Development.* Minneapolis, MN: Search Institute, 2008.

Roehlkepartain, Eugene, Peter C., Scales, Jolene Roehlkepartain, Carmelita Gallo, and Stacey P. Rude. *Building Strong Families: Highlights from a Preliminary Survey from YMCA of the USA and Search Institute on What Parents Need to Succeed.* Chicago: YMCA of the USA, 2002.

Roehlkepartain, Jolene L. *101 Games that Keep Kids Coming.* Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2008.

Roehlkepartain, Jolene L. *Teaching Kids to Care and Share.* Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2000.

Thompson, Vivian, and Jacqueline Braeger. "Acculturation and Latency." In *Human Development and Faith: Life-Cycle Stages of Body, Mind, and Soul*, edited by Felicity B. Kelcourse, 190–210. St. Louis, MO: Chalice Press, 2015.

Wimberly, Edward P. "The Family Context of Development." In *Human Development and Faith: Life-Cycle Stages of Body, Mind, and Soul*, edited by Felicity B. Kelcourse, 122–36. St. Louis, MO: Chalice Press, 2015.

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

Yust, Karen-Marie. "Becoming a Child, Becoming Christian." *Lifelong Faith Journal*, (Spring 2007) 1–9.

Yust, Karen-Marie. *Real Kids, Real Faith: Practices for Nurturing Children's Spiritual Lives.* San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2004.

Part 5C. Nurturing the Faith of Young Adolescents: Ages 11 to 14

For parents and adults who aren't familiar with young adolescents, this stage of spiritual development may feel like walking off a cliff that they didn't know existed. Many wonder where their beloved child went and who this unfamiliar young adolescent is that replaced him or her.

"The faith of a teenager is a 'journey in search.' It is a journey that questions those childlike assumptions," writes Stephen D. Jones in *Faith Shaping: Youth and Experience*. "Adolescence is the important moment of the life span to shape a personal faith because it is typically the first time to encounter fully life's ambiguities" (14, 20).

This journey in search is essential in forming a strong faith. "Faith must provide a coherent orientation in the midst of that more complex and diverse range of involvements," says James W. Fowler, the author of *Stages of Faith*. "Faith must synthesize values and information; it must provide a basis for identity and outlook" (172).

Unfortunately, we tend to view young adolescents in two contrasting ways: "One depicting them as dreamy-eyed, moody, gangling, easily led away by unrealistic enthusiasms," writes R. S. Lee, author of *Your Growing Child and Religion,* "and the other making them appear as lawless, rebellious, uncontrollable, almost (if not quite) delinquents" (220). When we see young adolescents in these ways, we hurt their faith journey because we either become dismissive of it—or afraid of it.

Yet early adolescence is a rich time for young people to grow in faith. "The aim of religious training at this stage should be to foster this growth toward maturity and the integration of these two trends," Lee says (221). We can tap into the idealistic aspects of young people and also their doubts and questions, and when we do so, a deeper faith takes root.

The research on the healthy development of young adolescents reveals ten faith factors that emerge as critical aspects of development. These ten factors pull together a large body of developmental information.

Ten Faith Factors of Young Adolescents

Factor 1: Yearns to be part of a group that matters

Young adolescents crave acceptance, and they want to be part of a group that cares about them. "Having friends becomes a priority," write Ronald Nydam and Arthur David Canales, "and listening to them—going along with the peer crowd— becomes a powerful tug" (214). Most adults view this tug as negative, as negative peer pressure. But peers also exert a lot of positive influence as well, and when we recognize those powerful, positive relationships as part of a young person's faith journey, we help them grow spiritually.

Stephen D. Jones, the author of *Faith Shaping* says that the typical pattern of faith development for young adolescents is through affiliation (54). Key aspects include "living with the tension of taking the first step beyond a cultural or parental faith bias, accompanied by the most intense desire to affiliate with that bias" Jones writes (54).

Fickleness defines relationships for this age group (Steinberg, 154), and young adolescents sometimes find a group that they stick with while others switch around. Young adolescents are acutely aware of how they fit in (or don't fit in) with a group at church, or school, or wherever they are.

That's why group activities matter to this age group, and why many churches emphasize camps, mission trips, and other group outings for young adolescents. Being part of a group matters a lot to young adolescents, and the more we can support their yearning to be part of a group that matters, the more we will help them in their faith formation. Yet mission trips and service projects alone don't make a difference in a young person's faith formation over time (Smith and Snell, 218). What matters is what happens during these trips. Teenagers who have a "powerful spiritual experience" are more likely to be religious by the emerging adult years (218).

Factor 2: Craves support and fights it

Forming a deep faith involves developing caring relationships. While young adolescents thrive on acceptance and feeling supportive, they also give mixed messages. They want closeness and distance—often at the same time.

These mixed messages often cause parents and other adults to pull back from young adolescents, which is exactly what they don't need. "Young adolescents not only need quality time with their parents, but they also yearn for time," write Ronald Nydam and Arthur David Canales. "The lack of spending time with a young teenager means to the teenager, for good or for ill, that, at worst, 'My parents do not love me,' and, at best, 'I am not a priority for my parents' " (213).

That's why the spiritual development for a young teenager may often feel uncomfortable and taxing on parents and other adults. As adults try to figure out a healthy balance of being involved and giving young teenagers space to grow, they often lose their balance, going too far in one direction one moment and then going too far in another direction in another moment. "Studies show that most teenagers would like to spend more, not less, time with their parents than they do now," writes Laurence Steinberg, an expert in adolescent development (Steinberg, 14).

Factor 3: Feels conflicted about learning

Young teenagers think differently than older children. They begin to think abstractly, going through Piaget's "formal operational thinking" that allows them to not only think abstractly but also to begin thinking about their thinking (Piaget). On one hand, this new type of thinking opens up new worlds to young teenagers, but it also shakes everything up in their world. Many young people who were good students sometimes go through a period of feeling conflicted about

learning. Parents often think that their young teenagers have "lost their brains" and "lost their way."

This shift in a young person's thinking greatly impacts their faith journey. That's why young teenagers often come across as overly idealistic or overly critical and harsh (Fowler, 152). These extremes emerge from their new way of thinking. When adults welcome young people's idealism and their doubts, we help them make sense of their thinking and their faith.

This is why it's also critical for parents to express clear expectations about learning for this age group. If parents want young people to remain engaged in learning, they need to say so and make it a priority. Often parents need to help young teenagers figure out new ways to study, how to complete homework, and even how to remember to bring home the homework. One parent drove her young teenage son to school every day after school to pick up the homework he forgot—as a way to emphasize that homework mattered and needed to be done every day.

"Religious ideas can be taught, but the truth of religion can only be discovered; and it is far more important to foster the spirit of discovery—which is the response to the challenge to adventure—than to persuade adolescents to accept without question what their teachers tell them," Lee writes. "We should in many cases go so far as to encourage an active distrust, or at least a questioning, of the accepted religious beliefs" (223).

Factor 4: Celebrates milestones while resisting them

Celebrating rituals, sacraments, and milestones help young teenagers experience God's love and deepen their faith journey. Churches celebrate milestones of young teenagers through confirmation, first communion (depending on the religious tradition), giving teenagers a teenage or an adult Bible, and by giving young teenagers opportunities to attend camps and mission trips.

Adults often misinterpret young teenagers lack of enthusiasm or interest in milestones as a signal to stop doing milestones. Don't make that mistake. Milestones, rituals, and sacraments have power through their traditions, and it's often important to withstand the discomfort that young teenagers have and continue milestones. That doesn't mean to dismiss young teenagers perspectives. In fact, explore their resistance. Sometimes young teenagers feel left out. Or they have ideas on how to make a milestone more meaningful (Roehlkepartain, 1).

Factor 5: Wonders about meditation and prayer

Prayer and meditation help young teenagers on their faith journey. Yet parents and their young teenagers often differ in the importance of prayer and how to pray (Schwadel, 126).

Young teenagers wonder about meditation and prayer, and often their questions have to do with how effective meditation and prayer are and if there are other ways to try meditation and prayer. In many ways, young people are exploring new ways to connect with God, and they're looking for ways that fit them well.

When we emphasize how young teenagers yearn to be part of a group and also to find their true selves, we can steer prayer practices to emphasize these points. "The adolescent's religious hunger is for a God who knows, accepts and confirms the self deeply," writes Fowler about this third stage of faith, the Synthetic-Conventional Faith that explains faith development for teenagers (153).

We can help young teenagers pray to God with the images that they have of God at this stage, "qualities of companionship, guidance, support, and of knowing and loving" them (Fowler, 156). Young teenagers pray to a God that comes from their belief of what they've been taught about God—but also what they feel about God and what they feel about certain situations (156).

Factor 6: Balks at some service; deepens others

Young teenagers, when they feel idealistic, love to help and serve others, and this act of service is another way to build their faith. When service-minded teenagers are asked when they first volunteered, most admit they started by age fourteen. Almost half started by age twelve (Hodgkinson, 23, 25).

Even if young teenagers balk or resist doing service, find opportunities for them to do so. Service projects help young teenagers put their faith into action. This is one of the reasons why many churches offer mission trips and service-project trips for young teenagers. These trips transform lives and deepen the faith of young teenagers.

What type of service projects work well with young teenagers? Ones that give them hands on, meaningful experiences without overwhelming them or boring them. One book, *Doing Good Together,* lists volunteer projects that are appropriate for eleven-year-olds, twelve-year-olds, and thirteen- to eighteen-year-olds, all with the help of caring adults (Friedman and Roehlkepartain, 224).

When young teenagers find ways to serve and help others, their idealism and enthusiasm often deepens their commitment to service. This, in turn, deepens their faith journey as well.

Factor 7: Attends worship services with resistance

Attending worship services is an important component of a young person's faith journey. Yet parents often struggle to get their young teenagers to go to church, and many give up. Anne Lamott, who writes about faith issues, wrote an essay "Why I Make Sam Go to Church" about why she makes her teenage son go to church.

> Sam is the only kid he knows who goes to church—who is made to go to church two or three times a month. He rarely wants to go. This is not exactly true: the truth is he never wants to go," Lamott writes. "The main reason is that I want to give him what I found in the world, which is to say a path and a little light to see by. Most of the people I know who have what I want—which is to say, purpose, heart, balance, gratitude, joy—are people with a deep sense of spirituality (99–100).

When young teenagers resist attending worship services, get creative. Encourage them to bring a friend. If they want to sit on the other side of the sanctuary, let them. But be clear about your expectations: You want them to attend, and you want them to pay attention. Some families debrief the worship service over a meal, giving young adolescents time to talk.

Worship helps young teenagers in their faith journey by giving them a sense of ritual. When families, youth groups, and churches articulate the importance of worship and help young teenagers wrestle with the concept, we can help young teenagers grow spiritually.

Factor 8: Longs for Meaning While Wondering about It

A key aspect of faith for young teenagers is to find purpose and meaning (Roehlkepartain, Benson, Scales, Kimball, and King, 21). "Early adolescents are spiritually pressed to find meaning in their lives," write Ronald Nydam and Arthur David Canales. "Young teenagers do possess spirituality and are in fact spiritual people" (227).

Many adults think young adolescents gain purpose and meaning through making a personal decision about their faith, such as through confirmation or a believer's baptism. Experts warn that pressuring young people to make a faith decision can backfire if it's not done well. For example, "it runs two grave risks of jeopardizing full religious development—the risk of forced growth, and the risk of arrested growth" writes Lee (215).

That doesn't mean confirmation and other programs for early adolescents are harmful. They can be helpful and help young people grow spiritually—if they're done thoughtfully and with care. The best programs link young teenagers with mentors of faith, and the best programs also emphasize how young teenagers are on a faith journey and that a commitment of faith doesn't mean they graduate and are finished. A faith commitment is about taking the journey to discover more and grow deeper in faith.

Factor 9: Desires religious and spiritual belonging

Not only do young teenagers want to belong with a meaningful peer group and a meaningful family, they also desire to belong to a religious group—if that group is something that draws them in. "This question for relational identity affects the faith of early adolescents at its root, that is, in the way they experience and image God," writes John S. Nelson. "Early adolescents experience and image God as warm more than cold, as close more than distant, as friend and confident more than as lord and lawgiver" (40).

A key aspect of this is to help young teenagers find adult faith mentors. "He or she needs the eyes and ears of a few trusted others in which to see the image of personality emerging and to get a hearing for the new feelings, insights, anxieties, and commitments that are forming and seeking expression," writes James Fowler. "Each gives the other the gift of being known and accepted. And more, each gives

the other a mirror with which to help focus the new explosiveness and many-ness of his or her inner life" (151).

What trips up many adults, however, is young teenagers' emerging sexuality. "The young adolescent is more susceptible to guilt feelings than he was in the intermediate childhood period, and this guilt is likely to be associated with the new feelings of sex now developing within in," writes Lee. "If he is subjected to strong teaching about sin and judgment, the action of his superego will be rein- forced, and any decision he makes about committing himself to religion is likely to be of the negative, forbidding type" (218). Instead, adults need to be honest about sexuality while putting appropriate expectations on it in the context of faith so that young adolescents can grow up well, rather than restrained.

Factor 10: Experiments with ways to integrate faith into life

When young teenagers learn about Christian traditions and how to apply them to life, they grow in their faith. Young adolescents tend to experience six patterns of faith that help them to integrate it into their lives. These include:

1. Experienced faith—This pattern of faith begins in childhood within the family. It continues throughout adolescence, and it's the way young people experience faith.
2. Conventional faith—Young adolescents tend to criticize this aspect of faith, which includes the belief of the religious community that young adoles- cents belong to.
3. Searching faith—This pattern of faith becomes strong during early adoles- cence. It entails young people searching for a style of belief that fits their thinking and values.
4. Rejection of church-related faith—This patterns begins in early adoles- cence, but it becomes much more prevalent in later adolescence and in early adulthood.
5. Owned faith—The seeds for this pattern of faith are planted during early adolescence, but adults often don't see young people owning their faith until young adulthood (typically between the ages of twenty-two to thirty-five).
6. Personal faith—This is the dominant form of faith for Christian adoles- cents, particularly those in the United States (Nelson).

When we allow young teenagers to embrace their idealism, act on their faith, and also question their beliefs, we help them integrate faith into their lives. "Call- ing adolescence a 'phase' may be a less than subtle method of blocking our own use- ful curiosity about what life is like for young teenagers, creating distance in order to quell our anxiety about managing their experience," write Ronald Nydam and Arthur David Canales. "An empathic appreciation of their developmental struggles is critical to good child rearing and can result in an enjoyable, playful, sometimes painful, but hopefully deeply enriching period of growth for families" (217).

Active, Engaged Parents

The relationship between parents and young adolescents often becomes strained and frustrating. Part of this is due to the nature of early adolescents. They're volatile and pushing boundaries, but ultimately, the most painful part for parents is that "parents remain present to children so that they can learn to leave them" (Nydam and Canales, 213).

This painful separation is another step along the path for a young person to become an individual. Parents remember the painful separations of the first day of childcare, the first day of preschool, the first day of kindergarten. During early adolescence, these steps toward independence often painfully occur on a daily basis, and sometimes multiple times a day (Galinsky, 241).

This is why parents need to stay engaged and involved with their young teenagers. "It is the steady reliable presence of the parent, the primary caregiver, who facilitates this trust in the availability of parents when they are needed" write Ronald Nydam and Arthur David Canales (213).

What are parents ultimately try to teach young adolescents? "One of the goals of adolescence is differentiating, learning to be one's self, no longer needing parents, on the way to maturity," write Ronald Nydam and Arthur David Canales. "The fully differentiated person can love deeply and maintain intimacy, can be relatively nonanxious in the midst of chaos, and can be realistic and accepting of human limitations" (213).

Parents of faith are parenting from Stage 5: Experimenting and Exploring. While young adolescents experiment with different identities, parents discover that they, too, need to experiment with new ways to interact with their young adolescent while encouraging him or her to develop a personal faith.

Young adolescents' faith formation grows out of the way they're parented. Researcher Diana Baumrind identified three major parenting styles: the Permissive style (where a parent is nonpunitive, accepting, and affirming, which gives the young teenager too much power), the Authoritarian style (where a parent controls and punishes a young adolescent, which gives the parent too much power), and the Authoritative style (where a parent sets boundaries but encourages more of a give-and-take approach to set and enforce boundaries). The best approach, the Authoritative style, emphasizes the power of both the parent and the young teenager (43–88). "Parenting out of anxiety and fear is qualitatively different from parenting out of confidence," write Ronald Nydam and Arthur David Canales (216).

Parents are essential in helping develop the ten faith factors listed in this chapter. "Parenting with confidence requires patience, understanding, and maintaining a calm demeanor even amidst early adolescent angst, defensive reactions, and defiant mood swings, through it all offering support, guidance, and love," write Ronald Nydam and Arthur David Canales (217). By staying engaged and involved, parents help young adolescents grow deeper in their faith.

Active, Engaged Grandparents

Since early adolescence can often feel rocky to both young people and their parents, grandparents have an even more vital and influential role. "Grandparents matter above and beyond parents," concluded researcher Jeremy Yorgason in a study of families with young adolescents. "Grandparents are like the National Guard. If there is a problem, they come in and help out" (Bragg, 1).

Grandparents help young adolescents see the value in themselves and also the value in their questions and doubts. Researchers found that grandparents are valued especially by young teenagers for providing affection, reassurance of worth, and reliable alliance (Van Ranst, Verschueren and Marcoen, 311).

"Grandparents will have an increasing influence on religious transmission, support, and socialization in the twenty-first century," writes John Roberto (45). Grandparents greatly influence their grandchildren's faith journey by being involved in their lives and by supporting their spiritual steps, every step of the way.

Active, Engaged Extended Family Members

Like grandparents, other family members (such as uncles, aunts, siblings, cousins, great-grandparents, and others) can greatly impact a young teenager's faith journey. While young adolescents may feel tension in their own homes, other extended family members can provide an important refuge and sounding board (Roehlkepartain, Scales, Roehlkepartain, et. al., 2–3).

Extended family members can also greatly influence a young teenager's interest and talents. For example, sometimes a young teenager has an interest that isn't shared within the immediate family (such as a young musician who lives in a family of athletes or vice versa). An extended family member who also shares that same interest as the young person can play an important role (and be a mentor) for the young person.

What's key is relationship. When young teenagers have different adults they can turn to and talk about their lives and their faith, they're more apt to grow spiritually. When they have different adults they can trust, they're more willing to seek these adults out when things aren't going well with their parents (Scales, Benson, et. al.). Extended family members, including grandparents, help young adolescents find their way during a time when the way often becomes muddy and unclear. By doing so, extended family give young adolescents a sense of security and safety, which also helps young people feel more secure about their faith journey.

Works Cited

Baumrind, Diana. "Child Care Practices Anteceding Three Patterns of Preschool Behavior" *Genetic Psychology Monographs*, 75, no. 1 (1967): 43–88.

Bragg, Lindsay. "Study: Grandparents Have Important Influence on Children's Lives." *The Digital Universe*, November 19, 2015.

Fowler, James W. *Stages of Faith: The Psychology of Human Development and the Quest for Meaning.* San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1981.

Friedman, Jenny and Jolene, Roehlkepartain. *Doing Good Together: 101 Easy, Meaningful Service Projects for Families, Schools, and Communities.* Minneapolis, MN: Free Spirit Publishing, 2010.

Galinsky, Ellen. *Between Generations: The Six Stages of Parenthood.* New York: New York Times Books, 1981.

Hodgkinson, Virginia A., ed. *Volunteering and Giving.* Washington, DC: Independent Sector, 1997.

Jones, Stephen D. *Faith Shaping: Youth and the Experience of Faith.* Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press, 1987.

Lamott, Anne. "Why I Make Sam Go to Church" (99–105) in *Traveling Mercies: Some Thoughts on Faith.* New York: Pantheon Books, 1999.

Lee, R. S. *Your Growing Child and Religion.* New York: MacMillan, 1963.

Nelson, John S. "Faith Development in Early Adolescence." In *Early Adolescent Ministry,* edited by John Roberto. New Rochelle, NY: Don Bosco Multimedia.

Nydam, Ronald J., and Arthur David Canales. "Early Adolescence: Venturing toward a Different World." In *Human Development and Faith: Life-Cycle Stages of Body, Mind, and Soul*, edited by Felicity B. Kelcourse, 211–30. St. Louis, MO: Chalice Press, 2015.

Piaget, Jean. *The Psychology of Intelligence.* Totowa, NJ: Littlefield, 1972.

Roberto, John, *Reimagining Faith Formation for the 21st Century.* Naugatuck. CT: Lifelong Faith Publications, 2015.

Roehlkepartain, Eugene, Peter L. Benson, Peter C. Scales, Lisa Kimball, and Pamela Ebstyne King. *With Their Own Voices: A Global Exploration of How Today's Young People Experience and Think about Spiritual Development.* Minneapolis, MN: Search Institute, 2008.

Roehlkepartain, Eugene, Peter C. Scales, Jolene Roehlkepartain, Carmelita Gallo, and Stacey P. Rude. *Building Strong Families: Highlights from a Preliminary Survey from YMCA of the USA and Search Institute on What Parents Need to Succeed.* Chicago: YMCA of the USA, 2002.

Roehlkepartain, Jolene. *Easter Traditions for Teens.* Vibrant Faith at Home, Spring 2013, http://www.vibrantfaithathome.org/item/easter-traditions-for-teens.

Scales, Peter C., Peter L. Benson, Marc Mannes, Eugene C. Roehlkepartain, Nicole R. Hintz, and Theresa K. Sullivan. *Other People's Kids: Social Expectations and American Adults' Engagement with Children and Adolescents.* New York: Kluwer/Plenum, 2003.

Schwadel, Philip. "Poor Teenagers' Religion." *Sociology of Religion*, 69, no. 2 (2008): 125–49.

Smith, Christian with Patricia Snell. *Souls in Transition: The Religious and Spiritual Lives of Emerging Adults.* New York: Oxford University Press, 2009.

Steinberg, Laurence. *You and Your Adolescent: The Essential Guide for Ages 10–25.* New York: Simon & Schuster, 2011, revised edition.

Van Ranst, Nancy, K. Verschueren, and A. Marcoen. "The Meaning of Grandparents As Viewed by Adolescent Grandchildren." *International Journal of Aging & Human Development*, 41, no 4 (1995): 311–24.

Part 5D. Nurturing the Faith of Older Adolescents: Ages 15 to 18

"Youth today live in a new world in many ways. The settings in which the average teenager lives his or her life are often so conflicting and confusing that they leave many youth drifting in search of roots," writes Stephen D. Jones in *Faith Shaping: Youth and Experience*. "No longer can we assume harmony even between the church and the home, or the home and the school, or the church and the youth peer culture. A new approach to nurture is needed in this area" (83).

This conflict makes the transmission of faith to older teenagers extremely challenging. With the developmental task of separating from their parents and finding their own voice and way (Steinberg, 233), many teenagers drift away from the church, and some never return. "Faith must provide a coherent orientation in the midst of that more complex and diverse range of involvements," says James W. Fowler, the author of *Stages of Faith* (172). But how do we help older teenagers create this coherence when they find so much dissonance between different aspects of their lives?

Part of the tension lies with the way teenagers now live with the overpowering presence of technology. "Teenagers no longer have bedrooms as a sanctuary to rest and relax, but command centers, which send out hundreds of e-mails, text messages, blog postings, phone calls, tweets, live feeds, photos, and songs that pour in every day," writes Mark Bauerlein.

Church clergy and lay leaders who work with older teenagers often lament that they can never get groups of older teenagers together because of their impossible, crammed schedules. One youth worker discovered that the only time he could connect with older teenagers, particularly ones actively involved in school, was at 7 a.m. on a school day for breakfast—and with only one at a time.

What do older teenagers need to grow well in the faith? The research on the healthy development of older adolescents reveals ten faith factors that emerge as critical aspects of development. These ten factors synthesize a large body of developmental information.

Ten Faith Factors of Older Adolescents

Factor 1: Discovers a balance between acceptance and independence

"One of the goals of adolescence is differentiating," write Ronald Nydam and Arthur David Canales, "learning to be one's self, no longer needing parents, on the way to maturity" (213). Although older teenagers may act like they no longer need parents, they actually do. Their needs are just different, and their needs sometimes are met by being accepted through other groups at school, at church, or in the clubs that they're involved in.

One way parents can nurture their older teenager's faith journey is by getting to know their friends and welcoming them, even if some of the friends make parents uncomfortable. "Adolescents sometimes go to extremes to prove that they are not like their parents, and that they are independent of adults," writes Laurence Steinberg, an expert in adolescent development. "The boy who is dressed in leather and reading motorcycle magazines this year may be wearing preppy clothes and running for class president next year. Nasty comments will only make the adolescent feel that he can't bring friends home" (169).

Through all the different places where an older teenager spends time (at home, at school, at church, at after-school activities, at a part-time job, and other places), this balance between acceptance and independence is key. "When God is a significant other in this mix . . . the commitment to God and the correlated self-image can exert a powerful ordering on a youth's identity and values outlook," writes James Fowler, the author of *Stages of Faith* (154).

Many families, however, don't witness their older teenager embracing God and the church. They often worry that they haven't done enough or that they have somehow driven away their teenager from a life of faith. When a teenager shows little interest (and sometimes disdain) for religion at this age, it's often because of an imbalance between acceptance and independence, with the balance leaning more heavily toward independence. When this happens, focus on acceptance while setting clear expectations and listening to teenagers. Continue to be welcoming and inviting toward church activities and faith practices. Allowing teenagers to find their own way is an important part of their faith journey.

Factor 2: Redefines meaningful support
An important aspect of growing deeper in faith involves developing caring relationships. For older adolescents, their caring relationships are shifting, and they're seeking to form relationships that are meaningful.

That means older teenagers are redefining their relationship with their parents, with their siblings, with their grandparents, with their friends, with their teachers. Anyone they come into contact with, they examine and ask: Is this relationship important to me? And if so, how?

This also affects their relationship with God. Older teenagers still tend to view God as a personal God (Fowler, 156), but they're also making sense of that relationship as well. When we surround older teenagers with people of faith, with mentors of faith, we can help them make sense of their relationship with God—and with their relationship with everyone else.

Factor 3: Yearns to learn and succeed in meaningful ways
For older teenagers, learning takes on a new dimension. This is where you see a widening gap between teenagers who embrace learning and those who resist it. When parents continue to stay engaged and involved in their older teenager's lives, they can still greatly influence their teenager's motivation to learn.

This learning not only affects young people academically at school but also what they're learning about faith. With many older teenagers taking Advanced Placement (AP) and International Baccalaureate (IB) classes, how are we giving them more advanced teachings about faith and their faith journey?

In the six stages of faith, James Fowler says that older teenagers are immersed in stage 3: the Synthetic-Conventional Faith (153). During this stage, older teenagers are trying to make sense of the disparate aspects of their lives and synthesize these differences into something that makes sense to them. That's why some teenagers drop out of some activities that they've done for years (such as a club or a church activity) while trying something else. They're trying to make sense of what may no longer make sense to them.

That's why we need to help older teenagers become clearer about their faith and their faith journey without discarding the entire process (which a number of older teenagers are tempted to do). We need to show them that faith is still relevant in their lives and that they can continue to grow in their faith and that the faith journey is one of change and growing (Lee, 221–22).

Factor 4: Enjoys meaningful milestones

Marking meaningful milestones, rituals, and sacraments connect older teenagers with their faith journey. Unfortunately, most churches stop marking milestones with older teenagers, except for the one of graduating from high school. Young teenagers tend to experience many more religious milestones and rituals than older teenagers in the church.

Yet older teenagers relish meaningful milestones and rituals. If you look closely at their high school, you often see classes, clubs, and other activities marking all kinds of meaningful milestones. That's one reason many teenagers enjoy the senior year of high school. They experience one milestone after another.

Although older teenagers may not participate as much in milestones, rituals, and sacraments at home (since they're trying to become independent and show how they're different from their families), it's vital that families continue these milestones, rituals, and sacraments anyway. Over time, this shows older teenagers the value of these milestones. They give older teenagers a sense of grounding, even when teenagers act like they don't care. Families continue to plant seeds along their older teenagers faith journey. Even if the ground seems hard and not open to accepting seeds, the seeds may actually be falling into places parents can't see. A number of young adults (once they reach the ages of twenty-five and older) often talk about how meaningful the rituals were that their parents had at home when they were teenagers, while the parents look at each other with great puzzlement.

Factor 5: Meditates and prays with questions

Prayer and meditation are key components on an older teenager's faith journey. Yet parents may not see any evidence (or interest) that their older teenagers are

praying or meditating, and this disconnect is common among older teenagers (Schwadel, 126).

Parents and other adults sometimes define meditation and prayer too narrowly compared to older teenagers. When teenagers were asked which activities make it easier for them to be spiritual, they mentioned these top factors: spending time outside or in nature (87 percent), listening to or playing music (82 percent), and being alone in a quiet place (74 percent) (Roehlkepartain, Benson, Scales, et. al., 31).

Prayer, however, is one of the five consistently very important factors that's associated with higher religiousness when teenagers become young adults (Smith and Snell, 218). The five factors include:

1. Frequent personal prayer
2. Strong parental religion
3. Places a high importance on religious faith
4. Has few religious doubts
5. Has religious experiences

Older teenagers may turn to prayer when life becomes difficult (Schwadel, 146). These acts of prayer may be private and unseen to others around them. That's why it's essential that parents and other adults continue to talk about prayer, continue to model prayer, and be open to discussions about prayer to discern what older teenagers think about prayer and meditation. By creating a warm, open exchange, adults can nurture older teenagers faith journey by allowing them to have questions, doubts, and wonderments about faith.

Factor 6: Creates a commitment to service

Older teenagers, particularly those who have been involved in service from an earlier age, often will become passionate and strongly committed to service. With experience, they can see that their efforts make a difference, and they often feel good about helping (Friedman and Roehlkepartain, ix–x).

"Youth service is becoming a key focus of youth work in congregations across many faith traditions," write the authors of *Growing Up Generous*. "Congregations are seeing how engaging young people in service to others often becomes a catalyst for reinvigorating and transforming a congregation (Roehlkepartain, Dalyah Naftali, and Musegades, 59).

While service benefits a congregation, service also enriches family life. When older teenagers volunteer with their families, families benefit in four ways say the authors of *Doing Good Together:* "1) providing quality family time when family members can become closer, 2) strengthening family communication, 3) offering ways for family members to be role models, and 4) giving families the opportunity to make significant contributions to their community" (Friedman and Roehlkepartain, ix).

Older teenagers who serve and help others discover that their faith journey deepens and expands as well.

Factor 7: Participates in worship in ways that reflect a personal faith journey

Attending worship services is an essential part of a person's faith journey, yet many older teenagers resist attending worship services. Parents and other adults often fear asking their older teenagers about their resistance, but hearing what teenagers have to say about worship—and why—is important to help them make sense of their faith journey.

According to research, teenagers are more likely to pray, read scriptures, and say faith is important than they are to regularly attend religious worship services (Schwadel, 144). Many claim that they don't have meaningful experiences during worship services (Schwadel, 144).

Some families counter this resistance by allowing teenagers a say in how they want to be involved in worship (such as sitting with family, sitting with friends, singing in the choir, playing with the handbell choir, or helping out with the soundboard) or by visiting other church worship services as a family to talk about what older teenagers find meaningful.

Often older teenagers don't enjoy worship services because they don't feel like they belong there. When other adults make an effort to welcome older teenagers and include them in meaningful ways (such as allowing older teenagers to usher, read scripture, and help serve communion), older teenagers often feel more connected to a worship community.

Factor 8: Explores meaning and purpose

Older teenagers yearn for purpose and meaning as part of their spiritual journey (Roehlkepartain, Benson, Scales, Kimball, and King, 21). They're searching for experiences that matter, experiences that give them a sense of purpose.

When young people were asked what types of experiences they found spiritually meaningful, they said:

1. Having the inner strength to make it through a difficult time.
2. Feeling a profound inner peace.
3. Feeling complete joy and ecstasy.
4. Feeling an overwhelming sense of love.
5. Experiencing God's energy, presence, or voice (Roehlkepartain, Benson, Scales, et. al., 15).

Many of these spiritual experiences involved their emotions. The way older teenagers feel greatly affects their religious experience (Fowler, 156) and their quest for meaning and purpose.

Talking about the meaning of life is something that older teenagers often talk about (Roehlkepartain, Benson, Scales, et. al., 17). Of young people who say that their spirituality has changed, the #1 reason is "how much I have a sense that life has meaning and purpose" (Roehlkepartain, Benson, Scales, et. al., 21).

Factor 9: Questions religious and spiritual beliefs

Older teenagers who tap into their abstract reasoning, independent thought, and reflection have a lot of questions about religion, spirituality, and faith (Kelcourse, 87). Although this often makes many parents and other adults uncomfortable, this questioning is a key component of a healthy faith (Jones, 17–18).

"If you have no questions about God, no uncertainty or doubt, then you have little need for faith in God," writes Stephen D. Jones, the author of *Faith Shaping: Youth and the Experience of Faith*. "It is only when you consider that you cannot prove God's existence to yourself or to others, or that you may not understand God's will for your life, that faith is essential" (18).

Creating safe ways for older teenagers to articulate their doubts and questions is critical. Teenagers need to see that faith is stronger than the questions asked about it and that faith isn't so sacred that it can't be questioned or challenged. Of course, it's important to place boundaries around questioning. We don't want teenagers destroying another person's faith or becoming so judgmental that relationships strain. The challenge is how to create a sacred space for questions that allows for diversity, tolerance, and respect.

Yet researchers have found that when teenagers have fewer doubts, they tend to be more religious when they become young adults (Smith and Snell, 218). The tension is that often, too many adults don't take teenagers' doubts seriously. We tend not to address doubts and help teenagers make sense of them. When small doubts languish, they grow into bigger doubts. By knowing that doubts are part of the faith journey (and also knowing that we don't want a teenager's doubts to grow and multiply), we can help teenagers talk about their questions and doubts.

Factor 10: Deepens faith integration while continuing to question

Integrating faith into daily life is an important way for older teenagers to grow spiritually. Adults need to be patient and caring during this aspect of spiritual growth because it often will appear to be uneven and even contradictory at times.

"A person in Stage 3 [of the stages of faith] is aware of having values and normative images," writes Fowler. "He or she articulates them, defends them, and feels deep emotional investments in them, but typically has not made the value system, as a system the object of reflection" (162).

That's why it's important to notice the strides older teenagers make in their faith journey and also to embrace their experience. Older teenagers need to know that the way they're integrating faith into their life and their thinking—matters. Sometimes, they'll go astray, but we, as adults, can ask further questions and point out other options.

The way adults live out their faith and model it also makes a huge impact on older teenagers as well. Older teenagers notice when adults are hypocrites. They also pay attention to when adults are doing the right thing and are living out an authentic faith that matters.

Patient, Involved Parents

Older teenagers say parents are the most common resource to help them with their spiritual life, yet one out of five young people say that no one helps them with their faith journey (Roehlkepartain, Benson, Scales, Kimball, and King, 7).

How often do older teenagers have conversations with their parents about what their parents believe? Research reveals that 42 percent have these types of conversations a few times, 12 percent have them about once a month, 7 percent have them about once a week, and 5 percent have them once a week. The rest don't have these conversations at all (Roehlkepartain, Benson, Scales, Kimball, and King, 17).

Parents of older teenagers often feel overwhelmed and inexperienced with the problems they face with their teenager (Galinsky, 240). "The problems are bigger, and yet parents' power is diminishing," writes Ellen Galinsky, the author of *Between Generations*. Many parents of teenagers feel like they've lost their kids for a while, but involved parents keep hanging in there and finding new ways to connect (241).

Part of the conflict entails the journey that parents are on at the same time as their teenagers. While teenagers are separating more from their parents and becoming more independent, a number of parents are going through a mid-life crisis, feeling the effects of aging, and questioning their purpose (Galinsky, 259). Researchers have found that only 15 percent of middle-age men and 40 percent of middle-age women have an integrated faith, a mature measurement of faith (Benson and Eklin, 18, 13).

Parents need to stay involved with their older teenagers not only in general but also about their faith journey. "Parents for whom religious faith is quite important are thus likely to be raising teenagers for whom faith is quite important, while parents whose faith is not important are likely to be raising teenagers for whom faith is also not important. The fit is not perfect. None of this is guaranteed or determined, and sometimes, in specific instances, things turn out otherwise. But the overall positive association is clear" writes Christian Smith in *Soul Searching: The Religious and Spiritual Lives of Teenagers* (57).

Parents of faith are parenting from Stage 6: Guiding and Questioning. High school-age young people need parents who help them make sense of their world and their future. While older teenagers question various aspects of faith, parents need to question how they can continue to model and talk about faith issues that bring them closer to their teenager rather than drive them apart.

Parents who live out their faith and talk about it make a big impact on teenagers. "The prime source of faith for self-described 'religious' people was the way faith permeated the daily life of their family," writes John Roberto. "Spiritual practices were woven into the very fiber of people's being: it was a total immersion. For these people, being religious was a way of life" (2007, 4).

The way adults parent their children (Baumrind, 43–88) and the way they talk about faith makes a big difference (Benson and Eklin, 65). "Given the power of family religiousness on the faith development of youth, priority should be given to

the faith formation of parents and the teaching of faith development skills" (Benson and Eklin, 65).

Patient, Involved Grandparents

The more religious a grandparent is, the more likely he or she will be involved in the life of their grandchildren (King and Elder, S323). "Religious grandparents are indeed more likely to be involved with their grandchildren in multiple ways" (King and Elder, S323).

"Grandparents who attend church services frequently are more likely than infrequent attenders to mentor their grandchild and share skill experiences with them. They are also more likely to perceive that they can influence their grandchild and they feel that their grandchild takes their advice seriously," write researchers Valarie King and Glen Elder. "They participate in more shared activities, have more frequent contact, and are more likely to care for their grandchild when he or she is sick. Finally, these grandparents are more likely to play the role of friend and report that they are closer to their grandchild" (S323).

Grandparents of grandchildren who are older teenagers also make a profound impact on these teenagers (Creasy Dean, 18). Young people know they can trust and confide in their grandparents and that their grandparents will still value and love them. This type of relationship greatly enriches the faith journey, even when it gets bumpy for the older teenager.

Patient, Involved Extended Family Members

Older teenagers who have more "plentiful and high-quality relationships with adults do better" than older teenagers who don't have them (Scales, Benson, Mannes, et. al., 24). This affects not only their overall development but also their faith journey.

Extended family and other caring adults who attend religious services weekly are more likely to engage with older teenagers and to value those interactions (Scales, Benson, Mannes, et. al., 155). Older teenagers need many caring, involved adults (who are patient and give teenagers space) in order to make sense of their faith journey.

One study found that nearly half of teenagers said a grandparent, aunt, uncle, or cousin was a "special adult" in their life (Scales, Benson, Mannes, et. al., 35). An extended family member has the potential of making a big influence on a teenager's faith life and to become a significant adult in that teenager's life.

We all need adults—within our family and outside our family—who care for us and who care about our faith journey. That's true for every stage of development. Older teenagers who are full of questions also need this care and this interest from those around them. This care helps older teenagers remain connected to their faith and growing spiritually.

Works Cited

Bauerlein, Mark. *The Dumbest Generation: How the Digital Age Stupefies Young Americans and Jeopardizes Our Future.* New York: Penguin, 2009.

Baumrind, Diana. "Child Care Practices Anteceding Three Patterns of Preschool Behavior," *Genetic Psychology Monographs*, 75, no. 1 (1967): 43–88.

Benson, Peter L., and Carolyn H. Elkin. *Effective Christian Education: A National Study of Protestant Congregations.* Minneapolis, MN: Search Institute, March 1990).

Creasy Dean, Kenda. *Almost Christian: What the Faith of Our Teenagers Is Telling the American Church.* New York: Oxford University Press, 2010.

Fowler, James W. *Stages of Faith: The Psychology of Human Development and the Quest for Meaning.* San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1981.

Friedman, Jenny, and Jolene Roehlkepartain. *Doing Good Together: 101 Easy, Meaningful Service Projects for Families, Schools, and Communities.* Minneapolis, MN: Free Spirit Publishing, 2010.

Galinsky, Ellen. *Between Generations: The Six Stages of Parenthood.* New York: New York Times Books, 1981.

Jones, Stephen D. *Faith Shaping: Youth and the Experience of Faith.* Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press, 1987.

Kelcourse, Felicity B., "Finding Faith: Life-Cycle Stages in Body, Mind, and Soul." In *Human Development and Faith: Life-Cycle Stages of Body, Mind, and Soul*, edited by Felicity B. Kelcourse, 66–101, St. Louis, MO: Chalice Press, 2015.

King, Valarie, and Glen H. Elder, Jr. "Are Religious Grandparents More Involved Grandparents?" *Journal of Gerontology*, 54B, no 6 (1999): S317–S328.

Lee, R. S. *Your Growing Child and Religion.* New York: MacMillan, 1963.

Nydam, Ronald J., and Arthur David Canales. "Early Adolescence: Venturing toward a Different World." In *Human Development and Faith: Life-Cycle Stages of Body, Mind, and Soul*, edited by Felicity B. Kelcourse, 211–30. St. Louis, MO: Chalice Press, 2015.

Roberto, John. "Best Practices in Family Faith Formation." *Lifelong Faith Journal*, (Fall/Winter 2007): 1–13.

Roehlkepartain, Eugene, Peter L. Benson, Peter C. Scales, Lisa Kimball, and Pamela Ebstyne King. *With Their Own Voices: A Global Exploration of How Today's Young People Experience and Think about Spiritual Development.* Minneapolis, MN: Search Institute, 2008.

Roehlkepartain, Eugene C., Elanah Dalyah Naftali, and Laura Musegades. *Growing Up Generous: Engaging Youth in Giving and Serving.* Washington, DC: The Alban Institute, 2000.

Scales, Peter C., Peter L. Benson, Marc, Mannes, Eugene C. Roehlkepartain, Nicole R. Hintz, and Theresa K. Sullivan,. *Other People's Kids: Social Expectations and American Adults' Engagement with Children and Adolescents.* New York: Kluwer/Plenum, 2003.

Schwadel, Philip. "Poor Teenagers' Religion." *Sociology of Religion*, 69, no 2 (2008): 125–49.

Smith, Christian with Melinda Lundquist Denton. *Soul Searching: The Religious and Spiritual Lives of Teenagers.* New York: Oxford University Press, 2005.

Smith, Christian with Patricia Snell. *Souls in Transition: The Religious and Spiritual Lives of Emerging Adults.* New York: Oxford University Press, 2009.

Steinberg, Laurence. *You and Your Adolescent: The Essential Guide for Ages 10–25.* New York: Simon & Schuster, 2011, revised edition.

Chapter 5E. Nurturing the Faith of Emerging Adults: Ages 19–29

For emerging adults, finding their own way and making all their own choices mark their entry into adulthood. "The freedom that emerging adults have to choose how to live results in a striking diversity of beliefs and values. . . . Many of them have developed their own idiosyncratic beliefs by combining different religious traditions in unique ways and adding a dollop of popular culture," writes Jeffrey Jensen Arnett in *Emerging Adulthood*. "If there is a unifying theme in all of this diversity, it is their insistence on making their own choices about what to believe and what to value" (186–87).

Depending on the emerging adult's faith journey, the young adult will either remain firmly in a Stage 3: Synthetic-Conventional Faith shared with younger teenagers and where many adults get stuck (Fowler, 161) or move on to a deeper faith, exploring Stage 4: Individuative-Reflective Faith (Fowler, 174). "The movement from Stage 3 to Stage 4: Individuative-Reflective Faith is particularly critical for it is in this transition that the late adolescent or adult must begin to take seriously the burden of responsibility for his or her own commitments, lifestyle, beliefs and attitudes," says James W. Fowler, the author of *Stages of Faith* (182).

Older adults and parents tend to become frustrated with emerging adults, wishing they'd "just grow up" (Graham, 232). Yet the exploration of young adults is a key aspect of their overall development and their faith journey. "The 17- to 20-year-old must deal with both contradictory emotional messages from parental figures and his or her own internal swirl of anxieties," writes Alice Graham, executive director of Interfaith Partnerships. "At times, it seems impossible to sort out the entangled sources of anxieties frustrating the young person who is struggling to make major life decisions" (232).

Why do some emerging adults thrive while others wither? "Young people who appear to be successfully navigating emerging adulthood tend to engage in identity exploration, develop internalization of positive values, participate in positive media use, engage in prosocial behaviors, report healthy relationships with parents, and engage in romantic relationships that are characterized by higher levels of companionship, worth, affection, and emotional support," writes Larry Nelson in *Emerging Adults' Religiousness and Spirituality*. "For others who appear to be floundering, emerging adulthood appears to include anxiety and depression, poor self-perceptions, greater participation in risk behaviors, and poorer relationship qualities with parents, best friends, and romantic partners" ("Series Foreword," viii).

Ten faith factors emerge as critical aspects of healthy development for emerging adults. These ten factors grow out of a large body of developmental information about healthy development in general and about faith development.

Ten Faith Factors of Emerging Adults

Factor 1: Finds a unique place in the world with value and acceptance

Although emerging adults appear to be very independent, they actually rely heavily on other people's opinions and acceptance. "It is critical to feel valued and to feel that behavioral choices are consistent with those of someone who values him or her," writes Alice Graham. "For this valuing to contribute to forward movement, it must have non-negating meaning for the [young adult]" (239). Finding a community of acceptance is key for young adults to thrive.

What young adults seek in terms of value and acceptance varies by gender. "Men's friendships are focused on companionship, whereas women's friendships are more focused on emotional intimacy," write Carolyn McNamara Barry and Jennifer Christofferson (80).

Finding a community that values and accepts the young adult is unnerving in the beginning. "It can be a frightening and somewhat disorienting time of being apart form one's conventional moorings," writes James Fowler. "Whether a person will really make the move to an Individuative-Reflective stance depends to a critical degree on the character and quality of the ideologically composed groups bidding for one's joining" (178).

Factor 2: Discovers an adult support system

Caring relationships help emerging adults form a deep faith. Many young adults find themselves immersed in discovering a new support system when they move to college, begin full-time employment, join the military, or start a new path, which often begins during the young adult years.

When emerging people find people who they connect with, they discover who they are and what they believe. Yet the push to find a peer group is radically different for the young adult compared to the older teenager. Seventy-five percent of young adults surveyed by Jeffrey Jensen Arnett say "they worry less now about what their peers or friends thing of them, compared to high school" (221–22).

Although young adults are more independent than older teenagers, they're aware of what their peers think of them, particularly if they don't feel supported. "The fear of nonconformity on the part of the status quo society will not so much redirect or transform the human spirit," writes James Loder, "but if possible, suppress or break it so it will conform without complaint" (205).

The close relationship of a young adult focuses on friends (instead of parents), and this tendency continues until the young adult finds a prominent romantic partner (McNamara Barry and Christofferson, 80). Young adults tend to find friends who share their religious beliefs, "even though most do not participate in religious groups together" (McNamara Barry and Christofferson, 80).

Factor 3: Explores curiosities and masters deeper learning

No matter which way they choose to go, emerging adults find themselves exploring new ideas and mastering deeper learning. In fact the majority of young adults

in the United States now attend some form of higher education (Arnett, 121). "The spread of college education has been an important influence in creating a distinct period of emerging adulthood in American society," writes Jeffrey Jensen Arnett. "Because of the extensiveness and openness of the American system of higher education, young people in the United States are more likely than young people in virtually any other country in the world to have the opportunity for an extended period of educational exploration" (121).

When it comes to exploring religion and spirituality, some young adults find a gold mine at college. "On the one hand, the cross-disciplinary study of religion is expanding, cocurricular support for student religious groups and interfaith dialogue on secular campuses is growing, and certain kinds of Christian colleges are also increasing in both influence and numbers," write Peter Glanzer, Jonathan Hill, and Todd Ream. "As a result students' religious and spiritual beliefs and practices do not necessarily suffer and some may even flourish" (164).

Yet not all emerging adults experience an increase in knowledge of spiritual matters and religion in college. "In higher education as a whole, students demonstrate less religious knowledge and show less belief that higher education should help them with big questions," writes Peter Glanzer, Jonathan Hill, and Todd Ream. "Students striving to integrate what they are learning, both socially and academically, with their own faith commitments will likely receive less support in the curricular area" (164).

Factor 4: Redefines and celebrates milestones

Celebrating sacraments, milestones, and rituals help emerging adults experience a deeper faith journey. Many young adults, however, may not participate in religious rituals, milestones, and sacraments because they say that religion isn't important in their lives (Gjelten, 4).

That's why it's key that parents and families continue to celebrate rituals, milestones, and sacraments, especially when young adults visit and spend time with them. "It is much more challenging for parents of emerging adults to serve as models of religiousness and spirituality if their children cannot see them (e.g., do not live at home)" writes Larry Nelson ("The Role of Parents," 63). But young adults typically don't live away from home full time, particularly in the early years of young adulthood when many attend college and live on campus part of the year and visit home for breaks. How families continue to mark milestones and rituals may be some of the few times that young adults experience religious rituals.

Factor 5: Meditates and prays

Meditation and prayer guide emerging adults on their faith journey. Yet parents and their young adults often differ in the importance of prayer with parents often valuing this practice more than young adults ("The Role of Parents," 63).

Yet when researchers ask young adults if they pray, 69 percent of them say yes (Astin, Astin, and Lindholm, 83). The practice of prayer reveals a lot about a young

adult's religious commitment in college. Young adults who pray on a daily basis during the college years are more likely to become more committed to religion whereas young adults who don't pray tend to become less committed (86).

Factor 6: Becomes more compassionate

Emerging adults tend to become more compassionate as they grow. A five-year study of college students and their spirituality found that young adults' sense of compassion about others and their sense of connectedness to all beings (called an ecumenical worldview) increases during the college years (Astin, Astin, and Lindholm, 81). "Students who are more actively engaged in campus clubs and organizations, or who belong to religious organizations are more likely to grow and develop in an ethic of caring, ecumenical worldview, and charitable involvement" write the researchers (81).

Community service, however, tends to decrease as emerging adults age. "All community service activities—doing volunteer work, performing service as part of a class, participating in food and clothing drives—decline in frequency between the freshman and junior years," the researchers say (Astin, Astin, and Lindholm, 69). What goes up, however, is young adults donating money to charity and helping friends with their personal problems (81).

Factor 7: Worships in ways that fit a personal value system

Attending worship services is an important component of a person's faith journey. Yet for many emerging adults, worship tends to be one of the ways that they don't act on their faith. Forty-two percent of young adults say that attending religious services is not at all important to them, and only 23 percent say it's somewhat important (Arnett, 168).

Part of young adults' struggle with worship is that many of them are in the mode of "make your own religion" (Arnett, 171). "One reason the beliefs of many emerging adults are highly individualized is that they value thinking for themselves with regard to religious questions and believe it is important to form a unique set of religious beliefs rather than accepting a ready-made dogma," Arnett says. "The individualism valued by many emerging adults makes them skeptical of religious institutions and wary of being part of one" (172).

For a number of emerging adults, worship becomes highly individualized, a way of being in the world or "worshipping" in nature or in some other way. Many balk at the term "worship," and many parents struggle and worry about their young adults lack of interest in worship. Many families continue to model their value of worship by attending worship services without pushing their young adults to act in ways that don't fit their belief system at this stage of life.

Factor 8: Searches for deeper purpose and meaning

Finding purpose and meaning is a key aspect of the faith journey for emerging adults (Roehlkepartain, Benson, Scales, Kimball, and King, 21). "When you ask

young people, the vast majority will assert that life has a spiritual dimension. For some, it grows out of a sense of meaning, purpose, connectedness, or inner peace," write the authors of *With Their Own Voices*, a research study of young people's spiritual development (Roehlkepartain, Benson, Scales, Kimball, and King, 12–13).

"Emerging adults' meaning-making has been associated with positive adjustment, which might yield opportunities for flourishing," write Carolyn McNamara Barry and Mona M. Abo-Zena. "Yet for those who do not engage in meaning-making or who do so in the absence of sufficient emotional and structural supports, they tend to be lost in transition, and such floundering may result in perilous developmental outcomes" (4).

Young adults find and create meaning by solidifying their identity and by interacting with key people who influence their lives: parents, friends, the media, places of higher education, and the religious community (McNamara Barry and Abo-Zena, 9–11). "This third decade is a time ripe for religious and spiritual development," write Carolyn McNamara Barry and Mona M. Abo-Zena (4). A key aspect for young adults is the search for deeper purpose and meaning.

Factor 9: Tinkers and challenges religion and spirituality

What alarms many parents and adults about the faith development of emerging adults is that many young adults tend to disconnect from the church, opting out of mainstream religion (Graham, 240). "For the vast majority of emerging adults, the task to self-author their identities, worldviews, and communities leaves them less tethered to tradition and more individually focused than at any other time in development," write Gina Magyar-Russell, Paul Deal, and Iain Tucker Brown in their article about young adult spirituality (41).

Young adults are tough on churches, traditional beliefs, and religion in general. "The individualism valued by many emerging adults makes them skeptical of religious institutions and wary of being part of one," writes Jeffrey Jensen Arnett. "To most emerging adults, participation in a religious institution, even a liberal one, requires them to abide by a certain set of beliefs and rules and therefore constitutes an intolerable compromise of their individuality" (172).

One congregation, located near a college campus in Texas, decided to deal with this situation head on. They created a "Skeptics Corner" class where college students could come and bring all their questions and arguments about religion and spirituality. The class, led by a religion professor from campus, became a popular class among college students. The professor created a warm, inviting environment, welcoming any question, any skeptical observation. Relationships formed, and college students felt affirmed and valued for their faith journey while many of their parents struggled to make sense of their process. That process, however, was an important part of their faith journey: finding their own voice and way in their spiritual development.

Factor 10: Develops an integrative faith independent of others

For emerging adults, integrating their faith into their lives evolves more around questions than about participating in faith practices. "The 'big questions' that pre-occupy students are essentially spiritual questions: Who am I? What are my most deeply felt values? Do I have a mission or purpose in life? Why am I in college? What kind of person do I want to become? What sort of world do I want to cre-ate?" write the authors of *Cultivating the Spirit: How College Can Enhance Students' Inner Lives.* "When we speak of students' 'spiritual quest,' we are essentially speaking of their efforts to seek answers to such questions" (Astin, Astin, and Lindholm, 1).

The faith journey for an emerging adult often rattles parents, grandparents, and extended family members because the young adult needs to define his or her own faith journey, independent of everyone else. "For most emerging adults, simply to accept what their parents have taught them about religion and carry on the same religious tradition as their parents would represent a kind of failure, an abdication of their responsibility to think for themselves, become independent from their parents, and decide on their own beliefs," writes Jeffrey Jensen Arnett. "Quite con-sciously and deliberately, they seek to form a set of beliefs about religious questions that will be distinctly their own" (Arnett, 177).

Parents and other adults, however, can easily misinterpret this process of young adults integrating their faith, because it appears to be more of a deconstruction rather than a reconstruction. "Too often, deconstruction is mistakenly understood as a singular nihilistic exercise leading to the complete rejection and destruction of home-making propositions," write Gina Magyar-Russell, Paul Deal, and Iain Tucker Brown. "However, deconstruction involves a double movement of disman-tling in order to rebuild, of individuating in order to reintegrate. . . . In essence, the goal of leaving is not to become an ideological vagabond, but rather home-leaving is a prerequisite for the homecoming to a more mature and cohesive iden-tity and worldview" (50).

Connected, Interested Parents

One of the key factors of whether or not emerging adults explore their spirituality has to do with their parents. When parents have a strong religious commitment (meaning they attend worship services regularly and talk about the importance of faith), the more likely young adults will find a religious grounding (Smith and Snell, 218).

For young adults to thrive, they need to separate from their parents. "Emerging adults see the three cornerstones for becoming an adult as accepting responsibil-ity for yourself, making independent decision, and becoming financially inde-pendent," writes Jeffrey Jensen Arnett. "Each of these criteria has connotations of independence specifically *from parents*" (48).

Parents feel the pain of this separation. They often feel like they're "losing" their son or daughter, and they often don't know how to connect to their young adult in general and around faith issues. But young adults who thrive, redefine their relationship with their parents, and parents who allow and participate in this redefinition also benefit greatly. Young adults need parents who are connected and interested in their lives—and parents who give them space to explore and discover.

"Parents take stock of the whole experience of parenthood," writes Ellen Galinsky about this stage of parenting. Parents "have the related tasks of preparing for the departure, then adjusting their images of this event with what actually happens, redefining their identities as parents with grown-up children, and measuring out their accomplishments and failures" (283).

This separation in the early years of young adulthood creates a lot of discomfort and flared tempers. "Conflict arises, as adolescents press for more autonomy while parents continue to feel responsible for protecting their children from potential harm," writes Jeffrey Jensen Arnett. "The changes in parents and their emerging adult children allow them to establish a new intimacy, more open than before, with a new sense of mutual respect. They begin to relate to each other as adults, as friends, as equals, or at least as near equals" (56, 58).

Unfortunately most parents don't view their emerging adult's spiritual development as anything close to becoming equal or near equal. In fact, for parents, their young adult's spiritual journey often feels like watching their son or daughter barreling over a dangerous cliff. Instead of panicking, keep talking about faith issues (without forcing them too much on your young adult).

"There is a strength about religion that's not going to go away," says Vern Bengtson, author of *Families and Faith: How Religion Is Passed Down Across Generations*. "There is a life course trajectory by which a lot of young people leave religion and then come back" (Brown, 1).

As young adults leave home and find their way in the world, they need parents who remain connected to them while letting them go. Parents are in Stage 7: Launching and Fostering. Parents continue to serve as faith models for their young adults, providing a safe place for young adults to grapple with faith issues.

Parents are essential in helping emerging adults develop the ten faith factors listed in this chapter. "The way in which parents socialize their children and adolescents appears to be related to the religious and spiritual development of emerging adults," writes Larry Nelson. "It may be that while their role as direct socializers of religiousness and spirituality diminishes as their children enter the third decade of life, parents may still play an important role via their broader parenting practices and the overall quality of the parent–child relationships during this period of development" ("The Role of Parents," 65). What's key for parents at this stage is to continue valuing, modeling, and showing the importance of religion (Smith and Snell, 57). Continue attending worship services regularly. Talk about faith. By staying connected and interested, parents help young adults make sense of their faith journey.

Connected, Interested Grandparents

Grandparents can play a vital role in an emerging adult's spiritual journey, particularly if they're intentional about their relationship and the power dynamics of their relationship. Researchers have found that grandparents who are close with their young adult grandchildren have great influence over their young adult grandchildren's beliefs and values (Brussoni and Boon, 267).

Researchers have identified five patterns of grandparenting, and each pattern affects the emerging adult in different ways (Krauss Whitbourne, 1):

1. Formal grandparent—This type of grandparent doesn't become overly involved, providing an interest in the grandchild and getting together occasionally with the grandchild.
2. Fun-seeking grandparent—This grandparent emphasizes fun, games, and leisure, seeing their role as the one entertainer.
3. Surrogate parent—Some grandparents take over the caretaking role, especially when they see that the parent can't (or won't) do this.
4. Reservoir of family wisdom—This grandparent provides wisdom, advice, and resources, becoming a guide for the young adult grandchild.
5. Distant figure—This type of grandparent shows up for holidays and special occasions but otherwise has infrequent contact with the grandchild (Krauss Whitbourne, 3).

"Despite considerable social change in family and religious life over recent decades, we suggest that contemporary families possess a stock of religious capital sufficient to influence the religious orientations of successive generations," write researchers Casey Copen and Merril Silverstein (497). Grandparents greatly impact the faith journey of their young adult grandchildren, providing an important sounding board and source of stability when grandparents remain connected and interested.

Connected, Interested Extended Family Members

Aunts, uncles, siblings, cousins, great-grandparents, and other extended family members also can influence an emerging adult's faith journey. Researchers have found that when extended family members support the religious socialization that young adults received at home, young adults are more likely to have a positive experience of religion (Cornwall, 207).

While many adults (60 percent) say that discussing religious beliefs with young people is important, few actually do so (Scales, Benson, Mannes, et. al., 102). Only 35 percent of adults talk about religious beliefs with young people (Scales, Benson, Mannes, et. al., 102). How will young people make sense of their faith journey when adults are reluctant to talk about faith issues?

Adults also have other huge gaps in what they value for young people and the way they act (see Display 5.3).

	Percentage of adults who say it's important	Percentage of adults who do this
DISPLAY 5.3		
What adults say and do		
Teach shared values	80	45
Guide decision-making	76	41
Have meaningful talks	75	34
Discuss personal values	73	37
Pass down traditions	56	38
Provide service opportunities	48	13
Model giving and serving	47	16

(Scales, Benson, Mannes, et. al., 102)

Although emerging adults are finding their unique, individual paths, they're observing the adults around them. How are adults talking about faith? How are they acting on their faith? How are they helping young adults make sense of the questions, doubts, and contradictions they see in religion? All this matters in the faith journey for emerging adults. They need adults who are connected and interested in them, not only personally but also about their faith journey.

Works Cited

Arnett, Jeffrey Jensen. *Emerging Adulthood: The Winding Road from the Late Teens through the Twenties.* New York: Oxford University Press, 2004.

Astin, Alexander W., Helen S. Astin, and Jennifer A Lindholm. *Cultivating the Spirit: How College Can Enhance Students' Inner Lives.* San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2011.

Brown, Matthew. "Faith in the Family: How Belief Passes from One Generation to the Next." *Deseret News National*, December 26, 2013. [Brown interviews Vern Bengtson about his book *Families and Faith: How Religion Is Passed Down across Generations,* Vern L. Bengtson, Norella M. Putney, and Susan Harris, New York: Oxford University Press, 2013.

Brussoni, M. J., and S. D. Boon. "Grandparental Impact in Young Adults' Relationships with Their Closest Grandparents: The Role of Relationship Strength and Emotional Closeness." *International Journal of Aging & Human Development*, 46, no 4 (1998): 267–86.

Copen, Casey and Merril Silverstein. "Transmission of Religious Beliefs across Generations: Do Grandparents Matter?" *Journal of Comparative Family Studies*, 38, no. 4 (2007): 497–510.

Cornwall, Marie. "The Influence of Three Agents of Religious Socialization: Family, Church, and Peers." In *The Religion and Family Connection: Social Science Perspectives*, edited by Darwin L. Thomas, 207–231. Provo, UT: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, 1988.

Fowler, James W. *Stages of Faith: The Psychology of Human Development and the Quest for Meaning.* San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1981.

Galinsky, Ellen. *Between Generations: The Six Stages of Parenthood.* New York: New York Times Books, 1981.

Gjelten, Tom. "Poll Finds Americans, Especially Millennials, Moving Away from Religion." National Public Radio, November 3, 2015.

Glanzer, Perry L., Jonathan Hill, and Todd C. Ream. "Changing Souls: Higher Education's Influence Upon the Religious Lives of Emerging Adults." In *Emerging Adults' Religiousness and Spirituality: Meaning-Making in an Age of Transition*, edited by Carolyn McNamara Barry and Mona M. Zbo-Zen, 152–67. New York: Oxford University Press, 2014.

Graham, Alice. "Identity in Middle and Late Adolescence." In *Human Development and Faith: Life-Cycle Stages of Body, Mind, and Soul*, edited by Felicity B. Kelcourse, 231–43. St. Louis, MO: Chalice Press, 2015.

Krauss Whitbourne, Susan. "Five Types of Grandparents and How They Shape Our Lives." *Psychology Today*, February 16, 2010.

Loder, James E. *The Logic of the Spirit: Human Development in Theological Perspective.* San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1998.

Magyar-Russell, Gina, Paul J. Deal, and Iain Tucker Brown. "Potential Benefits and Detriments of Religiousness and Spirituality to Emerging Adults." In *Emerging Adults' Religiousness and Spirituality: Meaning-Making in an Age of Transition,* edited by Carolyn McNamara Barry and Mona M. Zbo-Zen, 39–55. New York: Oxford University Press, 2014.

McNamara Barry, Carolyn, and Mona M. Zbo-Zen. "Seeing the Forest and the Trees: How Emerging Adults Navigate Meaning-Making." In *Emerging Adults' Religiousness and Spirituality: Meaning-Making in an Age of Transition*, edited by Carolyn McNamara Barry and Mona M. Zbo-Zen, 3–18. New York: Oxford University Press, 2014.

McNamara Barry, Carolyn, and Jennifer L Christofferson,. "The Role of Peer Relationships in Emerging Adults' Religiousness and Spirituality." In *Emerging Adults' Religiousness and Spirituality: Meaning-Making in an Age of Transition*, edited by Carolyn McNamara Barry and Mona M. Zbo-Zen, 76–92. New York: Oxford University Press, 2014.

Nelson, Larry J., "Series Foreword." In *Emerging Adults' Religiousness and Spirituality: Meaning-Making in an Age of Transition*, edited by Carolyn McNamara Barry and Mona M. Zbo-Zen, vii–x. New York: Oxford University Press, 2014.

Nelson, Larry J. "The Role of Parents in the Religious and Spiritual Development of Emerging Adults." In *Emerging Adults' Religiousness and Spirituality: Meaning-Making in an Age of Transition*, edited by Carolyn McNamara Barry and Mona M. Zbo-Zen, 59–75. New York: Oxford University Press, 2014.

Roehlkepartain, Eugene, Peter L Benson, Peter C Scales, Lisa Kimball, and Pamela Ebstyne King. *With Their Own Voices: A Global Exploration of How Today's Young People Experience and Think about Spiritual Development.* Minneapolis, MN: Search Institute, 2008.

Scales, Peter C., Peter L. Benson, Marc Mannes, Eugene C. Roehlkepartain, Nicole R. Hintz, and Theresa K Sullivan. *Other People's Kids: Social Expectations and American Adults' Engagement with Children and Adolescents.* New York: Kluwer/Plenum, 2003.

Smith, Christian with Melinda Lundquist Denton. *Soul Searching: The Religious and Spiritual Lives of Teenagers.* New York: Oxford University Press, 2005.

Smith, Christian with Patricia Snell. *Souls in Transition: The Religious and Spiritual Lives of Emerging Adults.* New York: Oxford University Press, 2009.

CHAPTER SIX

Developing the Family–at–the–Center Approach to Faith Formation

John Roberto

● ● ● ● The Family-at-the Center Approach to family faith formation is developed around the belief that parents and the family are the most powerful influence for virtually every child and youth outcome—personal, academic, social, and spiritual-religious; and that parents are *the* most important influence on the social and religious lives of children, youth, and emerging adults. Given the central role of families in shaping the lives of children and youth, the value of engaging, supporting, and educating families should be self-evident to all of us.

We believe the Families-at-the–Center Approach to family faith formation is better suited to the challenges and opportunities of twenty-first century parents, families, and congregations. We seek to promote growth in faith and discipleship, develop the family as a community of faith and school of discipleship, and equip parents (and grandparents) to transmit the religious tradition at home. This new approach is grounded in solid research on what promotes growth in faith and healthy individual and family development, and addresses the family as a whole, its individual members (children, teens, emerging adults), parents/grandparents, and the faith community. It builds a connection between families and the congregation, and provides

congregations with a plan for how they can engage and equip families toward the goals of deeper faith and discipleship.

In Chapter Three we introduced the Family-at-the Center Approach by describing seven foundational insights that guide the vision of the new approach.

1. God is actively present in family life.
2. The family is a community of faith and a "school of discipleship."
3. Faith is formed through eight essential processes.
4. Faith is formed in intergenerational faith communities
5. Faith is formed in developmentally appropriate ways.
6. Parents and the family are the most important religious influence on religious transmission.
7. Parents and families have a diversity of religious-spiritual identities.

We believe that family-appropriate goals for faith formation—goals that are viewed through the lens of family life—can guide the development of a congregational plan for faith formation that begins with families at the center and cultivates the family as a faith community and school of discipleship. We believe that congregations should empower families to:

- Believe in God and that God cares about them, and turn to God for support, guidance, and strength.
- Love and believe in the value of another person.
- Foster intimacy between spouses, among family members, and with God.
- Care for one another and be willing to sacrifice for each other.
- Initiate the young into a living relationship with God.
- Educate the young through teaching knowledge of the Bible and Christian tradition and how to live that faith in daily life.
- Read and reflect on the Bible and its message and meaning for their lives.
- Be witnesses to their faith in God and set an example of Christian living for each other and the community.
- Live with moral integrity guided by Christian values and ethics.
- Pray together, thank God for blessings, and ask for strength and guidance, especially during difficult times.
- Forgive and seek reconciliation.
- Celebrate life's passages and milestones throughout life as moments of grace and faith growth.
- Serve people in need in the local community and around the world, act justly to alleviate oppressive conditions, care for creation, and affirm life.
- Participate in Sunday worship and the life of their church community.
- Live as disciples of Jesus Christ at home, at school, in the workplace, in the community, and in the world.

Every congregation will bring these goals to life in unique ways based on their congregational culture, size, geography, ethnic makeup, and more. The practices

and plans described in this chapter are designed to guide congregations in implementing these goals by developing strategies, programs, and activities that are tailored to the parents and families in the congregation and wider community.

Online Resource Center: Reimagine Faith Formation
Articles, models, strategies, and resources for family faith formation can be found in the "Family" section on the *Reimagine Faith Formation* website developed by LifelongFaith Associates: www.reimaginefaithformation.com.

Strategies for Developing Family Faith Formation

A *strategy* is a careful plan or method for achieving a particular goal, usually over a long period of time. Each of the following strategies describe plans for developing family faith formation at home, in the congregation, and in the community that bring to life the goals for family faith formation described previously. These strategies work together to form a comprehensive plan for family faith formation. (See Chapter Seven for designing a plan.)

We present eight strategies that make families the center of faith formation and provide the building blocks that a congregation can use to develop a comprehensive plan for family faith formation.

1. Discovering God in everyday family life.
2. Forming faith at home through the life cycle.
3. Forming faith through milestones.
4. Celebrating seasonal events through the year.
5. Encountering God in the Bible through the year.
6. Connecting families intergenerationally.
7. Developing a strong family life.
8. Empowering parents and grandparents.

Developing Strategies

There are five important design considerations that permeate the development of family faith formation strategies.

1. Contextualized faith formation

The design of each strategy needs to be customized or tailored to the life situations and life tasks, needs and interests, and religious-spiritual journeys of families, parents, and/or young people. The profile of today's families in Chapter Two provides research findings that can influence the development of strategies, programs, activities, and resources to reach and engage families. Consider the impact of the following characteristics on the design of strategies.

- *Family forms:* There is no one dominant family form in the United States, and in many cases young people experience multiple forms from childhood through adolescence. Young people might live in families with two married parents in their first marriage, with two remarried parents (blended family), with cohabitating parents, with a single parent, and with no parent.
- *Spiritual-religious identities:* There are at least four unique spiritual-religious identities among parents and families: the *Engaged*—vibrant faith with active engagement in church life, the *Occasionals*—variable faith practice with occasional engagement in church life, the *Spirituals*—spiritually committed but not engaged in church life, and the *Unaffiliated*—not affiliated with a church and not interested in religion and spirituality.
- *Generations:* Generation X parents and Millennial parents have distinct parenting styles that reflect their generational experiences as well as the current world in which their children are growing up. In general Gen X parents approach child-rearing as a set of tangible practices that will keep their children safe, reasonably happy, well-behaved, and ready to take on life's challenges. They practice protective parenting. In general, Millennial parents, reflecting their values of individuality and self-expression, focus more on a democratic approach to family management, encouraging their children to be open-minded, empathetic, and questioning—and teaching them to be themselves and try new things. They are moving away from the over-scheduled days of their youth, preferring a more responsive, less directorial approach to activities.
- *Ethnic diversity:* Most communities today are multiethnic. In a few short decades the United States will be a country of ethnic minorities with no majority ethnic group. Each ethnic culture has a distinctive ethnic identity, history, and religious traditions and practices; and each has unique needs and life situations.

2. Holistic faith formation

The design of each strategy needs to promote a holistic faith formation through the eight essential faith-forming processes.

- *Fostering caring relationships* within the family, across generations, and with other families/parents.
- *Celebrating the church year seasons* and events through which families experience the story of faith.
- *Celebrating rituals and milestones* that provide a way to experience God's love through significant moments in the family's life journey and faith journey.
- *Learning the Christian tradition* (Trinity, Jesus, church, beliefs, morality and ethics), reflecting upon the tradition, integrating it into one's faith life, applying it to life today, and living its meaning in the world.
- Fostering personal and communal *prayer* and being formed in the *spiritual disciplines*.

- *Encountering God in the Bible*, and studying and interpreting the Bible—its message, its meaning, and its application to life today.
- *Living the Christian mission in the world*—engaging in service to those in need, caring for God's creation, and working for justice.
- *Worshipping God* with the community of faith—experiencing God's living presence through scripture, preaching, and Eucharist.

3. Connected faith formation

The design of each strategy needs to connect church life with home life or home life with church life. The flow goes both ways. Congregational experiences (worship, seasons of the year, learning, service, and more) are extended into the home through experiences, activities, and resources that deepen faith. Family life issues, concerns, interests, milestones, and more become central to the design of church experiences (celebrations, programming, activities, and more).

4. Intergenerational faith formation

The design of each strategy needs to engage families in the intergenerational life, events, and experiences of the faith community. This can involve developing intergenerational experiences at church that include family participation (worship, learning, service, social) and preparing families for participation in the central events of church life and the Christian faith by guiding their participation and reflection upon those events.

5. Digital faith formation

The design of each strategy needs to utilize digital approaches and online platforms for delivering programs, activities, and resources to families, and in engaging families in faith formation at home or in the community, 24-7. This can involve extending a church event or program into people's daily lives through online content and activities, blending online faith formation with participation in a gathered program, providing online faith formation that can be experienced as parents or a whole family at home, and much more. (This is developed more fully in Chapter Seven.)

Strategy 1. Discovering God in Everyday Family Life

The first strategy explores how we can help families discover God and the sacred in the rhythms and practices of everyday life. This builds on the foundational conviction that God is truly present to us each day, and this presence is discovered in the fabric of our lives—our experiences, our relationships, and more; and that all humans are essentially spiritual beings. We do not have to "bring God" to families or "make" them spiritual; we help them discover the spiritual in their everyday life—recognize, understand, and respond to God's presence in their midst.

In her research on the spiritual lives of America's "Nones," Elizabeth Drescher conducted a small-scale survey that "made it clear that everyday experiences are the

core resources of spiritual narratives, even for those affiliated with traditional religious institutions" (44). Based on her research she developed what she calls "the 4Fs" of contemporary spirituality: Family, Friends, Food, and Fido. "People feel most connected to whatever they understand as God, the divine, a Higher Power when they're deeply engaged in the fabric of everyday life, spending time with family, with friends, preparing and sharing food, enjoying their pets" (43). Prayer was the only traditional spiritual practice that was seen as spiritually meaningful. It ranked fifth after the 4Fs.

When Drescher asked people to rank a list of spiritually meaningfully practices, the items that rank at the top of the list included: 1) enjoying time with family, 2) enjoying time with friends, 3) enjoying time with pets or other animals, 4) preparing and/or sharing food/meals, 5) praying, 6) enjoying nature, 7) listing to/playing music, 8) enjoying/creating art, 9) physical activity/sports, and 10) yoga and meditation. On the list of twenty-five items, the last three items were reading/studying scripture, attending worship, and attending a nonworship activity, event, or meeting at church (43).

Reflecting on the spirituality of the "Nones," she writes, "'Spirituality,' as it is variously articulated, moves throughout the lives of Nones as they craft stories that are (1) embedded in everyday life; (2) center primarily on relationships rather than individualistic pursuits or institutionalized rituals; and (3) are composed of practices focused on the integration of body, mind, and spirit. Over time, these stories make up the 'spiritual life'" (51).

From research and our own personal experiences, it is clear that meaning-making is rooted in everyday experiences: enjoying family and friends, pets, food, nature, music, art, and physical activity. These are activities and practices that people (religiously affiliated and unaffiliated) themselves identify as spiritually important experiences.

How can congregations help parents and the whole family discover God within their daily life and experiences? Here are two strategies that provide a way to reach and engage families of diverse spiritual–religious identities that can be designed for a number of environments: at home, at church, online, small groups, and more.

Discovering God in Daily Life Experiences

One process for guiding parents and the whole family in discovering and naming the sacred in their daily life experiences is the practice of the Examen from the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius Loyola. Tim and Sue Muldoon describe it in this way:

> There is an old form of Ignatian prayer known as the Examen, which is a kind of practice of reflection on one's past experiences, looking for places where one has felt God's presence. This prayer of awareness allows us the time to pause and recognize God even in the midst of difficult life situations. Over time, the practice of this prayer has helped us to notice how

God moves in our lives in small, often quiet ways, beneath the loud clang-
ing of the things that take our attention. We discover what is the starting
point for the spiritual life: the deep sense that our experiences really *mean*
something and that in reaching out toward the source and goal of that
meaning, we encounter God (19–20).

Here is an adapted version of the Examen for helping parents discover God in
their daily life.

1. *Become aware of God's presence.* Find a comfortable place where you can
    secure ten or fifteen quiet minutes. Close your eyes and relax your body.
2. *Review the events and experiences of the day with gratitude to understand how God is
    acting in your life.* Move through the day as if you were watching it on video.
3. *Pay attention to the feelings that your experiences evoke.* Ask what God is saying
    through these feelings.
4. *Choose one feature of the day, reflect upon it, and pray from it.* How are you dis-
    covering God in the midst of your daily life? Are you drawing closer to
    God or further away?
5. *Look toward tomorrow.* Ask God to give you light for tomorrow's challenges.

Here is an "Examen for Children" developed by Tim and Sue Muldoon.

1. Quiet the children before bedtime.
2. Ask them what made them happy over the past day.
3. Ask them what made them sad over the past day.
4. Ask them what they look forward to tomorrow.
5. Remind them to thank God for what made them happy, ask for God's help
    when they are sad, and pray for God's presence in the coming day (22).

FAITH5™ developed by Rich Melheim in his book *Holding Your Family Together*
provides another process that helps families discover the sacred in every day life. It
involves five steps.

1. Share the highs and lows of the day every night.
2. Read a key Bible verse or story every night.
3. Talk about how the Bible reading might relate to your highs and lows.
4. Pray for one another's highs and lows aloud every night.
5. Bless one another before turning out the lights of the day.

The Examen and FAITH5™ can be woven into the family's daily life at meal-
time or bedtime or family time each day. They can even be used with the whole
family in the car on their way to an activity.

Discovering God through photos is a visual approach to guiding families in dis-
covering God in daily life. One example of this in practice is "Picturing God: Faces
and Traces of the Divine," a photo blog on IgnatianSpirituality.com that shares a
photo every day of the people, places, and scenes where we find God's presence.

Picturing God helps us discover the grace of God in the ordinary and extraordinary moments of daily life, from a lone flower growing in a parking lot to sweeping mountain views on a hike. (Go to http://picturinggod.ignatianspirituality.com.) Imagine family members sharing a photo where they found God in their day and then use questions from the Examen to talk about the photo.

Discovering God in the Practices of Everyday Life

Everyday people engage in practices that have the potential of becoming spiritually significant and formative. In her book, *An Altar in the World*, Barbara Brown Taylor affirms the spiritual nature of the everyday activities of our lives. She writes that spirituality "may be the name for a longing—for more meaning, more feeling, more connection, more life. When I hear people talk about spirituality, that seems to be what they are describing. They know there is more to life than what meets the eye. They have drawn close to this 'More' in nature, in love, in art, in grief. They would be happy for someone to teach them how to spend more time in the presence of this deeper reality . . ." (xiv).

She observes that "the last place most people look is right under their feet, in the everyday activities, accidents, and encounters in their lives. . . . the reason so many of us cannot see the red X that marks the spot is because we are standing on it" (xiv—xv). One way to begin paying attention is to uncover the practices of everyday life:

> To make bread or love, to dig in the earth, to feed an animal or cook for a stranger—these activities require no extensive commentary, no lucid theology. All they require is someone willing to bend, reach, chop, stir. Most of these tasks are so full of pleasure that there is no need to complicate things by calling them holy. And yet these are the same activities that change lives, sometimes all at once and sometimes more slowly, the way dripping water changes stone. In a world where faith is often construed as a way of thinking, bodily practices remind the willing that faith is a way of life (xvi).

In *An Altar in the World*, Barbara Brown Taylor presents twelve practices that have the potential of becoming spiritually significant and formative for people—if we pay attention to them "under our feet." Each of these practices provides a pathway for guiding people to discover God in everyday life.

- The practice of waking up to God (vision).
- The practice of paying attention (reverence).
- The practice of wearing skin (incarnation).
- The practice of walking on the earth (groundedness).
- The practice of getting lost (wilderness).
- The practice of encountering others (community).

- The practice of living with purpose (vocation).
- The practice of saying no (sabbath).
- The practice of carrying water (physical labor).
- The practice of feeling pain (breakthrough).
- The practice of being present to God (prayer).
- The practice of pronouncing blessings (benediction).

In *Practicing Our Faith*, Dorothy Bass and a team of writers recover the importance of historic Christian practices for developing a way of life today: honoring the body, hospitality, household economics, saying yes and say no, keeping sabbath, testimony, discernment, shaping communities, forgiveness, healing, dying well, and singing our lives.

Christian practices are the ways by which we live the Christian way of life and deepen our relationship with God. Each practice addresses a basic area of human need and is something we learn from and do together with other people. "Each practice address fundamental human needs that appear in every life and every society—the need to learn, for example, or to gain material sustenance, know another person intimately, care for the earth, or encounter strangers without harm. These are things that all people—not just those who are Christian—do, so basic are they to who we are as human beings" (Bass and Briehl, 11).

Each practice has taken shape in Christian communities throughout the ages and around the world today. Participating in these practices is a way of responding through action to God's love for us. "Christian practices do more than address fundamental human needs and conditions; they also respond to God's active presence for the world in Jesus Christ by fostering care of the larger *oikos* of which we human beings are part, the household of the earth" (Bass, xvi).

In their book *On Our Way*, Bass and Briehl describe five characteristics of the way of life embodied in the Christian practices. "To embrace a way of life abundant requires us to be *attentive*. No one can live this way in isolation from others; life abundant depends upon and arises within life *together*. It does not lead into a fantasy future or purely spiritual realm but *into the real world*. There, Christians practice these practices not for our own sake but *for the good of all*, and not by our own power or vision but *in response to God*, whose own grace and call provide this way of life" (12).

How can we guide families in reflecting on their everyday practices? Here is a simple five-step process that guides parents and families in discovering God's active presence in the world through everyday life practices and explores their spiritual significance for living an abundant way of life. This process can be taught and experienced through congregational events and programs and made available at home through online experiences and resources. (To see the process in a family resource go to *Living Well: Christian Practices for Everyday Life*, available for free at http://www.lifelongfaith.com/faith-formation-in-christian-practices.html.)

1. *Yearning* taps into our hunger for living well by addressing a basic area of human need through the real-life stories of people seeking meaning and purpose for their lives through a particular practice.
2. *Reflecting* gives people an opportunity to become aware of how they experience the basic human need and hunger for the Christian practice in their own lives, and how they may already be living this practice.
3. *Exploring* presents the biblical teaching on the practice, how the practice addresses our basic need and hungers, and why the practice is important for living a Christian life.
4. *Living* provides people with a variety of ways to live the practice—activities, ideas, and strategies—that they can use to integrate each Christian practice into their daily life.
5. *Praying* offers God thanks and praise, asking for God's help in living a Christian way of life.

There are many ways that congregations can focus on Christian practices as a way to guide parents and families in discovering God in their everyday life and in nurturing a Christian way of life at home and in the world. Here are three ideas to help your congregation imagine how to implement this strategy.

A focus for the whole year
Make Christian practices a church-wide focus for the whole year through family or intergenerational learning, worship and preaching, service/mission, and more. Here's an example of a one-year plan that uses the Christian practices presented in *Living Well: Christian Practices for Everyday Life* (available for free at http://www.lifelongfaith.com/faith-formation-in-christian-practices.html.)

September: Caring for body
October: Celebrating life
November: Discernment
December: Eating well
January: Forgiving
February: Keeping the Sabbath
March: Managing household life
April: Praying
May: Reading the Bible
June: Transforming the world (serving, working for justice, caring for creation)

A focus for a season or a month
Make a Christian practice the focus of a season or individual months through all family or intergenerational learning, worship and preaching, and service/action. For example, during the Lenten season the congregation and family can focus on one or more practices that reflect the theology and liturgies of the season, such as forgiveness, discernment, prayer, or transforming the world.

A connection to worship and preaching
Connect the Sunday readings or themes and preaching to Christian practices. Offer faith formation programming to prepare families for the practice and guide their reflection upon the worship experience. Make resources and experiences available online to extend the learning and worship into family life.

Programming Ideas

The are variety of ways that congregations can incorporate the activities for discovering God in daily life and in the practices of everyday life. Consider the following ideas.

Embed and equip
Congregations can embed these processes into church life and programming— worship, learning, milestones, retreats, Christian initiation, preparation programs for marriage, baptism, first communion, and more. Consider embedding the "discovering God in daily life" processes into marriage preparation or embedding Christian practices, such as eating well and keeping the Sabbath, in first communion preparation.

Create and sponsor
Congregations can create new programming where parents and families can experience the processes and learn how to use them at home. Consider creating family or intergenerational programs that teach Christian practices in large group or small group settings. Consider creating immersion experiences where families can experience a practice first hand, such as hospitality at a homeless shelter or serving a meal at a soup kitchen or caring for creation by planting a garden.

Consider developing small groups for parents and/or families on a variety of themes from life centered to faith centered that meet in a variety of locations (homes, coffee shops, community centers, church) where people can experience the "discovering" activities in a small, welcoming environment. Small groups can include moms and dads groups, grandparent groups, interest or activity groups, discipleship or spiritual sharing groups, Bible study groups, support groups, service/ action groups, and more.

Equip and resource
Congregations can create or curate digital content that provides print, audio, and video resources for discovering God in daily life and in the practices of everyday life. Consider resources for practicing the Examen: http://www.ignatianspirituality.com/ ignatian–prayer/the–examen#examen–part–of–your–day or picturing God in photos: http://picturinggod.ignatianspirituality.com.

Connect with resources such as the *Spirituality and Practice* website, which seeks to encourage everyday spiritual practice as an integral part of individual and

community life. This website is filled with thousands of activities and resources. Of particular interest is the *Spiritual Practices Toolkit* that consists of more than 260 classic and informal spiritual practices: http://www.spiritualityandpractice.com/practices/features/view/27713/spiritual-practice-toolkit.

Connect and engage

Congregations can use the "discovering" activities for connecting with parents and families who are not involved in the congregation—the *Spirituals* and the *Unaffiliated*. Consider developing outreach programs in a community setting such as spiritual conversations in a café setting (see Lifetree Café: http://lifetreecafe.com), speaker series, worship experiences, courses, and workshops. Consider providing print, audio, and video resources and activities on a website or on social media platforms that connect to people's life issues. Consider inviting people into online communities where they can share their lives, have spiritual conversations, and experience the "discovering' activities.

Strategy 2. Forming Faith at Home through the Life Cycle

We know from research that the family is the primary way in which religious socializations occurs and that faith and values are transmitted. Richard Gaillardetz writes about the unique way in which faith is formed at home, pointing us to how faith is woven into the fabric of daily living.

> As virtue ethicists remind us, we do not become virtuous by memorizing rules or church maxims. We become virtuous by being engaged, at as many levels as possible, with other people who live the life of virtue. Gospel values are not passed on so much by explicit moral catechesis as by the way in which a set of values has shaped basic human interactions. And so it is with the Christian household. Basic gospel values are internalized through our most mundane domestic interactions. When our household members learn how decisions are made and conflicts resolved, how work gives way to healthy play, how household tasks are undertaken out of a sense of commitment to the welfare of others, how affection and encouragement dominate household interactions, how challenges, corrections and even discipline are engaged in ways that never demean but rather affirm the dignity of all—those household members are being schooled in the life of discipleship. They become a Christian virtue community.

Even if our current practice places the primary emphasis on the congregation's role, the family remains the most important community for faith nurture. What would it look like to view faith formation as a home activity, rather than

a congregational activity? What if the home was the primary environment for forming faith—empowered, resourced, and supported by the congregation? What if parents, grandparents, and other significant adults were the primary teachers—empowered, resourced, and supported by the congregation to share, practice, and mentor faith at home? This would be quite a shift in the way we do faith formation today. It would align congregational faith formation around the family. It would be transformational for families and for the whole faith community.

With this shift we can now envision a "curriculum for the home." The word *curriculum* is derived from the Latin verb *currere*, which means to run. In literal terms, a curriculum is a course to be run; it is a *journey*. A household faith formation curriculum is a journey of discipleship—a process of experiencing, learning, and practicing the Christian faith as parents, children, and the whole family seek to follow Jesus and his way in today's world.

First, the eight faith-forming processes provide the *content* of family faith formation at home through the experiences, activities, programs, and resources for growing faith at home in developmentally appropriate ways.

1. *Fostering caring relationships* within the family, across generations, and with other families/parents.
2. *Celebrating the church year seasons* and events through which families experience the story of faith.
3. *Celebrating rituals and milestones* that provide a way to experience God's love through significant moments in the family's life journey and faith journey.
4. *Learning the Christian tradition* (Trinity, Jesus, church, beliefs, morality and ethics), reflecting upon the tradition, integrating it into one's faith life, applying it to life today, and living its meaning in the world.
5. *Fostering a prayer life* (personal and communal) and being formed in the spiritual disciplines.
6. *Encountering God in the Bible*, and studying and interpreting the Bible—its message, its meaning, and its application to life today.
7. *Living the Christian mission in the world*—engaging in service to those in need, caring for God's creation, and working for justice.
8. *Worshipping God with the community of faith* by experiencing God's living presence through scripture, preaching, and Eucharist.

Second, the content of faith formation at home is developed in four settings—home, intergenerational, church life, and parents.

1. *Home: What are families doing to grow in faith and discipleship in each of the eight faith-forming processes?* This is the first step in designing a curriculum plan—building the content, experiences, and activities around the life of the family and describing what is happening at home when families are experiencing, sharing, practicing, and living their faith through the eight faith-forming processes.

2. *Intergenerational: How are families connected to the other generations at church?*
    This involves connecting the eight faith-forming processes to the intergen-
    erational life, events, and experiences of the faith community. This can be
    done in a number of ways such as developing intergenerational experiences
    at church that include family participation (worship, learning, service,
    social) and connecting what families are learning at home to intergenera-
    tional experiences at church, for example families can learn about worship
    and how to worship at home, experience Sunday worship with the faith
    community, and live the Sunday worship experience at home and in their
    daily lives.

3. *Church life: How are congregations empowering, resourcing, and supporting families
    to grow as disciples and practice their faith?* There are a variety of ways to do this
    but central to every idea is aligning church ministries and programming to
    focus on faith formation at home. Congregations can redesign church min-
    istries and programming to teach, model, and demonstrate faith-forming
    practices when families are gathered at church. Sunday worship, educa-
    tional programs, and seasonal church year events are significant opportuni-
    ties for families to experience the eight faith formation processes that can
    be extended into family life through resources that are available online at
    family faith formation website.

4. *Parents: How are congregations empowering, resourcing, and supporting parents as
    faith formers?* This can be done by providing 1) a variety of educational
    opportunities for parents (at church, in small groups of parents, and online
    through webinars, podcasts, video programs); 2) online information about
    healthy children/adolescent development and parenting practices (in print,
    audio, and video, links to online resource centers); 3) parent mentors or
    coaches (from "empty nest" parents and from the grandparent generation)
    beginning at baptism or at the start of school; and 4) support groups for
    parents for each stage of development (like a MOPS group—Mothers of
    Preschoolers, http://www.mops.org). See "Strategy 8: Empowering Par-
    ents and Grandparents" on page 202 for more information.

Third, the content and settings of the curriculum are planned in *developmen-
tally appropriate ways*, accommodated to the needs and interests of young children
(0–5), older children (6–10), young adolescents (11–14), older adolescents (15–18),
and emerging adults (19–29) *and* to the way young people think and assimilate
information and values at each life stage. In Chapter Five, Jolene Roehlkepartain
developed ten faith factors that help us understand how to form faith in young
people at each stage of life.

Use the eight forming processes (content), the four settings (home, intergen-
erational, church life, and parents), and developmentally appropriate ways to form
faith (young children, older children, younger adolescents, and older adolescents),
to create life-cycle specific faith formation for families to experience at home.

Use the ideas in the other seven strategies developed in this chapter to "program" the home curriculum: God in everyday life, milestones, seasonal events, Bible through the year, connecting families intergenerationally, developing family life, and empowering parents and grandparents.

The chart on page 170 (see Display 6.1) outlines how to design family faith formation at home integrating content and settings for each life stage: young children, older children, young adolescents, older adolescents, and emerging adults.

First, determine a life stage focus. Choose young children, older children, young adolescents, older adolescents, or emerging adults. Then for each of the eight faith-forming processes address the following questions.

- *Home:* What are families doing to grow in faith and discipleship?
- *Intergenerational:* How are families connected to the other generations at church?
- *Church:* How are congregations empowering, resourcing, and supporting families to grow as disciples and practice their faith?
- *Parents:* How are congregations empowering, resourcing, and supporting parents as faith formers?

Strategy 3. Forming Faith through Milestones

A milestone is a an action or event marking a significant change or stage in development. These life and faith markers can provide important times for engaging families when they are most open to change and growth. Milestones are significant moments in life's journey that provide the opportunity for families to experience God's love and grow in faith through events in the life of the church community and family life. Milestones faith formation provides a natural opportunity to create a partnership between the congregation and the home.

Milestones can come from the life of the family or the life of the congregation and Christian tradition. Some milestones are predictable (see Display 6.2 on page 171); others are unpredictable such as moving to a new home, getting a pet, the death of a pet, chronic or acute illness or injury, divorce, death of a loved one, leaving home, and more. These can also be opportunities for just-in-time faith formation with outreach to the family and resources online for them to access.

A milestones faith formation plan blends milestones from our Christian religious tradition (baptism, first communion, first Bible) and milestones from the life of the family (birth of child, start of school, graduation). Milestone faith formation provides a natural or organic way to promote the spiritual and faith growth of families and strengthen their engagement in the church community. It is also a way to reach families who are not engaged in the church community.

A milestones plan for church and home for the first three decades of life could be designed around events (see Display 6.2). Develop an annual calendar of milestone celebrations designating specific Sundays or months of the year for the milestone

DIPSLAY 6.I

Forming faith at home: A plan

Life stage focus (Choose young children, older children, young adolescents, older adolescents, or emerging adults.)

For each of the eight faith-forming processes address the following questions.

- *Home: What are families doing to grow in faith and discipleship?*
- *Intergenerational: How are families connected to the other generations at church?*
- *Church: How are congregations empowering, resourcing, and supporting families to grow as disciples and practice their faith?*
- *Parents: How are congregations empowering, resourcing, and supporting parents as faith formers?*

	Home	Inter-generational	Church	Parents
Caring relationships				
Celebrating seasons				
Celebrating rituals and milestones				
Learning the Christian tradition				
Praying and spiritual formation				
Reading the Bible				
Serving, working for justice, caring for creation				
Worshipping God with the faith community				

celebration. Preparation programs for a milestone also need to be included in this annual calendar. For information and resources on milestones faith formation, and milestone faith formation resources go to https://milestonesministry.org.

A milestone plan for church and home

Age	Milestone possibilities
Birth	Baptism
Young children (preschool)	Anniversary of baptism Bible storybook (children's Bible) Prayer Welcoming children to worship Entering school
Older children (elementary school)	Blessing of the backpacks (all ages) The Lord's Prayer Friendship First communion Bible presentation The Ten Commandments The Apostles' Creed
Middle school	Preparing for adolescence Relationships Religious identity Stewardship/money matters Sexuality
High school	Confirmation/Affirmation of faith Witness and gifts for ministry Mission trip/Service to others Driver's license Graduation
Emerging adult years	Leaving home (college, military, work) Graduating college Returning from college or military Establishing a new home Starting a new job Marriage

Five Elements

Milestone faith formation can be developed around five elements: *naming*, *equipping*, *blessing*, *gifting*, and *reinforcing*.

1. *Naming* the sacred and ordinary events that take place in daily life—beginnings, endings, transitions, achievements, failures, and rites of passage—and creating rituals and traditions that shape our identities and give us a sense of belonging to the family of Jesus Christ.
2. *Equipping* brings people together for learning, builds community, invites conversation, encourages storytelling, and provides information. A family or intergenerational learning program—at church or home or in the community—prepares the individual and the whole family for the milestone and for living faith at home.
3. *Blessing* the individual and marking the occasion in a worship service and in the home says that it is all about faith. God is present in all of daily life, making the ordinary sacred. Offer a prayer to bless the lives of those involved in the milestone moment: a prayer during worship for those participating in the milestone moment and a prayer at a small group or with family at home.
4. *Gifting* offers a tangible, visible item that serves as a reminder or symbol of the occasion being marked as well as a resource for the ongoing nurture of faith in daily life.
5. *Reinforcing* the milestone with a follow-up gathering of those involved in the milestone moment helps it gain deeper roots in the life of faith of those who participated.

It is important that each milestone include a family gathering (parents, children, grandparents) as a time to connect, learn, and pray together as well as to learn how to share, practice, and live faith at home. Sometimes this gathering is planned several weeks before the milestone celebration, and at other times it happens on the same day as the milestones celebration.

Example: Baptism Milestones Faith Formation

Here is an example of milestone faith formation for baptism that utilizes the five elements above—naming, equipping, blessing, gifting, and reinforcing—and incorporates the faith-forming processes—caring relationships, celebrating rituals, learning, praying, reading the Bible, serving, and worshipping together—at home and at church. This example can be adapted for every milestone.

Church
- *Mentors/Coaches:* New parents can enter into a mentoring relationship with a member of the congregation ("empty nest" parents or grandparents) who

will guide the new parents through the baptism process and the first years of establishing new family and faith traditions.

- *Parent preparation:* The content for parents can include preparing for baptism (theological enrichment), raising an infant/young children, and parenting for faith growth with young children. There are many ways to deliver this program content today: gathered programs, one-on-one mentoring, online programming (webinars, audio and video programs), small groups, and more.
- *Family gathering:* This is an opportunity for the whole family to gather for learning about baptism and for experiencing ways to grow in faith as a family at home—praying, reading the Bible, celebrating rituals and the church year seasons, and more.
- *Ritual:* A welcoming rite can be celebrated several weeks prior to the baptism so that the faith community becomes aware of the forthcoming baptism.
- *Intergenerational connection:* The church community can be involved in the baptism by writing letters of welcome to baptismal families, becoming prayer partners and circles of support for each baptismal candidate and their family, and creating faith chests for each newly baptized child with a variety of resources for the new child and family (see http://store.milestones ministry.org/product-p/fcmm.htm).
- *Celebration of baptism:* The baptism celebration can involve the family and congregation more fully by including siblings and family members in the preparation and celebration of the rite, creating a photo or video story of the baptism for the family, creating a "Book of Blessings" for family, friends, and the congregation to contribute words of welcome, support, and/or hopes and dreams for the child, and much more.
- *Reunion:* The congregation can host a reunion breakfast or dinner for families who have had children baptized in the past year. This practice could be extended as an annual event for all families until their children are five years old (or the start of school).
- *Baptismal anniversaries:* The congregation can celebrate baptismal anniversaries each month at Sunday worship with a special remembrance and blessing. On the anniversary of each baptism the congregation can send families a note of congratulations and a prayer ritual to renew baptismal promises.

Home

Congregations can develop a variety of resources for celebrating baptism at home and helping the family begin faith practices and traditions with young children through print, audio, and video content delivered online at the family faith formation website. Congregations can use social media (such as Facebook groups) to keep parents of young children connected to each other.

- *Caring relationships:* sharing stories; connecting children with grandparents and other adults; family time together (social and fun activities); starting a

tradition of reflecting on the day such as the FAITH5™ process—1) share the highs and lows of the day every night, 2) read a key Bible verse of story every night, 3) talk about how the Bible reading might relate to your highs and lows, 4) pray for one another's highs and lows aloud every night, and 5) bless one another before turning out the lights of the day.

- *Celebrating rituals:* baptism anniversaries (prayers, symbols—light, water, oil), marriage anniversaries, a home altar with baptism symbols, pictures, a Bible, as well as seasonal symbols such as an Advent wreath.
- *Learning:* children's storybooks with positive values and/or spiritual themes, music and video programs that teach positive values and/or spiritual themes.
- *Praying:* mealtime and bedtime prayers, first book of prayers and devotions.
- *Reading the Bible:* scripture readings and reflections on baptism, children's Bible storybook, children's Bible stories (music, video), Bible videos (*Veggie Tales, What's in the Bible,* and more).
- *Serving:* helping activities at home, caring for creation (planting a garden).
- *Worshipping together:* participating in Sunday worship as a family, reading the Sunday scriptures at home.

Milestones faith formation presents a great opportunity to connect with parents about their own faith journey (see "Strategy 1: Discovering God in Everyday Life" on page 159 for processes). Significant milestones and life transitions provide churches with "moments of return" when people who have not been involved in church life can return to the church for a ritual experience, family celebration, religious perspective on life's transitions, encouragement, and/or comfort and support. By maximizing these opportunities churches are nurturing people's faith *and* welcoming them back into the life of the faith community. Marriage, baptism, moments of sickness (personal, family, friends), the death of a loved one, and life decisions are all important milestones or life transitions that provide an excellent opportunity for "moments of return."

An Illustration of Milestones Faith Formation in Action

Here is a milestones faith formation case study from Westwood Lutheran Church in St. Louis Park, Minnesota. Their approach is a great illustration of how to implement milestones faith formation. The content reflects the Lutheran tradition, but as you will see their approach can serve as a model for any church. (For the complete plan go to "Rooted in Faith" at http://www.westwoodlutheran.org/Rootedinfaith.)

Milestones plan

Milestones are based on the promises made in baptism. They are intended to help support the faith development of both the individual child and the family. We focus on one milestone at each age/grade level but all are welcome to participate in the Milestone classes and celebrations.

Typically, Milestones represent the attainment of a new skill or developmental level. Learning to walk, tie your shoes, or drive a car are all developmental milestones in the faith life of a young person. Milestones are an extension of our promises made in baptism. Here at Westwood we use the term to denote a new understanding in the faith life of our children, youth, and families that we celebrate with the whole congregation. Milestone Ministry (see detail in Display 6.3) helps the entire congregation remember and keep their promises made in baptism.

DISPLAY 6.3

Milestone ministry at Westwood

Age	Milestone
Birth	Baptism
First year	Baptismal remembrance (gathering for newly baptized)
Toddlers	Creation (care for the world God made)
Preschool 1	Bible (receive a story Bible)
Preschool 2	Worship (proclaim Christ and help in worship)
Pre-K/K	Service (serve your neighbor as Jesus commanded)
1st grade	Lord's Prayer (learn about prayer)
2nd grade	First communion (share in the Lord's Supper)
3rd grade	Bible and God's story (receive a more age-appropriate Bible)
4th grade	Baptism (learn about Lutheran baptism)
5th grade	Ten Commandments (What do they really mean?)
6th grade	Apostles' Creed (What do Lutheran's believe?)
7th grade	Bible and God's story continues (receive a Bible with commentary and question)
8th grade	Elder wisdom (faith through the generations)
9th grade	Sexuality (sexuality as gift)
10th grade	Affirmation of baptism (public affirmation of promises)
11th grade	Vocation (live among God's people with care)
12th grade	Real world (tools for living on own, importance of faith)

Faith portfolio

Each year your child will have pieces of his/her faith journey that we will encourage you to keep in a binder. These will include milestone and education pieces and will be a snapshot of the journey your child has gone on at Westwood. We think it will be especially interesting for you and for them as they write their faith statements as a part of their affirmation of faith in confirmation.

Education programming

(Note: Milestones faith formation works together with the education program from birth to twelfth grade.)

Birth to kindergarten
- Baptism class: Offered monthly for families looking to have their child baptized. It is a wonderful opportunity to meet other families, hear about Westwood, and learn what it means to be Lutheran. Baptisms are typically held the second Sunday of the month.
- Toddler Joy School (16 months–3 years): The first class in our Sunday school series. This is a nonseparating class for parents and their child and lasts approximately an hour on Sunday mornings. Parents take turns reading the Bible story and leading a simple craft, if desired. There is also time for the toddlers to play and interact with each other (as well as time for parents to connect as the toddlers play); we generally open and close with music.
- Preschool 1 (3–4 years): Children enjoy age-appropriate worship in the classroom. Children are led through the basic stories in their new Bible story book, which they receive at the beginning of the year.
- Preschool 2 (4–5 years) and PreK/K (5–6 years): Children begin the hour with age-appropriate worship in the classroom. Children spend three to four weeks focusing on a Bible story, engaging it in a variety of ways through drama, art, games, and prayer. These same stories are simultaneously being studied by children in grades one through five.

First to sixth grade
- Rotation: First through fifth graders spend three to four weeks on a story (the same story as the four-year-olds and kindergarteners). They rotate each week to a different workshop: computers, drama, cinema, games, art, storytelling, and science to experience the story from a different perspective, engaging different senses and learning styles.
- Sixth grade pre-confirmation: Engage questions through the Re:Form curriculum. Learners look at questions such as: Was Jesus really human? Is the Bible true? Is divorce a sin? The discussions are very interactive and engaging for kids and adults.

Confirmation: seventh to tenth grade
- In confirmation youth will participate once a month in parent/student learning during the confirmation hour. We ask parents or guardians to join their children as they learn. Sermon conversations, retreats, large and small group gatherings, worship together, and service opportunities are all a part of confirmation curriculum.

  ○ 7th grade confirmation: Old Testament
  ○ 8th grade confirmation: New Testament
  ○ 9th grade confirmation: Luther's Small Catechism. Learners also choose a mentor to walk the last part of the confirmation journey with them.
  ○ 10th grade confirmation: Learners craft a faith statement and participate in an interview with staff in preparation for the Affirmation of Baptism celebration in worship.

Ninth to twelfth grade
- Engaging faithful conversations on Wednesday nights. This is done through small groups, sundaes on Wednesdays, and as we worship together. Youth are invited to be a part of trips, retreats and camps, and participate in Bible study and fellowship opportunities.

Guide to Developing a Milestones Plan

Here is a sample planning guide for developing a congregational plan for milestones faith formation. Use a chart (see Display 6.4 on page 178) to record you ideas.

1. Identify and describe the milestones at each stage of life.
2. Develop an annual calendar that designates specific Sundays or months of the year for each milestone celebration. Preparation programs for a milestone also need to be included in this annual calendar.
3. Use the five elements of milestones faith formation to develop the plan for each individual milestone: naming, equipping, blessing, gifting, and reinforcing
4. Develop *at church* and *at home* activities. Use the faith-forming processes—caring relationships, celebrating rituals, learning, praying, reading the Bible, serving, and worshipping together—to guide the development and/or selection of activities and resources.
5. Develop the parent formation/involvement activities for the milestone.
6. Schedule a family gathering (parents, children, grandparents) for the milestone as a time to connect, learn, and pray together as well as learn how to share, practice, and live faith at home. Sometimes this gathering is planned several weeks before the milestone celebration and at other times it happens on the same day as the milestones celebration.

A milestones faith formation plan

Age	Milestone	At church	At home	For parents
Young children				
Older children				
Young adolescents				
Older adolescents				
Emerging adults				

Examples of milestones resources

Burns, Jim and Jeremy Lee. *Pass It One: Building a Legacy of Faith for Your Children through Practical and Memorable Experiences.* Colorado Springs: David C. Cooke, 2015

Faith Stepping Stones. Faith Inkubators. (http://www.faithink.com)

Haynes, Brian. *Shift—What It Takes to Finally Reach Families Today.* Loveland: Group, 2009.

Keeley, Laura and Robert J. *Celebrating the Milestones of Faith: A Guide for Churches.* Grand Rapids: Faith Alive Christian Resources, 2009.

Milestones Ministry Modules. Milestones Ministry. (https://milestonesministry.org)

"Rooted in Faith." Westwood Lutheran Church, St. Louis Park, MN. (http://www.westwoodlutheran.org/Rootedinfaith)

Smith, Traci. *Seamless Faith: Simple Practices for Daily Family.* St. Louis: Chalice Press, 2015.

Strategy 4. Celebrating Seasonal Events through the Year

Calendar events and the feasts and seasons of the church year provide a natural rhythm to faith formation at home throughout the year. The seasonal celebrations through the year (calendar and church year) engage families in the intergenerational life of the church and/or wider community—building relationships across the ages through shared experiences. And they provide a natural way to connect church and home in faith formation. Consider some of the opportunities that occur each year. These are just illustrations. Add seasonal events that are particularly meaningful for your church and community (see Display 6.5).

Congregations can guide parents and families in discovering the spiritual significance of calendar year events—familiar to everyone and celebrated by many—by providing opportunities for faith formation developed specifically for each event. Congregations can celebrate calendar year events at church (Martin Luther King

---

DISPLAY 6.5

Calendar and church year events to celebrate

Calendar year	Church year feasts and seasons
• New Year's Eve and Day	• Advent
• Martin Luther King Jr. Day	• Christmas
• Valentine's Day	• Epiphany
• St. Patrick's Day	• Ash Wednesday
• Earth Day	• Lent
• Mother's Day	• Holy Week
• Memorial Day	• Easter
• Father's Day	• Pentecost
• Independence Day (July 4)	• St. Francis Day–Blessing the Animals (October 4)
• Labor Day	• All Saints and Souls (November 1–2)
• Start of school	
• Halloween	
• Thanksgiving	

Jr. prayer service and service projects), celebrate a ritual at church (Thanksgiving worship service), bless people on their special day (Mother's Day, Father's Day), develop resources for the home celebration, learning, and much more.

The feasts and seasons of the church year provide an organic and natural sequence of faith growth for families and the whole community. People grow in faith by experiencing the feasts and seasons of the church year that are rich in theology, ritual, and spiritual significance. Congregations can develop programs and activities—at church or home—that prepare families for participation in the feasts and seasons and guide their participation and reflection upon those events.

There is an abundance of print and digital products for celebrating the seasons of year, designing family learning programs around the seasons, and creating faith-forming experiences to be done at home that extend and deepen the church experience. A great example of online resources is from Illumination Learning, an online collection of Orthodox Christian resources for family-centered catechesis, which has a section devoted to seasonal resources: http://illumination-learning.com/main/connecting-church-home. For additional digital resources consult the seasonal resources on the www.curatingfaithformation.com website from Lifelong-Faith Associates.

Example: Lent with a Home—Church Connection

Let's take the example of the Lenten season from Ash Wednesday through Easter Sunday. Imagine providing a forty-day Lenten experience for the home that connects the theology and spirituality of Lent and the Lent events at church with home life through a variety of activities, which are delivered online through the congregation's faith formation website. The faith-forming processes provide a framework for designing at-home Lenten activities and resources, in particular celebrating rituals, learning, praying, reading the Bible, and serving and working for justice. The following example (see Display 6.6) can be adapted for other feasts and seasons of the church year.

Example: Earth Day with a Home—Church—Community Connection

Let's take the example of the celebration of Earth Day in April and use this event as an opportunity to connect home, church, and community. The following example (see Display 6.7) illustrates programs and activities in the community and at church in gathered settings with activities delivered to families online through the congregation's faith formation website.

Calendar year events, such as Earth Day, provide a way to engage in missional outreach to parents and families. Imagine hosting a blessing of the animals at church for the whole community on a weekend close to the Feast of St. Francis on October fourth.

A Lenten experience for church and home

Lent at church	Lent at home *(print, audio, video, online activities)*
• Ash Wednesday • Sunday worship • Scripture readings • Friday simple meals • Stations of the Cross • Lent service projects • Lent Bible study • Palm Sunday • Holy Thursday/Maundy Thursday • Good Friday • Easter Vigil/Easter Sunday	• Fasting activities • Praying daily through Lent • Serving (almsgiving) • Reflections on the Sunday readings and sermons • Daily Bible readings • Lent devotions • Lent study resources and videos • Lent children's activities

An Earth Day experience
for community, church, and home

Earth Day in the community	Earth Day at church	Earth Day at home
• Community cleanup • Planting a community garden • Planting trees in the community • All-ages workshop on caring for creation • Story time at the public library focused on environmental awareness books	• Ecumenical prayer service for caring for creation • Intergenerational program on the theological and biblical foundation of caring for creation • Church audit: energy use and creation-friendly practices • Adopting a global project to address the effects of climate change	• Recycling activities • Planting a family garden • Mealtime creation prayer • Daily Bible verses on caring for creation for April • Children's activities to explore and experience caring for creation • Storybooks and videos on caring for creation themes • House audit: energy use and creation-friendly practices

Example: Family Seasonal Celebrations

Sometimes it's not possible to involve the church and/or community in a seasonal celebration. Congregations can engage families in seasonal events—calendar year or church year—by developing family (or intergenerational) programs at church or in the community that immerse people in learning about and celebrating the seasonal event. Congregations can use the church's faith formation website and/or social media to deliver content and experiences, 24-7, directly to parents and the whole family at home as a follow-up to the family program/celebration or as stand-alone content for the family to use in celebrating the season at home.

One way to implement this idea is to develop four seasonal family gatherings or festivals—fall, winter, spring, and summer—and select an event within each season as a focus. To design the family gathering, review the intergenerational learning process in Strategy 6: Connecting Families Intergenerationally" on page 185.

Strategy 5. Encountering God in the Bible through the Year

Strategy 5 provides a way for families (and all ages) to encounter God in the Bible, study the Bible, and apply its message and meaning to life today. The first example builds on the scripture readings in Sunday worship; the second example illustrates a yearlong plan for exploring the Bible through family learning programs at church. Both examples begin with church-based experiences that then are extended into the home to deepen the family's understanding of the Bible and its application to daily life.

Example: Scripture in Sunday Worship

The first example for encountering God in the Bible through the year builds upon the pattern of scripture readings and/or themes that are integral to the worship life of the congregation. The *Revised Common Lectionary* and *Catholic Lectionary* provide a rich resource to build family faith formation with a three-year cycle of weekly readings from the Old Testament, Psalms, Epistles, and Gospels built around the seasons of the church year beginning in December with Advent. The *Narrative Lectionary* provides a second resource for family faith formation with its four-year cycle of readings from September through May—each year following the sweep of the biblical story, from creation through the early Christian church. Worship services and sermon series with multiweek themes provide a third resource to create family faith formation focused on a variety of themes rooted in the Bible.

This can be implemented in a number of ways. St. Elizabeth of Hungary Church in Acton, Massachusetts, offers monthly family-intergenerational learning that utilizes the *Catholic Lectionary* as its primary content (see http://www.

seoh.org/faith-formation/gift). Here is an example for a September through April plan developed around the readings in Cycle C (Luke) and Cycle A (Matthew) of the lectionary and focused on themes drawn from the scripture readings from the lectionary and/or from the events of the church year. (To design family-intergenerational learning, review the process in Strategy 6 on page 185.)

1. September: Stewardship (25th Sunday in Ordinary Time, Luke 16:19–31)
2. October: Pray Always (29th Sunday in Ordinary Time, Luke 18:1–8)
3. November: Last Things and Heaven (33rd Sunday in Ordinary Time, Luke 21:5–19)
4. December: Mary, Immaculate Conception (Luke 1:26–38)
5. January: The Baptism of the Lord (Matthew 13–17)
6. February: You Are the Salt of the Earth (5th Sunday in Ordinary Time, Matthew 5:13–16)
7. March: The Temptation of Jesus (First Sunday of Lent, Matthew 4:1–11)
8. April: Palm Sunday (Matthew 26:14–27)

Many churches engage in lectionary-based faith formation using the *Revised Common Lectionary* or *Catholic Lectionary* as a primary resource for learning. Most of these programs provide age-specific learning from children through adults; some even have family or multiage learning components. (For examples of lectionary-based resources see the resource list on page 184.)

Churches who do not use a lectionary-based approach often develop a thematic approach—drawn from life issues, popular culture, religious or biblical topics, or contemporary social issues—and create a multiweek sermon series that connects the theme with Biblical teachings.

Family faith formation at home is developed around the biblical content from Sunday worship whether it is lectionary-based or thematic. The key is to extend and deepen the experience of Sunday worship at home through experiences, practices, and resources. This includes providing a variety of age-appropriate and whole family digital content on the church's faith formation website. Determine a theme or topic that emerges from the scripture readings and make that the lens you use to select resources. A family faith formation plan can include the following elements, designed around the theme from Sunday worship:

1. Caring relationships: family conversation questions on the theme of the Sunday readings.
2. Celebrating seasons: activities for the church year feast or season (when appropriate).
3. Celebrating rituals: weekly table ritual.
4. Learning: a podcast or video of the sermon with a study guide for the parents, children's creative Bible activities, storybooks, video presenting the Bible story.

5. Praying: daily prayer, weekly family devotion.
6. Reading the Bible: short bible reading for each day of the week, online resources for studying the Bible (print, audio, video).
7. Serving/action: ideas for living the biblical teaching in the family or in the community.

Tri-Saints Lutheran in Hardy, Nebraska, provides weekly online faith formation for families and age groups centered in Sunday worship, the readings, and the sermon. Review their current Sunday worship plan at http://tri-saintsworship.weebly.com.

There are a variety of sources that provide digital resources—website content, blogs, podcasts, videos, and apps—for developing Bible-centered family faith formation at home. And many of these resources are free. For a list of digital resources consult the "Bible and Worship" resource listings on the www.curatingfaithformation.com website from LifelongFaith Associates.

Examples of Lectionary Resources
Living the Good News lectionary-based curriculum: https://www.livingthegoodnews.com
Feasting on the Word lectionary-based curriculum: http://www.feastingontheword.net/Curriculum/
Seasons of the Spirit lectionary-based curriculum: http://www.seasonsonline.ca
Spark lectionary-based curriculum: http://wearesparkhouse.org/kids/spark/lectionary/
Taking Faith Home: https://milestonesministry.org/taking-faith-home/
The Text This Week (all lectionaries): http://www.textweek.com
Working Preacher (RCL and Narrative lectionaries): https://www.workingpreacher.org

Example: Exploring the Bible

The second example for engaging families with the Bible is creating a yearlong family-intergenerational learning program—in a large group format or in small groups of families. This can be organized monthly, biweekly, or weekly. Each of the family-intergenerational themes and programs would be combined with online resources for continuing faith formation at home. The content of the program can focus on a tour of the Bible, individual books of the Bible, major themes in the Old Testament and New Testament, important and enduring stories in the Bible, and much more.

A yearlong "Tour of the Old Testament" could include sessions such as Navigating the Bible; God Creates—Book of Genesis; God Frees—Book of Exodus; God Teaches—Book of Deuteronomy; Messengers of God—Books of the Prophets (Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel); Praying to God—the Psalms.

A yearlong "People of the Old Testament" series could focus on Noah, Abraham, Joseph and his brothers, Moses, Samuel, David, and Ruth. A yearlong introduction to the New Testament could focus on understanding the four gospel

portraits of Jesus: life, teachings, actions, death and resurrection or exploring several of Paul's Letters: community he wrote for, key teachings, application to life today. There are lots of possibilities.

One example of a family-intergenerational resource on the Bible is the WE curriculum from Faith Alive with volumes on *The Tabernacle*, *The Epic Story*, and *The Unshakable Promise* (http://www.faithaliveresources.org/Pages/Item/58934/WE-Curriculum.aspx). For example, *WE: The Epic Story* includes ten intergenerational events that trace the narrative of God's big story from creation to new creation: creation, the fall, Abraham, the exodus, David, Jesus' birth, Jesus' ministry, Jesus' death and resurrection, the spread of the gospel, and the new heaven and new earth.

The at-home faith formation includes a variety of print, audio, video, and online resources to explore, experience, and apply the teaching from the family-intergenerational session. This can include similar content to the suggestions in "Example One: Scripture in Sunday Worship." The at-home resources might focus more directly on the Bible content through age-appropriate learning activities, family devotions, and conversations on the book of the Bible or Bible story or Bible teachings, and biblically focused prayer activities.

There is an abundance of Bible resources for creating at-home faith formation to deepen the learning from the church program: print (books and curriculum), audio/music, video (e.g., *What's in the Bible* video programs), and digital online content (much of which is free). For a list of digital resources consult the "Bible and Worship" resource listings on the www.curatingfaithformation.com website from LifelongFaith Associates.

Strategy 6. Connecting Families Intergenerationally

Participating in the intergenerational life and experiences of a congregation is an essential environment for developing discipleship and nurturing faith growth in parents and the whole family. The life of the Christian community is formative: feasts and seasons of the church year, Sunday worship, sacramental and ritual celebrations, holidays and holydays, works of justice and acts of service, times of prayer, spiritual traditions, and events that originate within the life and history of a individual congregation. All of the generations need to be engaged together in the life, ministries, and events of the church.

Through intergenerational participation Christian commitment is formed and strengthened as persons develop relationships and actively participate in a community that teaches, models, and lives out the community's beliefs. People learn the Christian way of life as they participate authentically and relationally with more experienced members of the community.

Intergenerational experiences strengthen and create new relationships among people of all ages, enhance their sense of belonging in the faith community, and

increase participation in church life. Intergenerational experiences provide "up close and personal" formation in faith as children, teens, young adults, middle-aged adults, and older adults engage in sharing faith, teaching, learning, serving, celebrating, and praying for one another.

An intentionally intergenerational congregation supports families by surrounding them with a community of faith and engaging the whole family in caring, celebrating, learning, praying, and serving together; and providing parents with opportunities to learn from Christians who are practicing their faith and raising faithful children. Participation in intergenerational experiences helps to develop the faith of parents and grandparents and increases their confidence and competence for engaging in faith practices at home. Intergenerational participation creates a shared experience, often missing from the everyday life of families.

Becoming Intentionally Intergenerational

Most congregations are multigenerational by membership. Some are *intentionally* intergenerational. They make their intergenerational character a defining feature of their community life, ministries, and faith formation. These churches make it a priority to foster intergenerational relationships, faith sharing, and storytelling; to incorporate all generations in worship; to develop service projects that involve all ages; and to engage all generations in learning together. For these churches, being intergenerational is a way of life. It is an integral element of their culture. It is who they are!

Conduct an *intergenerational audit* to analyze how well families are engaged intergenerationally in Sunday worship, community life events, ministries, programs, and activities. Identify strengths and the areas for development. Develop ideas for specific ways that the congregation can strengthen the intergenerational connection with families in existing ministries and programming *and* identify new ideas and projects that engage families with the other generations in the congregation. See Display 6.8 for a form to use.

For more ideas for intergenerational ministry and faith formation consult Chapter Five in *Generations Together: Caring, Praying, Learning, Celebrating, and Serving Faithfully* by Kathie Amidei, Jim Merhaut, and John Roberto (Naugatuck: LifelongFaith Associates, 2014) and the "Intergenerational" section of the Reimagine Faith Formation website: http://www.reimaginefaithformation.com/intergenerational.html.

Intergenerational and Family Learning

One of the best ways to connect the generations and engage the whole family in faith formation is intergenerational learning. We have already seen how intergenerational learning can be incorporated into Strategy 3—milestones, Strategy 4—seasonal events (church year and calendar year), and Strategy 5— Bible

DISPLAY 6.8

Intergenerational audit

Church life, ministries, and programming	Identify ways families are currently connected and engaged intergenerationally	Develop ways to strengthen current intergenerational connection and engagement	Create new ways to connect and engage families intergenerationally
Sunday worship			
Education			
Service, justice, care for creation			
Church year seasons			
Prayer life			
Social life			
Rituals and sacramental celebrations			

(Sunday worship and study of the Bible). Family-intergenerational learning can be incorporated into Strategy 7: Developing a Strong Family Life through programs such as family workshops (children, parents, grandparents) focused on family life topics and skills such as communication, technology use, family time, and more. Churches have also redesigned vacation Bible school to involve the whole family and multiple generations. And summer camps can offer camp programs that are designed for the whole family, as well as grandparent-grandchild camp experiences.

One model for family-intergenerational learning that is being used in churches in the United States and Canada incorporates four movements: 1) all ages learning, 2) in-depth whole family or intergenerational or age-specific learning, 3) intergenerational contributive experiences, and 4) reflection and application of learning. Here's an outline.

1. Welcome, community building, and opening prayer.
2. Part 1*: All-ages learning experience* for the whole assembly that introduces the theme or topic for the program.
3. Part 2: *In-depth learning experiences* that probe the theme or topic, organized for all ages (intergenerational) *or* for specific age groups (families with children or children-only, adolescents, young adults, and adults), and conducted in one of three formats:

    - Whole-group format: learning in small groups with the whole group assembled in one room (age specific or all ages small groups).
    - Age-group format: learning in separate, parallel groups organized by ages.
    - Learning activity center format: learning at self-directed or facilitated activity centers (age specific and/or all ages learning centers).

4. Part 3*: All-ages contributive learning* experience in which each generation teaches the other generations.
5. Part 4: *Reflection and application.*
6. Closing prayer.

Many of these churches have made the intergenerational curriculum the center of faith formation for all ages and teach the Christian faith (Trinity, Jesus, church, beliefs, morality and ethics, prayer and spirituality, and more) using the intergenerational learning model. To learn more about intergenerational learning consult *Intergenerational Faith Formation* by Mariette Martineau, Joan Weber, and Leif Kehrwald (New London: Twenty-Third, 2008). For case studies and program models of intergenerational learning go to: http://www.reimaginefaithformation.com/intergenerational.html.

A second model of family-intergeneration learning has been created by GenOn Ministries (www.genonministries.org) and includes weekly intergenerational experiences for children and/or youth that create an intentional arena where all ages can learn about and practice the art of Christian relationships. In these cross

generational gatherings, everyone eats together, plays together, studies together, and prays together. These four parts, plus weekly congregational worship, make up the whole, providing everyone involved a cross generational arena in which to have a complete, holistic experience of Christian nurture. In addition, young people also lead in congregational worship on a regular basis.

The four-part learning model includes:

1. *Bible study:* A time for each grade or a combination of grades to study the Bible as the model for Christ-centered living. Churches can use a nondenominational curriculum developed by GenOn for LOGOS or their own curriculum.
2. *Worship skills:* Choir, drama, bells, or other arts are rehearsed at LOGOS and then presented regularly in corporate worship. Each church decides the best fit with its own liturgy and worship style.
3. *Family time:* The shared meal is a time to gather regular "table families" of various ages who eat together each week for the entire program year. Kitchen teams prepare dinners that are served family style, using table settings and serving dishes practicing the art of serving one another.
4. *Recreation:* All have great fun in a cooperative atmosphere, often drawing on the hobbies and interests of adults in the congregation willing to share their passions on a one-time basis or longer.

A third model of family-intergeneration learning is Messy Church (http://www.messychurch.org.uk, http://messychurchaustralia.com.au) started in 2004 in the United Kingdom with a simple question: How can our small church reach the many families in our community? Messy Church was created for those outside the church and became church for them, not a stepping-stone to Sunday morning church. Messy Church is church for families who may not find other forms of church appealing and who don't yet belong to a church. There are now thousands of Messy Churches all around the world in most denominations.

A typical Messy Church meets monthly and includes four parts:

1. A flexible, relaxed arrival time with drinks and snacks.
2. Creative exploration of a Bible story or theme through many creative experiences for people of different learning styles and of all ages. Children and adults are not separated and are encouraged to explore the story or theme together.
3. A short but explicit time of worship with story, music, and prayers that builds on the creative exploration that has already occurred.
4. A generous welcome and hospitality is expressed through an invitation to share a delicious, home-cooked, sit-down meal with others.

The key values that define Messy Church are Christ-centeredness, creativity, and joyful celebration in a spirit of generous, inclusive hospitality. Messy Church tries to focus on people as they are and form relationships with whole families, no strings attached.

A fourth, emerging model is family-intergenerational vacation Bible school. Congregations have begun to rethink vacation Bible school, redesigning a child-only experience into a family or intergenerational experience. One approach to intergenerational VBS has all ages participating for three or four evenings in the summer with food, fun, music, learning, and games. The program incorporates typical VBS Bible content and interactive learning, but everything is intergenerational. A typical evening design (three hours) could look like this: registration, light meal, opening/music, Bible story, outdoor activity/inside craft, and snacks and closing. A second approach begins each evening with a family-style meal. Then the children participate in Bible stories and activities while the adults (parents, grandparents) participate in an adult-themed session. Families then reunite in the church for music and prayer to close the evening.

Family Faith Formation at Home

Intergenerational learning creates a shared experience among family members (and the all ages church community). Families are learning together, sharing faith, praying together, celebrating rituals and traditions, and being empowered to live as disciples in the world. Intergenerational learning experiences lead to family faith practice. Congregations can develop family resources specific to the program that can expand, deepen, and apply learning from the program at home. At home is where the learning really happens.

There is an abundance of faith formation resources on every faith theme that can be used for creating at-home faith formation: print (books and curriculum), podcasts, music, video, blogs, online games, apps, and website content (much of which is free). For a list of digital resources consult the www.curatingfaithformation.com website from LifelongFaith Associates.

Use the eight faith-forming processes as a framework for curating content specific to your program and tailored to your families: 1) Caring relationships and conversations, 2) Celebrating seasons, 3) Celebrating rituals, 4) Learning, 5) Praying, 6) Reading the Bible, 7) Serving, working for justice, caring for creation, and 8) Worshipping together at church.

Target the activities to the real lives of families so that they integrate easily into family life and schedules. Consider how activities can be used at meal times, car times, morning and bedtime, exits and entries from the home, family sharing times, waiting times (at games).

Make the activities available on a mobile-responsive faith formation website that can easily be accessed on a mobile device. Connect with families via social media to invite them to access the faith formation activities; invite them to share what they are learning and experiencing at home (comments, photos, video), and even join an online group of parents. Ask families to use their social networks to share content and experiences with other families. Use email, text, and social media

to guide families in using the at home content after an intergenerational learning program.

Intergenerational and Family Service

Intergenerational service engages people of all ages in working together to serve the poor and vulnerable, work for justice, be peacemakers, and care for creation. It connects families to other generations and engages the whole family in making a difference in the world. Intergenerational service provides benefits to individuals, families, and the whole church community.

- Intergenerational service helps narrow the generation gap between older and younger church members.
- Intergenerational service helps people grow spiritually as they pray for, give to, and do service together.
- Intergenerational service recognizes that all people in the church, regardless of age, have talents to contribute that are valuable and important.
- Intergenerational service assists children and youth in feeling a part of the church today not just the church of tomorrow.
- Intergenerational service appeals to busy families who want to spend more quality time together.
- Intergenerational service connects the generations and builds relationships as they serve God by serving their neighbor. It builds teamwork across the congregation.
- Intergenerational service communicates that it is the responsibility of all Christians, regardless of age, to serve people and work for justice as followers of Jesus Christ.

Eugene Roehlkepartain and Jenny Friedman offer a number of practical guidelines and suggestions for family service. They suggest the following:

1. Make the activities meaningful, so that every person, regardless of age, can contribute in a significant way.
2. Supply mentors or mentor families to individuals or families that have had little or no experience in service.
3. Offer various options to suit individuals and families with different ages, interests, time constraints, and locations.
4. Include preparation and reflection as part of any church–sponsored service activity.
5. Offer some simple "in-house" activities. Although some people are enthusiastic about and ready for community ministry, others may be more comfortable initially with simple service activities they can complete at the church.

6. Hold a service fair for all generations.
7. Provide service resources (books, media, websites) for families and all generations; include children's books that focus on caring for others.
8. Becoming a clearinghouse for local and global service opportunities.
9. Organize regular family and intergenerational service days and events.
10. Organize an annual family and/or intergenerational mission trip.
11. Celebrate what church members are already doing.

Congregations can offer a variety of developmentally appropriate service/mission projects that engage families with other families and/or with other generations and that allow families to choose from different levels of commitment from beginner experiences to advanced projects that are local, regional, national, and international. Here are some examples.

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

Each service/mission project includes a learning component that focuses on understanding the issue being addressed, exploring the teachings of scripture and tradition, developing the skills for mission and service, and then, upon completion of the project, reflecting upon the involvement. This means incorporating social analysis and theological reflection with action projects to guide people in developing a deeper understanding of the causes of injustice and the teachings of scripture and the Christian tradition. The process includes: 1) connecting to a social issue (experience)—how people are personally affected by an issue or how the issue affects others; 2) exploring the social issue (social analysis) to understand the causes and underlying factors that promote or sustain the issue; 3) reflecting upon the teachings of scripture and the Christian tradition (theological reflection) to develop a faith perspective on the social issue and how people of faith can address the issue; and 4) developing ways to address the issue (action) by working for social change and serving those in need as individuals, groups, communities, and/or organizations.

Families on a Mission, created by Jim Merhaut, is an example of a local mission experience to complement the usual long-distance mission trips that churches sponsor for teens and adults. The local emphasis helps a church fulfill its role of being a leaven for the community in which it is established. It strengthens the relationship

between the church and the poor and vulnerable members of the surrounding community, and promotes the church as a valuable resource in the community. The model gives parents and other adults an opportunity to mentor children and teens into the Christian life of service. It gives children and teens an opportunity to feel the power of making a significant difference in the lives of others. It gives local service agencies the opportunity to partner with a church that can provide much needed volunteer hours. And it gives the recipients of the service an opportunity to show the face of Christ to church members in a way that only they can do.

Families on a Mission is a three-day experience. All of the families meet in the morning at church to pray together, engage in a thematic icebreaker experience, and anticipate some key dynamics that would likely happen at the service sites. Families work each morning at agencies and organizations close to the church. Entire families offer service together—parents (grandparents) and children working side-by-side to serve the needs of poor and vulnerable members in the local community. In one church, families served at an educational facility offered for single mothers and their young children, provided recreational activities in a nursing home, and worked at a facility that serves children from families who have a member suffering from HIV/AIDS. After working at their individual service sites (where they serve all three days), the families return to the church to engage in two to three hours of service learning experiences. The families then depart to their homes for the evening.

An *annual church-wide service day* is a way to engage families with the whole faith community. An example of this type of church–wide involvement is Faith in Action Day sponsored by World Vision and Outreach, Inc. (www.putyour-faithinaction.org). This is a four-week, church-wide campaign that culminates on a Sunday where the entire congregation engages in service projects in and with the community. As an individual church or with churches in your area, select a local and global project already developed by a justice or service organization. Then develop an annual theme, such as poverty, care for creation, or peacemaking. Prepare the whole community for the service engagement, utilizing the resources developed by the partner organizations. Include 1) worship and prayer experiences focused on the particular theme or project; 2) educational sessions including social analysis of the issues and reflection on the teachings of scripture and the Christian tradition; 3) household activities on the theme or project such as prayers, learning resources, and action suggestions; 4) a website with the resources, activities, action projects, and features to allow people to share what they are doing; and 5) special presentations by experts on the issues and by people engaged in action on the issue.

Using the same design as the church–wide service day, a congregation can develop a *monthly service project* that addresses one particular need or issue (local and/or global) each month. Each month's project can include a short educational program of the topic, an action project, and reflection on the project. Themes for the service projects can correspond with calendar events and seasons as well as church year seasons. Examples include Back to School (September) and school kits

for students, Thanksgiving (November) and feeding the hungry, Lent (February or March) and serving the poor, and Earth Day (April) and caring for creation.

Service nights are simple, self-contained programs at church that feature five to ten service activity stations that engage all ages in doing a simple project for the benefit of someone or some group in need. At one station people might create greeting cards for the elderly or for sick church members. At another booth they might make blankets for a homeless shelter. At another booth they might bake cookies or make sandwiches for a soup kitchen. There are lots of ways to contribute to service organizations without having to leave your church building. Doing Good Together is an organization that promotes and supports family service. They publish a manual on how to organize a family service night. You can learn more about them and their family service night resources at www.doinggoodtogether.org.

One church offers a repeat opportunity every month for church members of all ages to participate in a simple service project. The church has partnered with a program called Feed My Starving Children (https://www.fmsc.org). Intergenerational groups gather monthly to pack food that will be shipped overseas by the charity. The simplicity of this experience would make it easy to build service learning around it, and it could be a very nonthreatening entry point for many people to get started on building their practice of Christian service.

Family–intergenerational service project ideas

There are so many ways to act on a particular need or issue. And there are so many people and organizations already engaged in transforming the world that will provide assistance in developing intergenerational service projects. The Internet provides easy access to ideas and organizations to assist you. Be sure to check with your denomination for ideas and recommendations. Below is a list of project ideas that are great candidates for intergenerational service. For suggestions on how to organize intergenerational service projects and more great ideas, check out the book *Doing Good Together: 101 Easy Meaningful Service Projects for Families, Schools, and Communities* by Jenny Friedman and Jolene Roehlkepartain (Minneapolis: Free Spirit Publishing, 2010).

Serving the poor and vulnerable
- Prepare and serve a meal at a soup kitchen or homeless shelter.
- Donate goods such as food for the local food bank, clothing, school kits for children, "personal essentials" for those at a homeless shelter, a toy collection at Christmas, gift packages for prisoners.
- Care for the elderly by visiting them at a convalescent home or senior citizen facility or doing chores and shopping.
- Build or repair homes.
- Support efforts to provide vaccines and medical care to the world's poor, such as provide mosquito nets for malaria prevention, immunizations against childhood disease, and HIV/AIDs treatment.

- Work with people who have disabling conditions.
- Conduct a church-wide or community-wide intergenerational fundraising project to (a) support the efforts of local and national groups who work directly with the poor, (b) adopt a community in another country by supporting them financially and learning about their culture and community life, (c) support organizations that are building schools and libraries for children in the poorest countries of the world by providing books and/or our money to purchase books for children.

Acting for justice to ensure the rights of all people
- Develop intergenerational justice teams to advocate for just policies and priorities that protect human life, promote human dignity, preserve God's creation, and build peace by (a) becoming familiar with pending legislation or proposals that affect people's basic needs, (b) writing advocacy letters or emails, (c) working with advocacy groups, (d) working with organizations that are changing the structures that promote injustice.
- Support organizations that are working for justice—locally, nationally, and internationally by promoting the purpose and activities of organizations, providing financial support, and volunteering time to work with the organization.
- Develop a program or campaign to educate people in your church or community about a particular justice issue.
- Hold a Fair Trade Festival to provide a way for members of the church community to buy fair trade products, such as coffee, chocolate, and crafts that benefit local producers in the developing world.

Working for peace
- Work to end the violence of human trafficking of children by working with organizations seeking to shut down trafficking rings and providing support for the victims.
- Address violence in the media through a church-wide or community-wide campaign that encourages not purchasing and/or abstaining or limiting exposure to violent TV shows, movies, video games, and toys.
- Sponsor an intergenerational community-wide peace festival, working with organizations that seek to build bridges of understanding among people.

Caring for creation
- Conduct an campaign to educate and raise funds to adopt a piece of the planet through the Nature Conservatory's "Adopt an Acre" and "Rescue the Reef" programs, and the Rainforest Alliance's "Adopt-a-Rainforest" program; or protect endangered species and their habitats through the World Wildlife Fund's projects.
- Sponsor a community-wide "care for the environment day" by planting trees in your community and cleaning up the community.

Strategy 7: Developing a Strong Family Life

Family faith formation strengthens family life by developing the assets/strengths and skills for healthy family life and providing a supportive context for forming faith, living the Christian faith, and promoting positive development in children and youth. A strong family life provides the supportive context for forming faith and living the Christian faith. There are two elements of a strong family life: the first is developing assets or strengths as a family; the second is promoting character strengths in young people through developmental relationships. Two studies from the Search Institute provide research-based understandings for building a strong family life together.

Family Assets

There are family assets or strengths that help all kinds of families become strong. These assets help to keep youth safe, help each other learn and pursue their deep interests, create opportunities to connect with others, teach youth to make good decisions, foster positive identity and values, nurture spiritual development, build social-emotional skills, and encourage healthy life habits. There are twenty-one identified "Family Assets" that contribute to building a healthy and strong family life. When families have more of these research-based assets, the children, adolescents, and adults in the family do better in life. The twenty-one family assets discovered through the Search Institute's research are organized into five categories:

Nurturing relationships
- Positive communication—Family members listen attentively and speak in respectful ways.
- Affection—Family members regularly show warmth to each other.
- Emotional openness—Family members can be themselves and are comfortable sharing their feelings.
- Support for sparks—Family members encourage each other in pursuing their talents and interests.

Establishing routines
- Family meals—Family members eat meals together most days in a typical week.
- Shared activities—Family members regularly spend time doing everyday activities together.
- Meaningful traditions—Holidays, rituals, and celebrations are part of family life.
- Dependability—Family members know what to expect from one another day-to-day.

Maintaining expectations
- Openness about tough topics—Family members openly discuss sensitive issues, such as sex and substance use.
- Fair rules—Family rules and consequences are reasonable.
- Defined boundaries—The family sets limits on what young people can do and how they spend their time.
- Clear expectations—The family openly articulates its expectations for young people.
- Contributions to family—Family members help meet each other's needs and share in getting things done.

Adapting to challenges
- Management of daily commitments—Family members effectively navigate competing activities and expectations at home, school, and work.
- Adaptability—The family adapts well when faced with changes.
- Problem solving—Family members work together to solve problems and deal with challenges.
- Democratic decision making—Family members have a say in decisions that affect the family.

Connecting to community
- Neighborhood cohesion—Neighbors look out for one another.
- Relationships with others—Family members feel close to teachers, coaches, and others in the community.
- Enriching activities—Family members participate in programs and activities that deepen their lives.
- Supportive resources—Family members have people and places in the community they can turn to for help (*The American Family Assets Study*).

Developmental Relationships

Developmental relationships are close connections through which young people develop the character strengths to discover who they are, gain the ability to shape their own lives, and learn how to interact with and contribute to others. The Search Institute identified five key actions that promote healthy development, each of which is described from the perspective of a young person.

Express care: Show that you like me and want the best for me.
- Be present—Pay attention when you are with me.
- Be warm—Let me know that you like being with me and express positive feelings toward me.
- Invest—Commit time and energy to doing things for and with me.
- Show interest—Make it a priority to understand who I am and what I care about.
- Be dependable—Be someone I can count on and trust.

Challenge growth: Insist that I try to continuously improve.
- Inspire—Help me see future possibilities for myself.
- Expect—Make it clear that you want me to live up to my potential.
- Stretch—Recognize my thoughts and abilities while also pushing me to strengthen them.
- Limit—Hold me accountable for appropriate boundaries and rules.

Provide support: Help me complete tasks and achieve goals.
- Encourage—Praise my efforts and achievements.
- Guide—Provide practical assistance and feedback to help me learn.
- Model—Be an example I can learn from and admire.
- Advocate—Stand up for me when I need it.

Share power: Hear my voice and let me share in making decisions.
- Respect—Take me seriously and treat me fairly.
- Give voice—Ask for and listen to my opinions and consider them when you make decisions.
- Respond—Understand and adjust to my needs, interests, and abilities.
- Collaborate—Work with me to accomplish goals and solve problems.

Expand possibilities: Expand my horizons and connect me to opportunities.
- Explore—Expose me to new ideas, experiences, and places.
- Connect—Introduce me to people who can help me grow.
- Navigate—Help me work through barriers that could stop me from achieving my goals (*Don't Forget the Families: The Missing Piece in America's Effort to Help All Children Succeed*).

The Search Institute found that one of the most powerful things parents in all circumstances and from all backgrounds can do for children and youth is to build and maintain a strong relationship with them. That is not always easy, but intentional investment in relationships with their young people is one of the most important ways parents help their children develop the strengths they need to be their best in school and life.

Think about how your congregation and community currently equips, supports, and partners with families, and imagine how you could in the future.

- To what extent do we *express care* with the families in our congregations and communities, including listening to them, showing interest in their lives, and investing in them?
- In what ways do we *challenge growth* in families by expecting them to live up to their potential and helping them learn from their mistakes?
- How do we *provide support* and advocacy when families really need it?
- How do we *share power* with families, treating them as true partners by giving them voice in things that matter to them and collaborating with them to solve problems and reach goals?

- How do we encourage families to *expand possibilities* by connecting them with other people, ideas, and opportunities to help them grow?

Create a Family Life Plan for Each Life Cycle Stage

How can congregations equip, resource, and support parents and families at home to cultivate a strong family life and strengthen developmental relationships?

Congregations can play an important role in building family assets. Congregations can utilize the family assets and developmental relationships as the framework for working with families to develop their strengths, build skills, and promote the positive growth of young people. The content of a congregational plan is built upon the research from the Search Institute—the twenty-one family assets and the five key characteristics of developmental relationships. A congregational plan for developing strong families connects programming at church or in the community with at-home activities and resources.

A congregational plan should include partnering with other congregations, schools, and community organizations in a collaborative effort to build strong families in the community. In every community there are congregations, schools, and community organizations who share a common commitment to building strong families, and have programs and resources that can be utilized to implement a shared plan for working with parents and families.

In *Don't Forget the Families: The Missing Piece in America's Effort to Help All Children Succeed*, the Search Institute reminds us that six shifts are needed in the approaches taken to recognize and engage with families as important actors and full partners in developing strong family life and nurturing key character strengths in young people. Our plans need to include:

1. Listening first to families rather than just developing and sending messages that don't resonate or motivate.
2. Focusing on building relationships with families, rather than only providing programs.
3. Highlighting families' strengths, even amid challenges, rather than adopting and designing approaches based on negative stereotypes.
4. Encouraging families to experiment with new practices that fit their lives, rather than giving them expert advice on what they need to do.
5. Emphasizing parenting as a relationship more than a set of techniques.
6. Broadening coalitions focused on young people's success to actively engage families as a focal point for strengthening developmental relationships

Using the content of the Family Assets and Developmental Relationships, congregations can curate and create developmentally appropriate programs, activities, and resources for young children, older children, young adolescents, and older adolescents. The ideas that follow—family website, parent programs, family programs, family mentors, and life cycle support groups for parents, and the resources in your

congregation and community—can become essential elements of a congregational plan for developing the assets/strengths and skills for healthy family life.

Family website

An online family website can provide parents and the whole family with activities to use at home: print, audio, video, apps, games, links to selected family and parent websites, and more. The website can also extend learning from a gathered program into everyday family life and parenting. For a great example of a parent/family website with a variety of media resources designed around the developmental relationships go to ParentFurther at http://www.parentfurther.com. An example of a parent/family website targeted to one life stage is Zero to Three: http://www.zerotothree.org.

Parent programs

In gathered settings (large group or small group) or online (webinars, online courses, video programs), parent programs can be created and curated to equip parents with the knowledge and skills for building strong families and strengthening developmental relationships. For example, the Search Institute offers six one-hour interactive sessions for parents of young adolescents that can be offered on a schedule that works for the sponsor (and parents). Between each session parents engage in relationship-building activities with their middle schoolers. The six sessions include: 1) the power of parent-teen relationships, 2) learn and talk about family priorities, 3) strengthen relationships, 4) prepare for the future, 5) goal setting, and 6) expand your child's web of relationships. This type of course could be developed for the other three stages of the life cycle. (For more information about the Search Institute program go to: http://www.parentfurther.com/content/keep-connected-program. For videos programs for parents from the Search Institute go to: http://www.parentfurther.com/content/workshops-webinars.

Parent programs can be incorporated into congregational events and programs that already engage parents, such as parent preparation programs for baptism, first communion, or confirmation. They can be incorporated into the celebration of milestones (see "Strategy 3: Forming Faith through Milestones" on page 169). They can also be offered at the beginning of each life stage transition: birth, start of grade school, start of middle school, start of high school, graduation from high school.

Family programs

In gathered settings or at home, family programs can engage the whole family (parent-child, parent-teen) in developing family life skills. Congregations can sponsor family workshops throughout the year (perhaps in partnership with other congregations or community organizations) using the content in the Family Assets and Developmental Relationships. For example:

- Communicating effectively.
- Establishing family routines: family meals, shared activities, daily commitments.

- Celebrating meaningful traditions and rituals.
- Discussing tough topics.
- Making decisions and solving problems as a family.
- Learning how to build strong relationships and express care for each other.
- Developing the strengths and potential of children and youth.
- Supporting each other: encouraging and praising, giving feedback, standing up for each other.
- Treating each with respect and dignity.

Another example of a program that builds assets and relationships at home is reading books, using a list developed by Search Institute and First Book, as a fun way for parents and kids to grow stronger as a family. A list of curated books is available online with a free, downloadable guide for each book. Each guide has questions and activities to help the family explore their strengths. The books all tie to Search Institute's research on family strengths and relationships. They are organized into the following topics. Go to the ParentFurther website for the program http://www.parentfurther.com/content/build-strong-families-stories.

- Express care
- Provide support
- Challenge growth
- Expand possibilities
- Share power
- Create routines and traditions
- Connect to your community

Family programs can be built around film festivals with movies selected for their positive messages about family life or growing up. In addition to viewing the movie, there can be family discussion of the movie, skills development, and lots of popcorn. An example of a movie that provides a foundation for follow-up activities is Disney/Pixar's *Inside Out* about the emotional life of child growing up. There are lots more. To select movies for the film festivals check out reviews at: Common Sense Media (https://www.commonsensemedia.org), Pauline Center for Media Studies (http://media.pauline.org), Spirituality and Practice (http://www.spiritualityandpractice.com/films), and Visual Parables (http://www.readthespirit.com/visual-parables).

Family mentors

Family mentors can provide guidance and support for parents and the whole family at each stage of life. Every congregation has mentor resources in the grandparent generation, those who are actively engaged in church and bring decades of parenting and family life experiences. Congregations can identify and provide training for mentors (mentoring skills, understanding today's family, learning how to access online resources and activities, and more). Developing relationships between

parents and mentors can begin with birth/baptism. Mentoring can be life cycle specific—mentors who focus on children or adolescents.

Life cycle support groups for parents

Support groups for parents—in gathered settings (church, home, community) and in online groups (such as a Facebook parents group)—provide opportunities for parents with children in the same age group to talk about parenting, get information and encouragement, discuss family life issues and challenges, and more. Congregations can also sponsor support groups for divorced parents, parents in blended families, parents of children with special needs, and other affinity groupings. An example of a life cycle support group is MOPS (Mothers of Preschoolers). Go to their website to learn more: http://www.mops.org.

Strategy 8. Empowering Parents and Grandparents

Parents (and grandparents) are the most important social and religious influence on their children, adolescents, and emerging adults. The faith of parents and grandparents, their role modeling, their teaching, and their warm and affirming parenting style are key factors in religious transmission and developing highly religious children, youth, and young adults. We know from research studies that the religious tradition of parents, their religious involvement, and whether the parents were of the same religious faith at marriage have a huge impact on how a faith tradition is transmitted to the next generation. Parental behaviors influence religious development through "role modeling"—what parents do in setting examples for religious practice and belief, such as attending church regularly, participating in church activities, and encouraging faith development at home through prayers, scripture reading, and religious stories. It is important that parents show consistency between belief and practice: "walking the walk and not just talking the talk" (Bengston, et al., 185).

Grandparents and great-grandparents are having an increasing influence on religious transmission, support, and socialization. One way they do this is by reinforcing or accentuating parents' religious socialization. A second way is by providing, replacing, or substituting for parents' religious socialization by becoming the moral and religious models and teachers for their grandchildren (Bengston, et al., 185).

Congregations can empower parents and grandparents to be *faith formers* of young people in three interrelated ways: 1) promoting their growth in faith, 2) teaching the skills for parenting for faith growth, and 3) developing their competence and confidence as parents. We explore relevant research in these three areas that can inform the creation and curation of programs, activities, and resources for parents and grandparents. We conclude with practical ideas for bringing these three ways to live in a congregation.

Promoting the Faith Growth of Parents

Congregations can promote the growth of parents/grandparents in faith and discipleship and the practice of a vital and informed Christian faith. Parents who possess and practice a vital and informed Christian faith have a huge impact on the faith of their young people. A strong, vital, mature faith in parents is one of the most important contributors to nurturing sons and daughters of vital, committed Christian faith.

In the "Study of Exemplary Congregations in Youth Ministry," reported in the *Spirit and Culture of Youth Ministry*, young people of mature Christian faith had parents who were committed to Jesus Christ, experienced the presence of God in their daily lives and relationships with others, had a faith that helped them decide what is right or wrong, and took responsibility for serving those in need. Parents in the study sought out opportunities to grow spiritually.

The "Study of Exemplary Congregations in Youth Ministry" found that parents rated the following characteristics of the Christian faith as highly important to them (ranked in order). These findings could easily become topics in a formation program for promoting the faith growth of parents and grandparents.

1. My faith helps me know right from wrong.
2. I have a sense of sharing in a great purpose.
3. I have had feelings of being in the presence of God.
4. I have a sense of being saved in Christ.
5. I am spiritually moved by the beauty of God's creation.
6. God helps me decide what is right or wrong behavior.
7. I have found a way of life that gives me direction.
8. Religious faith is important in my life.
9. My life is committed to Jesus Christ.
10. My life is filled with meaning and purpose.
11. I have a real sense that God is guiding me.
12. I feel God's presence in my relationships with other people.
13. I seek out opportunities to help me grow spiritually.
14. I try to apply my faith to political and social issues.
15. I talk with other people about my faith.
16. I give significant portions of time and money to help other people (Martinson, et al., 174).

The overwhelming majority of these parents were involved in spiritual support groups in their churches. They reported that they belonged to at least one church group in which others will pray with them and for them as needed; in at least one church group in which they can talk about spiritual issues; and in at least one church group in which it is possible to talk about personal problems (Martinson, et al., 174–75).

The challenge today is the dramatic changes in the spiritual–religious identities of parents (see Chapter Two). We know from research that Generation X and Millennial parents reflect an increasing diversity in religious beliefs, practices, and affiliation. A growing number of parents and whole families are now religiously unaffiliated and/or spiritual but not religious. Twenty-three percent of Generation Xers and more than 34 percent of Millennials are not religiously affiliated and the number of unaffiliated Millennials is growing. We know that families of Generation X and Millennial parents are participating less in church life and Sunday worship. Parents may bring their young people to educational programs and milestone celebrations (first communion, confirmation), but they are not participating in Sunday worship or other church activities. Religion and spirituality may be important to families today, but for many it is not usually expressed by participation in churches.

We now see that the first generations of not religiously affiliated parents (Generation X and Millennial) are raising their children to become the second generation of not religiously affiliated. Families can transmit the importance of religion—the Christian faith and practices, and belonging to a church community—but they can also transmit nonaffiliation and how religion and faith are not important in daily life. What we are seeing today is large numbers of parents transmitting nonaffiliation. As the number of "Nones" grows among the younger generations, we can expect this trend to continue.

Promoting the faith growth of parents needs to begin with their spiritual–religious identities. We can identify at least four spiritual–religious types of parents. Each will need spiritual and theological formation tailored to their spiritual–religious identities and their religious-spiritual needs and hungers. Their formation will need to be personalized with different content and experiences that address their needs, interests, and hungers.

- The *Engaged* are parents for whom faith is central to their lives, who are transmitting this faith to their children and are actively engaged as a family in a church community. They are spiritually committed and growing in their faith.
- The *Occasionals* are parents who participate only occasionally in church life and for whom transmitting a religious faith primarily means bringing their children to educational programs at church. Some may even attend worship regularly. Their spiritual commitment is low and their connection to the church is more social and utilitarian than spiritual. While receptive to an established church, these parents/families do not have a faith commitment that would make their relationship with God and participation in a faith community a priority in their lives. Their occasional engagement in church life does not lead them toward spiritual commitment.
- The *Spirituals* are parents who identify themselves as spiritual, and even Christian and practicing their Christian faith, but with no connection to a

church community. They identify themselves as spiritual—they pray, read the Bible, serve others—but don't identify themselves as Christian necessarily. They may be searching for God and the spiritual life, but are not affiliated with organized religion and an established Christian tradition. These parents may involve their children in educational programs and vacation Bible school sponsored by a church.

• The *Unaffiilated* are parents who are nonaffiliated and for whom religion and spirituality are not important elements of their family life. They may believe in God (most "Nones" do), but religious faith or spiritual practices are not present in their family life. It is not only the parents who are not affiliated, the whole family is not affiliated. They tend to reject all forms of organized religion.

In her book *Losing Our Religion: How Unaffiliated Parents Are Raising their Children*, Christel Manning provides more insight into the world of the *Spirituals* and *Unaffiliated* and how they are raising their children religiously. She identifies five different ways that parents incorporate religion in the lives of their children. (See Chapter Three for more information.)

1. *Nonprovision:* These are parents who do not incorporate religion into their children's lives. They do not intentionally include religion or spirituality in the home life or enroll the child in institutional religious education programs.

2. *Outsourcing:* These are parents who rely on other people to incorporate religion into their children's life. They do not intentionally incorporate religion or spirituality in the home, but do enroll the child in a formal program. They are not members of a religious institution.

3. *Self-provision:* These are parents who try to incorporate religion into their children's upbringing without institutional support, do not enroll the child in a formal religious education program, and intentionally incorporate religion or spirituality into home (talk to child about God or higher power, pray or meditate with child, read religious stories).

4. *Alternative:* These are parents who were unaffiliated before they had children and reported searching for and eventually affiliating with an organization that welcomes doubters and the nonreligious. They enroll their child in programs that teach children about many different religions and intentionally incorporate religion/spirituality in the home from a variety of traditions.

5. *Traditional:* Some unaffiliated parents return to the religion they were raised in, enroll their child in a conventional religious education program, and incorporate religion in the home (Manning 2013, 13–19).

Manning found that in most cases, there was a great deal of consistency between the parents' religious or secular identity and how they raised their children. She observes, "The fact that most parents in the study took steps to incorporate religion into the lives of their children is surprising only if we take None to mean the

absence of any religious, spiritual, or philosophical worldview. Once we discover the more substantive dimensions of unaffiliated parents' worldviews, we see that they transmit those beliefs and practices to their children much as affiliated parents do" (Manning 2013, 19).

The five approaches to how unaffiliated parents are raising their children religiously provides a much need understanding of what drives parents to engage (or not to engage) their children in religious education and congregational life. This new understanding calls congregations to be cognizant of parent motivations as they communicate with parents, assess current programming, and design new initiatives to reach and engage parents.

This more complex and nuanced portrait of religiosity calls upon congregations to create parent formation that is responsive to the needs, interests, and concerns of parents and families in each of the four spiritual-religious types—*Engaged, Occasional, Spiritual, Unaffiliated*. There is no one-size-fits-all model of parent faith formation that will work today.

Developing Faith-forming Skills

Congregations equip parents and grandparents with the knowledge and skills necessary for faith-forming—learning how to transmit faith and values to children, becoming a Christian role model for children and adolescents, and building a community of faith at home that nurtures faith growth in the young.

Parenting and spirituality

In *The Spiritual Child* Lisa Miller identifies key findings from the growing body of research (including her own) on parenting and spirituality that can inform how we equip parents as faith formers of their children.

- A parent, grandparent, or other spiritually engaged, loving adult is equally capable of transmitting spirituality and religion to a child. The transmission comes through the child's sense of parental love and transcendent love (some call it God's love) mixed together as one felt experience.
- The intergenerational transmission of spirituality is passed through its practice, whether in personal prayer, religious observance, or other spiritual practice: an ongoing shared awareness of spiritual presence in the world. The child sees the parents' experience of spirituality and then follows suit, while being immersed in the love of the parent.
- The parent living out spiritual values and morality together with the children guides the intergenerational transmission of lived spirituality and spiritual values. This is spirituality put into action, with care, respect, moral courage, and compassion.
- Components of intergenerational transmission of spirituality are often held in religion—through family prayer, attending services or holidays together, and other religious practices, for instance. However, they can

exist and do exist outside of religion, when the spiritual value or spiritual presence in living is clear and spiritual life is made apparent by parents.

• The intergenerational transmission of spirituality is more protective than anything else against alcohol, depression, and risk taking for children.

The common thread through all of these is a child's experience of a parent's unconditional love and spiritual values together embodied in everyday interactions. This means the parent represents or acknowledges the transcendent relationship and provides a spiritual road map for living, along with a spiritual compass for doing the right thing. Intergenerational transmission of spirituality works because the child's experience and guidebook to spirituality is taught through the parent-child relationship. A child's innate natural spirituality becomes a powerful lifelong capacity through the unconditional love of the parent-child relationship (Miller, 89–90).

Parenting style

Reinforcing this view of the role of the parent and grandparent in transmitting spirituality and faith is the research on the influence of parenting style. We know from research that parents who are warm and affirming are more likely to have children who follow their religious preferences. This points to the importance of parenting style for faith transmission. Research indicates that an *authoritative-communicative parenting style* seems best suited to promoting faith transmission and nurturing faith growth.

After reviewing research studies on parenting styles and children's spirituality, Sungwon Kim summarizes the impact of parents in this way:

A variety of parental factors—religiosity, God-concept, the parent-child relationship, parenting styles, and discipline styles—influence children's spirituality, religiosity, and God-concept. Concerning the parent-child relationship, parental love, support, care, and acceptance are always required for children's healthy spiritual growth. Several studies, however, showed varying results regarding parental discipline. Two key factors the research identifies are the motivation and manner of discipline. Love-oriented discipline (verse power- or punishment-oriented discipline) appears to be most helpful for the children's spiritual development. The affectionate constraint style, also known as the authoritative style, results in the most positive spiritual outcomes in children (244–45).

The parenting style that exhibits most nearly the balance between love and control is the authoritative style. Authoritative parents communicate to their children in a respectful and rational manner; the children are accepted and respected by parents. The parents value both autonomous self-will and discipline conformity; they affirm the child's present qualities but also set standards for future conduct. In sum, authoritative parents are loving and supportive, while offering and enforcing appropriate

boundaries and guidelines. Recent research suggests that the principles undergirding authoritative parenting, in particular, promote children's spiritual growth and development (247).

Donna Habenicht affirms these finding and provides the following characteristics of the authoritative–communicative parenting.

Authoritative–communicative parents are seeking to follow God's model for parenting: unconditional love and grace, clear guidelines for moral values and behavior, and disciplinary action when needed.

Authoritative–communicative parents have warm relationships with their children and are considerate of and attentive to their needs. Parents are firm, patient, loving, and reasonable. They teach their children to reason and make decisions. The rights of both parents and children are respected.

Authoritative–communicative parents are interested in and involved in their children's lives. They know their kids' whereabouts, activities, and associates when away from home, and they keep up with what is happening at school. Parents and children converse daily. The children know that their parents will listen, consider, and value their opinions.

Children of authoritative–communicative parents tend to be more securely bonded to their parents. Their moral development is strong and firm. They are confident, friendly, happy, and cooperative, and they enjoy personal self-respect and self-esteem. Usually they do well academically and are achievement-oriented and successful. Responsible and independent, they often show leadership skills.

Usually they choose to embrace the values and the religion of the family they grew up in. A strong, reasonable conscience enables them generally to have the strength to resist peer pressure and do what they know is right. Their God is the perfect blend of mercy and justice, a God who continually loves them and draws them closer to himself (21).

Habenicht notes that the positive effects of authoritative, directive parenting are strong for every cultural group studied. "Responsiveness or emotional closeness has cultural specific components. Children understand how their culture expresses closeness between parent and child. Regardless of how specific cultural groups define and express responsiveness, the fundamental premise of the authoritative model that children need to feel loved, respected, and firmly guided while they are maturing into adults seems to be true for all children" (22).

Parenting faith practices

Marcia Bunge has identified practices from the Christian tradition that describe how parents can fulfill their duties as Christian parents. These eight practices are often mentioned in the Christian tradition as ways to strength a child's moral and

spiritual development. These practices resonate well with the research on faith transmission and can serve as the basis of programs and resources for equipping parents and grandparents as faith formers of their young people.

1. Reading and discussing the Bible with children.
2. Participating in community worship, family rituals, and traditions of worship and prayer.
3. Introducing children to good examples and mentors.
4. Participating in service projects with parents or other caring adults and teaching financial responsibility.
5. Singing together and exposing children to the spiritual gifts of music and the arts.
6. Appreciating the natural world and cultivating a reverence for creation.
7. Educating children and helping them discern their vocations.
8. Fostering life-giving attitudes toward the body, sexuality, and marriage (14–17).

The eight practices also provide rich content for developing faith-forming skills for talking about faith at home, reading the Bible and sharing Bible stories, praying at home and teaching children to prayer, teaching how to teach right from wrong (moral decision-making), celebrating rituals and holidays, participating in service at home and in the world, worshipping with the church community, and more.

Developing Skills for Parenting

Congregations provide parent education that develops the knowledge, skills, and confidence of parents (and grandparents) for parenting children and teens, informed by the best research on effective child-rearing and parenting practices. The Developmental Relationships (Search Institute) in Strategy 7 provide an important source for developing parent education. This section presents additional sources of content and perspectives for developing parent education.

Child-rearing practices

In "What Makes a Good Parent?" Dr. Robert Epstein identifies the ten most effective child-rearing practices—all derived from published studies and ranked based on how well they predict a strong parent-child bond and children's happiness, health, and success.

1. *Love and affection*. Parents support and accept the child, are physically affectionate, and spend quality one-on-one time together.
2. *Stress management*. Parents take steps to reduce stress for themselves and their child, practice relaxation techniques, and promote positive interpretations of events.
3. *Relationship skills*. Parents maintain a healthy relationship with their spouse, significant other, or coparent and model effective relationship skills with other people.

4. *Autonomy and independence.* Parents treat their child with respect and encourage him or her to become self-sufficient and self-reliant.
5. *Education and learning.* Parents promote and model learning and provide educational opportunities for their child.
6. *Life skills.* Parents provide for their child, have a steady income, and plan for the future.
7. *Behavior management.* Parents make extensive use of positive reinforcement and punish only when other methods of managing behavior have failed.
8. *Health.* Parents model a healthy lifestyle and good habits, such as regular exercise and proper nutrition, for their child.
9. *Religion.* Parents support spiritual or religious development and participate in spiritual or religious activities.
10. *Safety.* Parents take precautions to protect their child and maintain awareness of the child's activities and friends.

Parenting practices

In a meta-analysis of research studies, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) focused on the content in parent education programs that had the greatest impact on parenting approaches. Their findings point to important knowledge and skills to incorporate in parent education.

• *Teaching parents emotional communication skills.* This includes using communication skills that enhance the parent-child relationship: developing active listening skills and teaching parents to help children recognize their feelings, label and identify emotions, and appropriately express and deal with emotions. This also included allowing children to feel like they are part of the conversation, equal contributors to the communication process.
• *Teaching parents positive parent-child interaction skills.* This includes teaching parents to interact with their child in nondisciplinary situations (e.g., every day activities) and engaging in a child's selected and directed play activities. This can include showing parents how to demonstrate enthusiasm and provide positive attention for appropriate child behavior and choices.
• *Teaching parents discipline practice such as the correct use of time out.* This includes the correct application of time out and how it reduces the need for other forms of discipline when used correctly and consistently.
• *Teaching parents to respond consistently to their child.* This includes teaching parents the importance of consistent responses to child behavior. Parents learn to use consistent rules across settings

The CDC's analysis also included an important characteristic of effective parent education programs: *having parents practice with their own child during program sessions.* This is in contrast to training programs where no practice takes place or where parents are asked to role-play with another parent or the group leader.

Agile parenting

Bruce Feiler, the author of *The Secrets of Happy Families*, developed his ideas for effective parenting from his three-year journey to find the smartest ideas, cutting-edge research, and novel solutions to make his family happier. Instead of the usual psychologists and family "experts," he sought out the most creative minds from Silicon Valley to the country's top negotiators, from the set of the TV show *Modern Family* to the Green Berets and asked what team-building exercises and problem-solving techniques they use with their families. Feiler then tested these ideas with his own wife and children.

Through his research and practice Feiler developed the concept of an "agile family." Agile is a system of group dynamics in which teams do things in small chunks of time, adjust constantly, and review their progress frequently. Ideas don't just flow down from the top but percolate up from the bottom. The best ideas win, no matter where they come from. Many families have been using similar techniques to improve how their families function. Agile families have a system to change and react to family chaos in real time.

The Agile Family Manifesto
1. Commit to constant improvement—innovate and practice, practice, practice.
2. Solutions exist: don't rely solely on a family expert; talk to anyone who's an expert in making groups run smoothly. Solutions are out there—you just have to go find them.
3. Empower the children: teach them executive skills by allowing them to take a role in their own upbringing. Let them plan their own time, set weekly goals, evaluate their own progress, suggest rewards, and set appropriate punishments.
4. Parents aren't perfect: break free from the all-knowing parent and give everyone an equal say.
5. Build in flexibility: evaluate and adapt—and always remember it's okay to change.

He decided to adapt what he learned about creating an agile family from inside his own house. He and his wife experimented with a morning list, and then presented the idea to their girls. Together, they assembled their list, creating a homemade poster and a daily chore chart. In the first week alone, the Feilers cut parental screaming in half. Soon they began holding a weekly family meeting. After some trial and error—learning to ask the right questions—something amazing happened. Bruce and Linda began to see into their daughters' emotional lives and their deepest thoughts and feelings. "When Linda and I adopted the agile blueprint with our daughters, weekly family meetings quickly became the single most impactful idea we introduced into our lives since the birth of our children. They became the centerpiece around which we organized our family. And they transformed our relationships with our kids—and each other—in ways we never could have imagined," Bruce explains.

In addition to the practices of developing a morning checklist and holding weekly family meetings, Feiler describes how to rethink the family dinner (what you talk about is more important than what you eat), create a family mission statement, resolve conflicts through negotiation, set an allowance (like Warren Buffet manages money), have difficult conversations and keep talking, and share the family history, to name few of the practices in the book.

Feiler's TED Talk, "Agile Programming for Your Family" (https://www.ted.com/talks/bruce_feiler_agile_programming_for_your_family) presents the key concepts as does his book *The Secrets of Happy Families* (William Morrow, 2013).

Generation X and Millennial parenting styles

Generation X parents (born 1962/64–1979) and Millennial parents (born 1980–1999) have distinct parenting styles that reflect their generational experiences as well as the current world in which their children are growing up. Parent education programs and activities need to be responsive to the concerns, interests, and approaches of Gen X and Millennial parents. (See Chapter Two for more information.)

Generation X parents approach child-rearing as a set of tangible practices that will keep their children safe, reasonably happy, well-behaved, and ready to take on life's challenges. They practice protective parenting. Gen X parents approach child-rearing like any other technique—there must be a good way and a bad way to get the job done. They are also much more scientific—books and other resources need to show that there's empirical evidence favoring one way over another, because skeptical Xers don't take advice on faith. Gen X parents are practicing more traditional bedtimes and scheduled mealtimes and playtimes. They want to create a family life with more order and structure (than they may have had when they were growing up). Gen X parents are focused on control. They often have an extreme distrust of institutions—really, of anyone and everything outside their inner circle of family and friends. Combine that with the tight bonds they have with their children, and you get parents who demand control, options, transparency, and oversight. When volunteering, they tend to choose roles that allow them to supervise what's happening directly. They advocate for whatever helps their own kid.

Millennial parents, reflecting their values of individuality and self-expression, focus more on a democratic approach to family management, encouraging their children to be open-minded, empathetic, and questioning—and teaching them to be themselves and try new things. They are moving away from the overscheduled days of their youth, preferring a more responsive, less directorial approach to activities. Helicopter parenting is frowned upon by Millennials who are now developing a new technique called "drone–parenting"—the parents still hover, but they're following and responding to their kids more than directing and scheduling them. Instead of hyperdirecting their kids, many researchers believe, there's a focus among today's Millennial parents on a democratic approach to family management—constantly canvassing their children for their opinions. "Open-minded"

"empathetic" and "questioning" are the qualities Millennial parents most want for their children.

Parenting and technology

One of the emerging areas of parent education is equipping parents with the knowledge and skills for managing technology in their families. Alexandra Samuel spent two years conducting a series of surveys on how families manage technology. Her findings revealed that parents could be roughly divided into three groups based on how they limit or guide their kids' screen time. *Digital Limiters* raise their children offline and prefer to keep their children away from the Internet. *Digital Enablers* trust their own children online and give them plenty of screen time and access to devices. *Digital Mentors* guide their children online, enjoy spending time online with their children, cultivate their children's digital skills, and foster online learning.

Samuel found that *Digital Mentors*, in fact, may be the parents who are most successful in preparing their kids for a world filled with screens, working actively to shape their kids' online skills and experiences. *Mentors* are more likely than *Limiters* to talk with their kids about how to use technology or the Internet responsibly. They're also more likely to research specific devices or programs for their kids; and they're also the most likely to connect with their kids through technology, rather than in spite of it. (See Chapter Two for more information.)

The American Academy of Pediatrics developed ten tips for helping parents manage the digital landscape—all of which could be content in a parent education program. (For the complete presentation go to: https://www.healthychildren.org/English/family-life/Media/Pages/Tips-for-Parents-Digital-Age.aspx)

1. Treat media as you would any other environment in your child's life. The same parenting guidelines apply in both real and virtual environments. Set limits; kids need and expect them. Know your children's friends, both online and off. Know what platforms, software, and apps your children are using, where they are going on the web, and what they are doing online.

2. Set limits and encourage playtime. Tech use, like all other activities, should have reasonable limits. Unstructured and offline play stimulates creativity. Make unplugged playtime a daily priority, especially for very young children.

3. Families who play together, learn together. Family participation is also great for media activities—it encourages social interactions, bonding, and learning. Play a video game with your kids.

4. Be a good role model. Teach and model kindness and good manners online. And, because children are great mimics, limit your own media use.

5. Know the value of face-to-face communication. Very young children learn best through two-way communication. Research has shown that it's that "back-and-forth conversation" that improves language skills—much more so than "passive" listening or one-way interaction with a screen.

6. Create tech-free zones. Keep family mealtimes and other family and social gatherings tech-free. Recharge devices overnight—outside your child's bedroom. These changes encourage more family time, healthier eating habits, and better sleep, all critical for children's wellness.

7. Don't use technology as an emotional pacifier. Media can be very effective in keeping kids calm and quiet, but it should not be the only way they learn to calm down.

8. Apps for kids—do your homework. Look to organizations like Common Sense Media for reviews about age-appropriate apps, games, and programs to guide you in making the best choices for your children.

9. It's okay for your teen to be online. Online relationships are part of typical adolescent development. Social media can support teens as they explore and discover more about themselves and their place in the grown-up world. Just be sure your teen is behaving appropriately in both the real and online worlds.

10. Remember: kids will be kids. Kids will make mistakes using media. Try to handle errors with empathy and turn a mistake into a teachable moment.

Creating a Plan for Parent Formation and Education

Congregations can equip, resource, and support parents and grandparents to be faith formers of their children, adolescents, and emerging adults by promoting their growth in faith, teaching the skills for parenting for faith growth, and developing their competence and confidence as parents.

Content for parent programming

The first content area is the *spiritual and religious growth of parents*. This content will need to be tailored to the four spiritual-religious identities of parents and to the traditions, beliefs, and practices of the particular Christian tradition. The characteristics of mature Christian faith embraced by highly religious parents (from "The Study of Exemplary Congregations in Youth Ministry") provide direction for parent faith formation: developing a relationship and commitment to Jesus, experiencing the presence of God in daily life and relationships with others, praying, having Christian moral and ethical values to decide what is right or wrong, serving those in need and applying faith in the world, growing spiritually, and developing a well-informed Christian faith (Bible, Christian beliefs).

The second content area is *developing the faith-forming skills of parents*. This would include developing an authoritative parenting style, understanding the characteristics of each life cycle stage (see Chapter Five), and developing skills for sharing faith with the young. The practices identified by Marcia Bunge can serve as the basis for parent programming—engaging parents in learning how to read and discuss the Bible with interpretations; participating in community worship, family rituals, and traditions of worship and prayer; participating in service projects;

exposing children to the spiritual gifts of music and the arts; appreciating the natural world and cultivating a reverence for creation; educating children and helping them discern their vocations; and fostering life–giving attitudes toward the body, sexuality, and marriage.

The third area is specific *knowledge and skills for parenting* the young and building strong families. Based on the research from the Search Institute on Developmental Relationships (Strategy 7) and in this section we can identify important themes for parent education.

- Expressing care, love, affection, and support for children.
- Balancing time and commitments, managing stress.
- Practicing healthy relationships.
- Disciplining children and learning discipline practices.
- Creating a warm, caring supportive family.
- Setting boundaries and high expectations for children.
- Managing technology and media use.
- Challenging children to grow and continuously improve.
- Providing support to help children complete tasks and achieve goals.
- Sharing power with children so that their voice is heard and they share in making decisions.
- Expanding possibilities and connecting children to opportunities for growth.
- Developing emotional communication skills.
- Developing positive parent-child interaction skills.
- Learning to respond consistently to their child.
- Developing the skills and practices for agile parenting.

Guides for developing parent programming

1. *Address diverse spiritual-religious identities of parents.* Parent formation needs to be responsive to the needs, interests, concerns of parents and families in each of the four spiritual-religious types—Engaged, Occasional, Spiritual, Unaffiliated. There is no one-size–fits–all model of parent faith formation that will work today.

2. *Have parents practice new skills with their own children during program sessions.* This is one of the CDC's conclusions about important characteristics of effective parent education programs. This is in contrast to training programs where no practice takes place or where parents are asked to role-play with another parent or the group leader.

3. *Give parents a plan.* Reggie Joiner and the Think Orange team emphasize how important it is to give families a plan. "When parents show up at church, they are often asking silent questions that we must answer; questions they don't even know they're asking. To begin looking at parents through a different filter, imagine that every time a parent walks through the door, he or she is asking you to do three things:

- *Give me the plan.* Most parents are parenting reactively, yet many of them desire to be proactive. They want a plan that will give them a system of support, consistent influence, and a steady flow of relevant information. In essence, what they need from the church is a partner.
- *Show me how it works.* Parents need to be influenced as much as children do, and they desire to be engaged in the process in a way that prompts them to take the best next step. Church leadership has the potential to challenge them collectively and give them a network of families to connect with personally.
- *Tell me what to do today.* If we are going to truly partner with parents, we have to give them specific instructions or resources to use this week. Sometimes parents have a lack of vision, but often they just don't know where to start. Give parents a map and a schedule (Joiner 2010, 89–90).

4. *Address the levels of partnership with parents.* Every parent is a partner with the congregation and faith formation, but they may be partnering with you at different levels. These four levels help clarify how parents are already part-nering so you can move them toward a strategic goal. It is important to *act like every parent will do something.*

- *Aware:* These parents are concerned about a particular situation or development. These parents are outside the church but open to it, and they're interested in becoming better parents because they genuinely care their families.
- *Involved:* These parents have a basic or entry-level relationship with the church. Even if it's just bringing their young people to church, these parents are taking steps to influence their young people's spirituality.
- *Engaged:* These parents are committed to partnering with the church. They are growing in their relationships with God and assume some responsibility for spiritual leadership in the home. They represent a wide spectrum of diverse stages of faith and experience.
- *Invested:* These parents proactively devote time and energy to partnering with the church. They understand and value the strategy of your ministry. They are in community with Christians and can help in key leadership roles and encouraging other parents (Joiner 2010, 87–90).

  Not every parent will be invested. The goal is to help those who are *aware* and *involved* to at least become engaged. Aware and involved parents have a lot of untapped potential. Congregations need to help them become more engaged parents.

5. *Design programs that engage parents in the learning experience.* Parent programs need to have content that is relevant to parents and processes that help

parents learn and want to participate in new learning. Here are several tips for designing and leading effective educational experiences for parents.

- Create a supportive, caring environment for learning. Greet parents, provide time for them to get acquainted with one another, and encourage mutual support during and after the experience.
- Actively engage parents in the learning. The amount they learn will be in direct proportion to how much they put into the experience.
- Let parents be the experts. Show that you value their knowledge and experience by giving them opportunities to contribute to the learning experience.
- Tie the learning activities around the parents' experiences and values so they know "this is for me and about my family."
- Focus the content on real needs, issues, and concerns, not just on content that parents ought to know. If, for example, you want to help parents teach their child/teen about healthy concepts of right and wrong, first identify the ways this connects with parents' needs or concerns regarding moral values, then develop the experience to reflect those concerns.
- Include information and skills parents can put into action immediately. Such application reinforces and helps parents internalize what they learn.
- Demonstrate how to use skills and practices during the program so that parents have a direct experience of how to use the skills or practice at home.
- Provide resources that parents can use for their own personal growth and with their family. Consider developing a parent website with resources and links to websites to enhance and expand the learning experience.

6. *Use a variety of environments and methods to engage* all *parents,* anytime and any-where, in a variety of settings—independent, mentored, at home, in small groups, in large groups, church–wide, in the community, and in the world. The seven environments provide a way to offer a diversity of programs in different learning environment as well as to offer the same program content in multiple learning environments—all of which provides parents with more options to participate and broadens the scope of parent formation and education offerings. (See Chapter Seven for descriptions and examples of each environment.)

7. *Use online platforms and digitally enabled strategies* by blending gathered community settings with online learning environments. Utilize the abundance of digital media and tools for parent formation and education—to engage parents anytime, anyplace, and just–in–time—and extend and expand faith formation from physical, face–to–face settings into their daily lives through digital content and mobile delivery systems.

Online platforms for parents (websites) integrate the content (programs, activities, resources), connect people to the content and to each other, provide continuity for people across different learning experiences, and make everything available anytime, anywhere, 24-7-365. Digital media tools and resources—social media (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and more), webinars and online learning, video conferencing, videos, audio podcasts, and much more—provide more features in designing parent programs, more methods for delivering programs, and more ways to connecting parents to each other.

Blended learning models provide ways to integrate online and face-to-face learning in a variety of ways, from online programs with minimal interaction in physical settings to programs in physical settings that utilize online content or extend the program using online content. There are least five ways to blend online and gathered. (See Chapter Seven for descriptions and examples of these five ways.)

- Gathered program using online content from websites, podcasts, videos, blogs, and other social media.
- Gathered program with online content that extends and deepens the experience with additional resources for learning.
- Online and gathered programming in one design with substantial program content (that people would have experienced in the gathered setting) in an online platform using digital media (print, audio, video, apps, websites) that parents can experience at their own pace and time in preparation for a gathered session that emphasizes interaction, demonstration, practice, and application.
- Mostly online learning program with occasional opportunities for interaction in a gathered setting, web conference, or other formats.
- Fully online learning program that provides a variety of ways to learn independently, with a mentor, or a small group that that makes available a variety of resources, such as online courses, activities, print and e-books, audio podcasts, video programs, and content-rich websites.

Ideas for parent programming

Using the content and guides for creating a parenting plan, congregations can curate and create parent programming—activities, resources (print, audio, video, digital, online) that applies to all parents and that is specific to the life cycle stages: young children, older children, young adolescents, older adolescents, and emerging adults. These ideas can be used with all three components of empowering parents and grandparents to be *faith formers* of young people: 1) promoting their growth in faith, 2) teaching the skills for parenting for faith growth, and 3) developing their competence and confidence as parents. All of the ideas below can be targeted to specific life cycle stages: young children, older children, young adolescents, older adolescents, and young adulthood.

1. *An online parent website* or a parent component of a family faith formation website can provide parents online learning experiences (workshops, webinars, courses, audio podcasts, video programs) to help them be faith formers. A website can provide parents with resources in all three content areas in a variety of media: print, audio, video, apps, games, links to selected parent websites, and more. The website can also extend learning from gathered parent programs. The website can include original programs created by the congregation and curated programming from other sources. Digital initiatives, such as the website or webinars, provide a way to reach a wider audience of parents in the community. A great example of a website designed for parents is ParentFurther (http://www.parentfurther.com).

2. *Parent programs*—in gathered settings (large group or small group) or online (webinars, online courses, video programs)—can be created and curated using the content suggested in this strategy. Parent programs can be organized in partnership with other churches and community organizations.

    *   Develop a progression of parent workshops, webinars, or courses through the life cycle as children and adolescents enter a new stage of life—birth, parenting young children, start of school, parenting older children, parenting young adolescents, parenting older adolescents, parenting emerging adults.
    *   Incorporate parent formation and education into congregational events that already engage parents, such as parent preparation programs for baptism, first communion, or confirmation. They can be incorporated into the celebration of milestones (see Strategy 3).
    *   Provide targeted programs of theological and biblical formation for parents and grandparents in a variety of learning formats to make it easy for them to access the opportunities: independent (online), mentored, at home, in small groups, in large groups, or church–wide. Incorporate a parent component into an adult faith formation program so that the specific needs of parents can be addressed.
    *   Add a parent-only component to family-intergenerational learning programs that addresses parent faith formation or skills development while their children are participating in child–focused activities. Gather the groups together for a shared experience to put into practice what they learned.
    *   Add a parallel parent experience to the existing children and adolescent program where parents can gather occasionally for a targeted program while their children are in age-specific programs.
    *   Add a parent component to vacation Bible school in the evenings or online.
    *   Provide online faith formation for parents using college and seminary programs and organizations such as ChurchNext (https://www.

churchnext.tv), which offers hundreds of short online courses in spiritual and faith enrichment.

3. *Laboratory experiences* that immerse parents in hands-on experiences—with or without their children—can teach knowledge and skills for faith forming and parenting. A family-centered worship experience can be an opportunity to teach parents about worship, reading the Bible, and how to do these things at home. A church-wide service day can be an opportunity to teach parents about the biblical basis of service and how to integrate service into family life. A church year seasonal celebration can be an opportunity to teach about ritual and how to celebrate rituals and church year seasons at home. These immersion experiences can be supported with online content for parents and for the whole family.

4. *Parent mentors* can provide guidance and support for parents and the whole family at each stage of life. Every congregation has mentor resources in the grandparent generation who are actively engaged in church and bring decades of parenting and family life experiences. Congregations can identify and provide training for mentors (mentoring skills, understanding today's family, learning how to access online resources and activities, and more). Developing relationships between parents and mentors can begin with birth/baptism. Mentoring can be life-cycle specific with mentors who focus on children or adolescents. Churches can also identity mentors (spiritual guides) who attend to people's spiritual life, guiding them in growing in their relationship with God and learning more about the Christian faith.

5. *Life cycle support groups for parents*—in gathered settings (church, home, community) and in online groups (such as a Facebook parents group)—provide opportunities for parents with children in the same age group to talk about parenting, get information and encouragement, discuss family life issues and challenges, and more. Congregations can also sponsor support groups for divorced parents, parents in blended families, parents of children with special needs, and other affinity groupings. An example of a life cycle support group is MOPS (Mothers of Preschoolers). Go to their website to learn more: http://www.mops.org.

6. *A parent catechumenate*—developed around marriage, baptism, first communion, and or confirmation—recognizes that milestones events can be "moments of return" for married couples and parents. These milestone events are an opportunity for people to consider or reconsider the Christian faith and to encounter Jesus and the good news. The *Catechumenate* of the early church, now restored for the contemporary church, provides a guided process moving from evangelization (inquiry) to catechesis (formation) to spiritual discernment (during Lent) to a ritual celebration of commitment (baptism-Eucharist-confirmation at the Easter Vigil) to post-baptismal faith

formation (mystagogy). The catechumenal process offers a multifaceted formation process: participation in the life of the faith community, education in scripture and the Christian tradition, apprenticeship in the Christian life, intimate connection with the liturgy and rituals of the church, moral formation, development of a life of prayer, and engagement in actions of justice and service. The journey from inquiry through formation to commitment and a life of discipleship within a faith community is a process that can be applied to all types of situations and settings for people of all ages.

Congregations can create a "catechumenate for parents" around key milestones—engaging parents in a multifaceted formation process alongside the preparation of their people. This formation process could be an introduction to the Christian faith for some and an enrichment program for others. It would include all of the elements of the catechumenate adapted for parents and could take place over a twelve-month timeframe. In addition to faith formation, workshops could be included that focus on skills for parenting for faith growth.

Works Cited

American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP). "Kids & Tech: 10 Tips for Parents in the Digital Age." https://www.healthychildren.org/English/family-life/Media/Pages/Tips-for-Parents-Digital-Age.aspx.

Amidei, Kathy, Jim Merhaut, and John Roberto. *Generations Together.* Naugatuck: LifelongFaith, 2014.

Bass, Diana Butler. *Grounded: Finding God in the World, A Spiritual Revolution.* New York: HarperOne, 2015.

Bass, Dorothy C., and Susan R. Briehl, eds. *On Our Way: Christian Practices for Living a Whole Life.* Nashville: Upper Room, 2010.

Bass, Dorothy C., ed. *Practicing Our Faith: A Way of Life for a Searching People.* San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2010 (second edition).

Bengston, Vern with Norella M. Putney, and Susan Harris. *Families and Faith: How Religion Is Passed Down across Generations.* New York: Oxford University Press, 2013.

Bunge, Marcia. "Biblical and Theological Perspectives and Best Practices for Faith Formation." In *Understanding Children's Spirituality*, edited by Kevin Lawson. Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2012.

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. *Parent Training Programs: Insight for Practitioners.* Atlanta: Centers for Disease Control, 2009.

Drescher, Elizabeth. *Choosing Our Religion: The Spiritual Lives of America's Nones.* New York: Oxford University Press, 2016.

Epstein, Robert. "What Makes a Good Parent?: A Scientific Analysis Ranks the 10 Most Effective Child-Rearing Practices." *Scientific American Mind*, November/December 2010.

Feiler, Bruce. *The Secrets of Happy Families.* New York: William Morrow, 2014.

Friedman, Jenny, and Jolene Roehlkepartain. *Doing Good Together: 101 Easy Meaningful Service Projects for Families, Schools, and Communities.* Minneapolis, MN: Free Spirit Publishing, 2010.

Gaillardetz, Richard. "The Christian Household as School of Discipleship: Reflections on the Ecclesial Contributions of the Christian Household to the Larger Church." In *The Household of God and Local Households. Revisiting the Domestic Church*, edited by T. Knieps-Port le Roi, G. Mannion, and P. De Mey. Lueven, Belgium: Peeters Publishing, 2013.

Habenicht, Donna J. "The Most Important Thing You Need to Know about Parenting." *Ministry*, November 2014.

Joiner, Reggie. *Think Orange.* Colorado Springs: David C. Cooke, 2009.

Joiner, Reggie. *The Orange Leader Handbook.* Colorado Springs: David C. Cooke, 2010.

Kim, Sungwon. "Parenting Styles and Children's Spiritual Development." In *Nurturing Children's Spirituality: Christian Perspectives and Best Practice*, edited by Holly Catterton Allen. Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2008.

Manning, Christel. *Losing Our Religion: How Unaffiliated Parents Are Raising Their Children.* New York: New York University, 2015.

Manning, Christel. "Unaffiliated Parents and the Religious Training of their Children." *Sociology of Religion*, 0:0 (2013): 1–27.

Martineau, Mariette, Joan Weber, and Leif Kehrwald. *Intergenerational Faith Formation.* New London, CT: Twenty-Third, 2008.

Martinson, Roland, Wes Black, and John Roberto. *The Spirit and Culture of Youth Ministry.* St. Paul: EYM Publications, 2010.

Melheim, Rich. *Holding Your Family Together.* Ventura: Regal Books, 2013. Also available as a download at http://www.faithink.com/download/tour/Faith5BulletinInserts.pdf.

Miller, Lisa. *The Spiritual Child: The New Science on Parenting for Health and Lifelong Thriving.* New York: St. Martin's Press, 2015.

Muldoon, Tim and Sue. *Six Sacred Rules for Families: A Spirituality for the Home.* Notre Dame: Ave Maria Press, 2013.

Pekel, Kent, Eugene C. Roehlkepartain, Amy K. Syvertsen, and Peter Scales. *Don't Forget the Families: The Missing Piece in America's Effort to Help All Children Succeed.* Minneapolis, MN: Search Institute, 2015. Available at: http://www.search-institute.org/research/developmental-relationships.

Roehlkepartain, Eugene C., Amy K. Syvertsen, and Peter Scales. *The American Family Assets Study.* Minneapolis, MN: Search Institute, 2012. Available at: http://www.search-institute.org/research/family-strengths.

Samuel, Alexandra. "Parents: Reject Technology Shame." *The Atlantic.* November 4, 2015, http://www.theatlantic.com/technology/archive/2015/11/why-parents-shouldnt-feel-technology-shame/414163.

Taylor, Barbara Brown. *An Altar in the World: A Geography of Faith.* New York: HarperOne, 2009.

Online Resource Center: Reimagine Faith Formation

Articles, models, strategies, and resources for family faith formation can be found in the "Family" section on the *Reimagine Faith Formation* website developed by LifelongFaith Associates: www.reimaginefaithformation.com.

Designing Family Faith Formation with Families at the Center

John Roberto

● ● ● ● In Chapter Six we presented eight strategies for developing faith formation that brings to life the Families-at-the-Center Approach.

1. Discovering God in everyday life.
2. Forming faith at home through the life cycle.
3. Forming faith through milestones.
4. Celebrating seasonal events through the year.
5. Encountering God in the Bible through the year.
6. Connecting families intergenerationally.
7. Developing a strong family life.
8. Empowering parents and grandparents.

We also presented five design considerations that should permeate the development of family faith formation strategies.

1. Contextualizing faith formation around diverse family forms, religious-spiritual identities, Generation X and Millennial characteristics, and ethnic diversity.
2. Providing holistic faith formation through the eight faith-forming processes.
3. Connecting church life with home life and home life with church life.
4. Engaging families in the intergenerational life, events, and experiences of the faith community.
5. Utilizing digital approaches and online platforms for delivering programs, activities, and resources to families and for engaging families in faith formation at home or in the community 24-7.

In Chapter Seven we present a design process for integrating the strategies—those proposed in Chapter Six and the ones you create and curate—into a model of faith formation tailored to the families in your congregation and community. We propose a network model of faith formation, which was described in the book *Reimagining Faith Formation for the 21st Century*, as a way to build a model and a platform that integrates a comprehensive approach to family faith formation, where families are at the center.

Family faith formation can now be developed as a *network of relationships, content, experiences, and resources*—integrating a wide variety of engaging and interactive content and experiences in online and physical settings to engage *all* parents and families today. We are moving away from the one-size-fits-all approach, which characterizes so much of family faith formation today, towards a diversity of ways to grow in faith and a variety of faith formation opportunities that are designed around the needs and interests of parents and families. Parents and families are at the center of a network approach. We can design faith formation so that it *adapts to parents and families* instead of expecting parents and families to adapt to the programs (content, schedules, requirements) offered them by the congregation.

A network approach is made possible by a web of environments that include churches, community organizations, libraries, museums, and schools/colleges; and by a web of digital resources, websites, and online communities. A network model of faith formation curates content and experiences from a wide variety of sources, presents that content on a digital platform, and guides parents and families in connecting content with their needs and interests, creating personal/family pathways for faith growth.

There are three important programming practices that guide the development of a family faith formation network.

1. Provide a *variety of content* (experiences, programs, activities, resources) to address the life tasks and situations, needs and interests, and spiritual and faith journeys of *all* parents and families today.
2. Utilize a *variety of environments and methods* to engage *all* families, anytime and anywhere, in a variety of settings—independent, mentored, at home,

in small groups, in large groups, church-wide, in the community, and in the world (see Appendix One on page 239 for descriptions).

3. Become *digitally enabled*—blending gathered community settings with online learning environments and utilizing the abundance of digital media and tools for learning and faith formation—and *digitally connected*—linking faith formation at church, with peers, in the community, and at home using online and digital media.(See Appendix Two on page 242 for descriptions).

Imagine designing a family faith formation network for families with children (0–10 years old) with developmentally appropriate children's activities, whole family activities, and parent activities that implement these programming practices: variety of content, variety of approaches and methods, and digitally enabled and digitally connected strategies. The family faith formation network would use strategies presented in Chapter Six, tailored to families with young children and older children. It would incorporate the eight faith-forming processes—caring relationships, celebrating church year seasons, celebrating rituals and milestones, learning, praying and spiritual formation, reading the Bible, serving and working for justice, and worshipping—and include parent formation and family life development. The architecture of the network can be envisioned as a web (see Display 7.1 on page 227).

Each content area of the network would have a variety of content—church and community programs and resources, digital media, links to online content at other websites, and more. Programming in each content area can be developed into *faith formation playlists.* This is similar to a music playlist where we curate and gather our favorite songs into our own "albums" for listening. A faith formation playlist curates content around a theme into an integrated learning plan that provides a variety of programming and a variety of ways to learn. Here's an example of a "Just for Parents" playlist from a demonstration website: www.FamiliesattheCenter.com.

> "Just for Parents" offers a variety of ways for you to enhance and enrich your knowledge and skills for parenting children and teens. All of these programs, activities, and resources are developed around research-tested ways to help your children and teens grow in healthy and positive ways by 1) expressing care, 2) challenging them to growth, 3) providing them with support, 4) involving them in decision-making, and 5) expanding their possibilities for the future.
>
> We have designed a variety of experiences, tailored to your busy lives, which can make a difference in strengthening your confidence and ability as a parent.
>
> 1. Participate in the "First Wednesdays" Webinar Series—without leaving your home!
> 2. Use a variety of activities to build positive relationships at home with the "Bringing Developmental Relationships Home" Guide—a free download.

226 Families at the Center of Faith Formation

3. Learn more about your children and teen with online resources from ParentFurther.
4. Participate in a small group study with the best-selling book *The Secrets of Happy Families* by Bruce Feiler.
5. Watch the the video "Parenting for the Long Haul" and download the "9 Parenting Strategies" guide.
6. Strengthen family relationships with stories.
7. Discover parenting resources and a free parent hotline from the Boys Town Parent Center.

New network programming is introduced seasonally in three, four-month seasons: January–April, May–August, and September–December—each of which provides seasonally appropriate content and experiences that reflect calendar seasons and events, church programs and events, community programs, and more. For more examples of networks and websites, and for design tools and resources go to the Reimagine Formation Website: http://www.reimaginefaithformation.com/design.html. For an example of a family faith formation network and website go to www.FamiliesattheCenter.com.

Online Resource Center: Reimagine Faith Formation
Articles, models, strategies, and resources for family faith formation can be found in the "Family" section on the *Reimagine Faith Formation* website developed by LifelongFaith Associates: www.reimaginefaithformation.com. Additional tools for designing a network can be found at http://www.reimaginefaithformation.com/design.html.
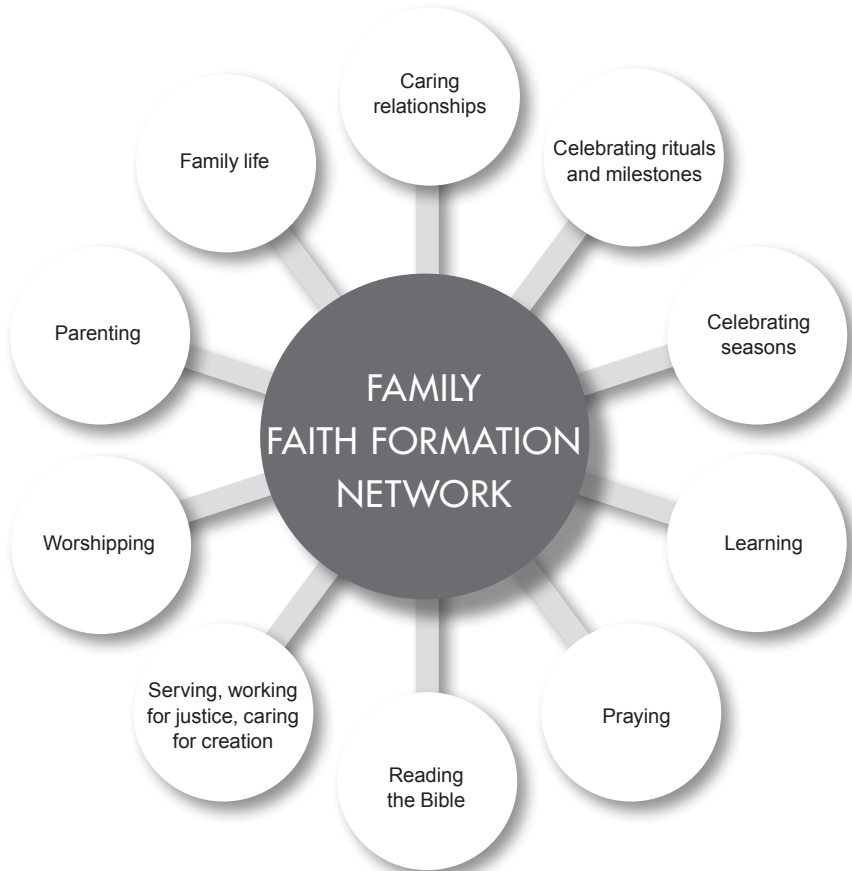
Design Process

There are ten planning steps for developing family faith formation in a network model.

Step 1. Establish goals for family faith formation.
Step 2. Develop a profile of family faith formation.
Step 3. Research parents and families and identify needs.
Step 4. Build the family faith formation network design.
Step 5. Generate programming for the network.
Step 6. Design a season of family faith formation programming.
Step 7. Build the digital platform for family faith formation.
Step 8. Test the seasonal plan and web design.
Step 9. Launch the family faith formation network.
Step 10. Evaluate the season of family formation programming.

Family faith formation network design

Caring relationships

Celebrating rituals and milestones

Family life

Celebrating seasons

Parenting

FAMILY FAITH FORMATION NETWORK

Learning

Worshipping

Serving, working for justice, caring for creation

Praying

Reading the Bible

Being by developing a family faith formation task force to design the plan. The task force should include the faith formation coordinator; church staff and ministry leaders who work with families, children, youth, and parents (in any ministry or program); and parents from the target age group(s) you have selected. It is very helpful to have several people who bring experience and expertise in digital technologies and media, and social media.

The task force is responsible for designing the family 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 a 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.

Planning Step 1: Establish Goals for Family Faith Formation

Prepare the team by having everyone read the first three chapters of this book.

Use the proposed family-appropriate goals for faith formation (Chapter Three) to guide the development of goals for family faith formation in your congregation.

We believe that congregations should empower families to:

- Believe in God and that God cares about them, and turn to God for support, guidance, and strength.
- Love and believe in the value of another person.
- Foster intimacy between spouses, among family members, and with God.
- Care for one another and be willing to sacrifice for each other.
- Initiate the young into a living relationship with God.
- Educate the young through teaching knowledge of the Bible and Christian tradition and how to live that faith in daily life.
- Read and reflect on the Bible and its message and meaning for their lives.
- Be witnesses to their faith in God and set an example of Christian living for each other and the community.
- Live with moral integrity guided by Christian values and ethics.
- Pray together, thank God for blessings, and ask for strength and guidance, especially during difficult times.
- Forgive and seek reconciliation.
- Celebrate life's passages and milestones throughout life as moments of grace and faith growth.
- Serve people in need in the local community and around the world, act justly to alleviate oppressive conditions, care for creation, and affirm life.
- Participate in Sunday worship and the life of their church community.
- Live as disciples of Jesus Christ at home, at school, in the workplace, in the community, and in the world.

Planning Step 2: Develop a Profile of Family Faith Formation

Develop a profile of your church's experiences, events, activities, and programs for families today. Then review your current offerings using questions such as these.

1. What are our strengths? What's working?
2. What are our weakness or areas in need of development? What's not working?
3. Who are we currently serving? Who are we *not* serving?
4. Do we have strong intergenerational connections and programming that involves parents and families?
5. Are we utilizing online/digital programming and resources in family faith formation?
6. Are we utilizing a variety of environments in family faith formation: self-directed, mentored, at home, in small groups, in large groups, church-wide, in the community, and in the world?

Planning Step 3: Research Parents and Families and Identify Needs

Planning begins with listening. Take time to conduct research with the parents of children and/or youth and/or emerging adults.

Conduct focus groups with parents

Organize several focus groups of eight to twelve parents. Select a diversity of parents, reflecting family forms, spiritual-religious identities, ethnic/cultural diversity, and socioeconomic diversity. Meet for about one hour in a variety of locations and times. Remember that people who are not involved in church may be hesitant to come to a meeting at church. Have two people lead each focus group—one to record (on a computer or tablet is preferable) and one to ask the questions. The recorder can also ask follow-up questions as appropriate. Use the following questions as a guide for developing focus group interviews. Every focus group needs to use the same questions so that comparisons can be made across the groups. In a sixty-minute focus group there is usually time for at least seven questions that you can select from the following list. Feel free to adapt the questions for your church, but make sure everyone uses the same questions.

1. How would you describe families and parents today in key words or phrases?
2. What are some of the important life issues that parents and families are experiencing today?
3. What are the significant spiritual issues that parents and families are experiencing today?
4. How important is your relationship with God? Why?
5. Where do you experience God most?
6. What is most important to you about being a Christian today?
7. How do you and your family live your Christian faith? Name some of the ways you put your faith into practice.
8. How can the church help you as a parent and your family? How can it help you and your family grow as a Christian? Be specific. Name some of the things you would like to see your church offer parents and families.

Compile the results

From the results of the focus groups, identify patterns or recurring themes in the life tasks and spiritual and religious needs. Also pay attention to information that may be unique to one focus group. Sometimes this uncovers important insights about the target audience.

Conduct observation of families in your community

Engage the team in becoming anthropologists by observing parents and families in the community. Develop an observation checklist and ask team members to spend a week simply observing parents and families at work, at play, at stores, in coffee

shops and restaurants, and so on. Everyone should keep a journal of their reflections. Watch for things like these.

1. What are some of the most popular activities in the community?
2. Where do people gather outside of work and school—coffee shop, gym, mall, park, community center, YMCA/YWCA, and so on? What are they doing there?
3. Where do people work? Do most people work in the community or do they commute to another area? What types of jobs do people have?
4. What are the most popular or well-attended churches in the community?
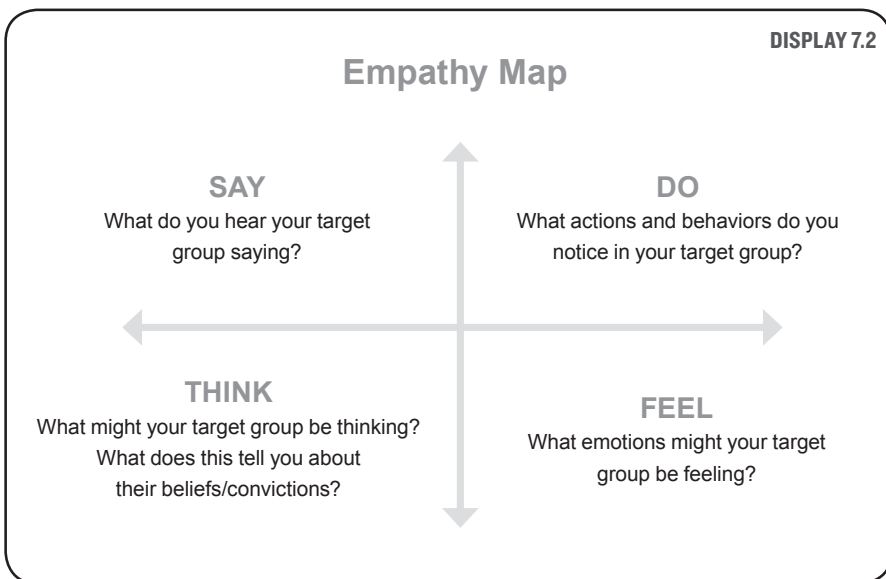5. Where are people on Sunday morning, if they are not at worship?

Find patterns in the research findings

An "Empathy Map" (see Display 7.2), developed by the Stanford School of Design, is one tool to synthesize observations and draw out insights from the research. Organize findings into the following four quadrants: What are people saying, doing, thinking, and feeling? Do this activity as a research team and use one or more sheets of newsprint to compile the findings.

Review the results of the Empathy Map, discuss the insights you have identified, and develop a report of the major findings and insights from these observations and your reflections.

Planning Step 4: Build the Family Faith Formation Network Design

Begin building the family faith formation network by determining the content

DISPLAY 7.2

Empathy Map

SAY
What do you hear your target group saying?

DO
What actions and behaviors do you notice in your target group?

THINK
What might your target group be thinking? What does this tell you about their beliefs/convictions?

FEEL
What emotions might your target group be feeling?

areas appropriate for the target audience. Use the eight faith-forming processes in combination with the eight strategies in Chapter Six as the basic framework for the network and then add new content areas to family life issues and parent issues. (For an example see www.FamiliesattheCenter.com.)

Diagram your network on a sheet of newsprint. Be comprehensive even if it looks overwhelming. You can always combine content areas or modify them later in the process (see Display 7.1 on page 227).

Planning Step 5: Generate Programming for the Network

Begin generating programming by reviewing the eight strategies in Chapter Six before you begin planning new ideas. How many of these strategies will you incorporate in your network plan? What ideas can you incorporate in your network plan from these eight strategies?

1. Discovering God in everyday family life.
2. Forming faith at home through the life cycle.
3. Forming faith through milestones.
4. Celebrating seasonal events through the year.
5. Encountering God in the Bible through the year.
6. Connecting families intergenerationally.
7. Developing a strong family life.
8. Empowering parents and grandparents.

Generate a list of all the possible programs, activities, and resources that *could* be included in the network (see Display 7.3 on page 232).

• Correlate the most important needs from the research into the appropriate content areas of the network design you have just created.
• Add programs that will continue to be offered for parents and/or families into the appropriate content areas of the network.
• Add events, ministries, and programs from the intergenerational faith community into the appropriate content areas of the network.

Generate ideas for new programming for each content area. Be sure to utilize a variety of program environments (See Appendix One on page 239) and digital strategies for faith formation (see Appendix Two on page 242).

Use a large newsprint sheet to record information and to see the whole picture of network programming. It would also be easy to create an Excel spreadsheet with all of this information.

Use the template that is provided (see Display 7.3 on page 232) to compile a report of the results. This report presents all of the ideas you can use to design seasonal plans for January–April, May–August, and September–December.

Family network programming			
Network content areas	Current programming in this content area	Intergenerational events/programs	New program ideas for this area

Planning Step 6: Design a Season of Family Faith Formation Programming

The most manageable way to program a faith formation network is to develop a three-season approach: January–April, May–August, and September–December. This means launching new programming three times and year and completely updating your website three times a year with the new programming as well as recurring programming.

All of the network content areas do not need to be introduced in the first season of programming. Over the course of a year (three seasons) network content areas and programming can be added so that the complete plan is finally implemented in the fourth season. Some of the programming will be consistent in every season, while other programming will be specific to a season. Programming from a completed season is archived online (on the website) so that it can be reused in another season or reintroduced a year later.

Here is a guide to developing one season of programming. Develop a first draft of the season and then review all of the programming and make final choices about what to include in the season. Use the form that follows (see Display 7.4) to record the information to get a overall view of the season.

1. Identify the season: January 1–April 30 or May 1–August 31 or September 1–December 31.
2. Add continuing programs to the seasonal plan. Use the seasonal plan template to record the results: list the network content areas and then add the programs to the appropriate month.
3. Add intergenerational events and programs to the seasonal plan.
4. Add new programming to the seasonal plan. Try to provide new (or current) programs in *different learning environments* and/or one program in multiple learning environments: on your own (self-directed), with a mentor, at home, in small groups, in large groups, in the congregation, in the

community, in the world. Try to implement a program idea with a *blended (digital) faith formation* strategy: gathered program with online content, gathered program and online content, online and gathered in one program, mostly online, and fully online.

5. Develop the final version of the seasonal plan. Select the program ideas for each network content area. Some content areas may have too many programs to launch in one season. Select the ones that will be included in this season and save the other program ideas for another season.

6. Schedule programming in each network content area. Some of the programming flows through multiple months in a season, such as a weekly Bible study group. Some programs are monthly, while other programs are seasonal—Advent, Christmas, Lent, and Easter—and therefore anchored in one or more months. Still other programming/resources are always available, such as an online course or a video program or Bible study resources.

    One way to manage the variety of programming is to focus on one month of major programming in the network content areas. For example the "Learning the Tradition" content area might select one month to schedule its theology enrichment series with four presentations from guest experts and options for small group study and online study using the video recordings. The Bible area might focus its programming in a different month, perhaps around a church year season, such as Lent. This approach reduces the overlap among major programs and helps people participate in multiple experiences.

7. Develop *faith formation playlists*. This is similar to a music playlist where we curate and gather our favorite songs into our own "albums" for listening. A faith formation playlist curates content around a theme into an integrated learning plan that provides a variety of programming and a vareity ways to learn. See the example the "Just for Parents" playlist earlier in this chapter.

8. Develop specific plans for each program (when needed): date or month, programming environment(s), digital strategy(s), resources, leaders, and cost.

Seasonal plan				DISPLAY 7.4
Network content area	**Programming & dates**			
	Month 1	Month 2	Month 3	Month 4

Planning Step 7: Build the Digital Platform for Family Faith Formation

This digital platform provides the primary way to connect parents and families to the network's offerings and to connect parents and families with each other. A faith formation website provides the platform for publishing and delivering the experiences, content, programs, activities, and resources of the network. A website provides the platform for *seamless* learning across a variety of experiences, resources, locations, times, or settings. The website, together with social media, provides continuity between faith formation in the congregation, at home, in daily life, and online. And it is available to people anytime, anywhere, and on any device (computer, tablet, smartphone).

Building a website is made much easier today by the availability of online website builders that provide predesigned website templates, drag-and-drop features to create web pages, and hosting for the website. Three popular website builders to explore are: Weebly (www.weebly.com), Wix (www.wix.com), and Squarespace (www.squarespace.com). All three have easy-to-use features and very reasonable subscription fees. For advanced users WordPress (http://wordpress.org) provides thousands of predesigned templates, lots of customization features, and ready-to-use apps. WordPress does require an understanding of web design and some programming ability. Weebly, Wix, and Squarespace have detailed tutorials for designing on their websites or on YouTube.

Here are several suggestions for web usability from Steve Krug's excellent and easy-to-use book *Don't Make Me Think: A Common Sense Approach to Web Usability.*

1. Don't make the user think—make web pages self-explanatory so the user hardly has any perceived effort to understand them, for example, clear choice of labels, clearly "clickable" items, simple search.
2. People generally don't read web pages closely; they scan, so design for scanning rather than reading.
3. Create a clear visual hierarchy and menu system (main menu, submenus).
4. Make it very clear how to navigate the site, with clear "signposts" on all pages.
5. Omit needless words.
6. The home page needs the greatest design care to convey site identity and mission.
7. Promote user goodwill by making the typical tasks easy to do, make it easy to recover from errors, and avoid anything likely to irritate users.

While it is beyond the scope of this chapter to provide step-by-step instructions for designing a website, there are specific features that can help customize a website design for the requirements of a family faith formation network and the seasonal plan you have created.

1. Choose a domain name (URL) for the family faith formation website. The congregation can either purchase a new domain name for the faith formation website from one of the companies that sell and register domain names

or use a free domain name provided by the website builder, e.g., Weebly provides hosting and a free website URL with the weebly.com extension.
2. Select a website template that is mobile-responsive, which means that the website will automatically size itself correctly on a computer, laptop, tablet, or phone. The template should do this automatically.
3. Create the primary navigation (main menus) for the website directly from the network content areas. Be sure to select a website template that allows enough room for all of the menu items to be seen. There may be a need to consolidate several content areas of the network to accommodate the website design template. This involves creating submenus (secondary navigation) under the main menu items. In the new mobile-responsive designs it might be better to have a "home page" for each content area, which introduces all of the experiences, programs, activities, and resources for that content area and has buttons or links to individual pages with the content. It is harder to view and select submenus on mobile devices. It's much easier to navigate from a "home page" with links.
4. Build each web page to incorporate all of the programs, activities, and resources for the particular network content area in the seasonal plan. A well-designed site with quality content will increase engagement and create a positive experience for the user—all of which encourages continuous learning. Each major content area can be constructed as a *playlist* that provides an integrated plan with a variety of media.
5. Design the website specifically for parents and families and write the content for them in their language with titles and examples that connect to their lives; select images (photo or short video) that reflect their life situations. Engage the target audience and tell them what they need to know and do. Be sure to pay careful attention to the titles and descriptions so that they capture people's interests. Develop descriptions that are positive in tone and indicate clearly the content or focus of an activity. Describe how your offerings respond to something within the lives of parents and families. Highlight the relationship between the content and the particular spiritual or religious needs, interests, passions, concerns, or life issues of parents and families. Describe the two to three benefits of participating or engaging in faith formation.

Planning Step 8: Test the Seasonal Plan and Web Design

It's wise to conduct one or two focus group meetings to get feedback on the seasonal plan and the usability of the web design. Testing is an opportunity to learn more about the user through observation and engagement. (For insights on testing the web design see Chapter Nine, "Usability Testing on 10 Cents a Day," in *Don't Make Me Think: A Common Sense Approach to Web Usability* by Steve Krug.)

Begin by identifying parents within the target audience to test the website and give feedback on the seasonal programming. Invite them to a focus group meeting.

Use a deliberate procedure when you test. Create a "testing process" so that you can gain important feedback. Here are four suggestions.

1. Let your users experience the network online. Show; don't tell. Let them review the website and the programming. Provide just the minimum context so they understand what to do. (Have computers or tablets available for people to use or ask them to bring a device to the focus group.)
2. Have them talk through their experience. For example, when appropriate, ask "Tell me what you are thinking as you are doing this."
3. Actively observe. Watch how they use (and misuse!) the website. Don't immediately "correct" what your users are doing.
4. Follow up with questions, such as: Show me why this would (or would not) work for you. Can you tell me more about how this made you feel and why? Do you find things that interest you and connect with your life? Are there things you would have liked to see?"

Based on the feedback from the focus group(s), determine what revisions to make in programming and website design. Consider inviting members of the focus group(s) to become reviewers throughout the season of programming. Stay in regular communication with them, asking for feedback on their experience of the website and the programming.

Planning Step 9: Launch the Family Faith Formation Network

Develop ideas for promoting and introducing the faith formation network and website to parents and families in your congregation and in the wider community. In your promotional efforts be sure to describe how your offerings respond to something within the lives of parents and families. Highlight the relationship between the season of programming and the particular spiritual or religious needs, interests, passions, concerns, or life issues of parents and families. Describe the two to three benefits of engaging in faith formation. Explain how to use the network and how to access the activities and resources. Use as many promotional methods as you can. Consider the following ideas.

1. Ask those who are participating in church life and faith formation to invite their friends and colleagues. Ask people to use their social networks to promote the faith formation offerings.
2. Promote engagement online by connecting to (or extending from) a gathered event, program, or ministry.
3. Send email, text messages, and/or regular e-newsletters to targeted groups (use a service like Constant Contact or Mail Chimp or Flock Note).
4. Establish a parent or family faith formation Facebook page for network announcements, updates, stories, and photos from people engaged in faith formation.

5. Use Twitter to announce updates and events, and invite reflections from people on their experiences in the network.
6. Purchase targeted ads on Facebook and Twitter.
7. Provide ways to share experiences using videos, reports, photos, and so forth on blogs, Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram. Have a contest to encourage submissions and give a prize to the best photo, video, or report.
8. Have the pastor share the benefits and information of the family faith formation network at Sunday worship.
9. Host information sessions after Sunday worship and other gathered programs to describe the network offerings and how to use them.
10. Include information about the family faith formation network in new member packets, baptism preparation materials, and other points of first contact with parents and families. Send a personalized invitation to new members.
11. Promote the family faith formation network at all gathered programs and events in the church.

Be sure to find ways to communicate the stories and examples of the benefits and blessings that are coming to parents and families, and to the whole church community. Consider making short videos or audio interviews of people who are engaged and then upload them to the church website and the faith formation website as well as to Facebook.

Planning Step 10: Evaluate the Season of Family Faith Formation Programming

There are two essential times to evaluate programming: at the completion of a program or activity and at the end of a season of programming.

A *program evaluation* can be as simple as embedding an evaluation onto the website with individual programs and activities so that parents can complete an evaluation as soon as the program or activity concludes. It is also easy to develop an evaluation form on SurveyMonkey (www.surveymonkey.com) and provide a link on the website to the online evaluation. SurveyMonkey compiles the results of the evaluation and produces a report of the results that can then be printed. (There are sample educational evaluation tools on SurveyMonkey that can be adapted.)

A *seasonal evaluation* reviews both programming and the website design and usability. The seasonal evaluation combines face-to-face evaluation meetings with online evaluation tools such as SurveyMonkey (www.surveymonkey.com).

For a *face-to-face seasonal evaluation* gather small groups of people (twelve to twenty) who participated in programming and utilized the website. Conduct this activity *twice*: once to get feedback on the content of the network—what people participated in, and second for the design and usability of the faith formation network. Make a copy of the four-quadrant grid (see Display 7.5 on page 238) on newsprint or a whiteboard to capture people's feedback in four different areas. Draw a plus in the

upper left quadrant, a triangle in the upper right quadrant, a question mark in the lower left quadrant, and a light bulb in the lower right quadrant.

- The upper left quadrant is for things people liked or found notable (in the programming and website).
- The upper right quadrant is for constructive criticism.
- The lower left quadrant is for questions that the experience raised in the lives of the people.
- The lower right quadrant is for ideas that the experiences spurred.

For an *online seasonal evaluation* develop an evaluation form on SurveyMonkey (www.surveymonkey.com) and provide a link to the online evaluation on the faith formation website and church website Design the online evaluation in two sec-tions: an evaluation of seasonal programming and an evaluation of the website design and usability. Be sure to have people indicate if they did not participate in a program by adding a response to each question such as "did not participate." Send an email to all those who participated in one or more programs and activities in the season and ask them to go online to compete the evaluation.

For more evaluation instruments go to the "Family" section on the *Reimagine Faith Formation* website developed by LifelongFaith Associates: www.reimagine faithformation.com.

Works Cited

Krug, Steve. *Don't Make Me Think: A Common Sense Approach to Web Usability.* Berkeley: New Riders, 2014, third edition.

DISPLAY 7.5

Evaluation Grid
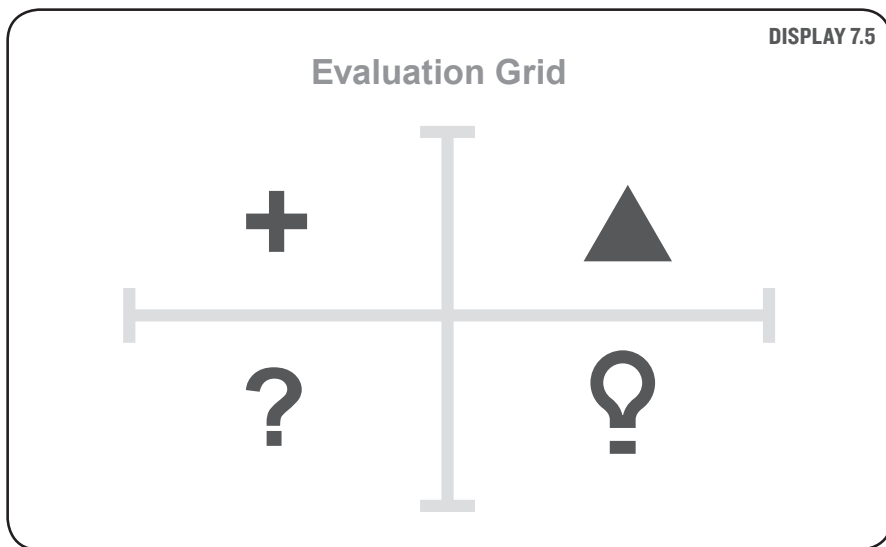
APPENDIX 1

Programming Environments

Family faith formation incorporates seven program environments, in online spaces and physical places, to provide a variety of ways for people to learn and grow in faith that respects their preferred styles of learning, their life situations, and their time constraints. The seven environments provide a way to offer a diversity of programs in different learning environment as well as to offer the same program content in multiple learning environments—all of which provide parents/families with more options to participate in faith formation and broadens the scope of faith formation offerings. The seven environments include:

Independent
Independent programming provides maximum flexibility for the parent/family to engage in faith formation so they can decide when, how, where, and what they will experience. With the increasing number and variety of books and printed resources, audio podcasts, video presentations, video programs, online courses, and online resource centers, independent faith formation offers a 24-7 approach to faith growth and learning for busy parents/families. Congregations can serve as guide to helping them find the best format and content to address their needs, and then deliver that programming online through the family faith formation website.

With a mentor or coach
Mentoring or coaching provides a one-to-one relationship that can be utilized in a variety of faith formation programming. For example a mentor/coach can work with parents who are having a child baptized and provide individualized faith formation around the life situations and religious-spiritual needs of the parents. Most congregations have a group of willing mentors/coaches in the grandparent generation.

At home
At-home programming provides parents and whole families with faith formation programs, activities, and resources designed for use at home or in daily life and delivered

in a variety of ways including a faith formation website or social media. With the abundance of high quality digital content congregations can provide programs and resources, such as online learning programs, resources for the church year seasons, Sunday worship resources, online communities and support groups, and links to online faith formation resources and resource centers.

In small groups

Parent and family small-group programming provides an excellent way to address a diversity of needs and life situations by organizing a variety of small groups with each one targeted to a particular need or topic. Small groups provide lots of flexibility in schedule and location. Groups can meet at times and places that best fit members' lives, such as a group that meets for breakfast weekly at the local restaurant or for coffee at a local coffee shop. Small groups create an accepting environment in which new relationships can be formed. It is not always necessary for the congregation to sponsor small group programs. Congregational leaders can provide resources, support, and training for leaders, thereby enabling parents and families to organize their own small groups. Small group programming learning can take many different forms including:

- Discipleship or faith-sharing groups or study groups such as Bible study groups, theme or issue-oriented study groups, Sunday lectionary-based faith sharing groups, book study groups.
- Practice-focused groups such as parenting skills and spiritual formation.
- Support groups for parents at different stages of family life: young children, older children, younger adolescents, older adolescents, and emerging adults.
- Support groups for single parents, blended families, divorced parents, parents with children who suffer from serious illnesses, and more.

In large groups

Large-group programming provides a way to address a faith theme, topic, or issue that engages a wide diversity of parents or families, including:

- Family programming on faith themes, seasonal celebrations, social events, service days, and more that can be sponsored weekly, biweekly, monthly, or seasonally.
- Multisession programs, such as a parenting courses for each life stage: young children, older children, younger adolescents, older adolescents, and emerging adults.
- One-session program, such as a monthly session for parent enrichment.
- Speaker series, such as a multi-evening or multiweek program focused around family life issues, parenting, theological themes, current events, season of the church year, and more.
- Activities and discussion after Sunday worship for the whole family to explore and experience the Sunday readings in age groups or family-intergenerational groups.

- Parent parallel learning program for parents while their children are engaged in age-appropriate learning.
- Workshops for parents or the whole family targeted to specific family life issues: communication, parenting skills, building a strong family, managing family time, developing technology rules, and more.
- Film festivals that explore important life and faith themes that can be followed with family activities and discussions.
- Family camp for a week or weekend at a Christian camp.
- Family or parent retreat experiences: evening, one day, or weekend.
- Family mission trip organized by the church: local, domestic or international.
- Intergenerational programs for all ages in the congregation.

The congregation

Congregational programming focuses on the events already present in the life of the church: Sunday worship, the feasts and seasons of the church year, sacramental and ritual celebrations, works of justice and acts of service, prayer experiences, spiritual traditions, and events that originate within the life and history of an individual congregation. Faith formation can provide experiences for people to *prepare*—with the appropriate knowledge and practices—for participation in the central events of church life and the Christian faith and to *guide their participation and reflection* upon those events.

In the community and world

Programming in the community and world provides a way for congregations to utilize existing programs and activities outside the church as part of a family faith formation plan. This involves researching the resources and programs (programs, courses, clinics, workshops, presentations, and more) being offered by community organizations, schools, community colleges and universities, retreat centers and Christian camps, YMCAs, libraries, bookstores, and more. Many organizations—locally and nationally—have already created programs and activities that be adopted by the congregation.

APPENDIX 2

Digitally Enabled Strategies

Family faith formation is *digitally enabled*—blending gathered community settings with online learning environments and utilizing the abundance of digital media and tools for learning and faith formation; and *digitally connected*—linking faith formation at church, with peers, in the community, and at home using online and digital media.

Family faith formation can now utilize digital technologies and digital media to engage parents and families with faith-forming content anytime, anyplace, and just-in-time—and extend and expand faith formation from physical, face-to-face settings into their daily lives through digital content and mobile delivery systems. Online platforms for family faith formation (websites) integrate the content (programs, activities, resources), connect people to the content and to each other, provide continuity for people across different learning experiences, and make everything available anytime, anywhere, 24-7-365.

We now have access to new digital methods and media for reaching and engaging people—social media (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and more), webinars and online learning, video conferencing, videos, audio podcasts, and much more. All of these methods and media expand the opportunities to engage *all* parents and families in faith formation. We need to continually ask: How are we providing mobile content for a family to use at the dinner table, in the car, in the morning or at bedtime, or for a mom or dad to use while they wait for their children participating in sports, music, arts?

A family faith formation website provides the platform for connecting with families and delivering content, programs, activities, and resources to engage people in faith formation. Increasingly churches will need to see themselves not as exclusive providers of family faith formation, but as platforms for bringing meaningful and engaging learning experiences to parents/families and for guiding them to such experiences elsewhere. A website provides the platform for *seamless* learning across a variety of experiences, resources, locations, times, or settings. The website, together

with social media, provides continuity between faith formation in the congrega-
tion, at home, in daily life, and online.

Family faith formation incorporates blended models of faith formation to con-
nect physical settings and online settings. The new digital tools, digital media, and
online platforms connect participation in church life with daily life *and* connect
parents/families at home, at work, and other places with personalized and custom-
ized faith formation content and experiences. Faith formation today can integrate
online and face-to-face learning, blending them in a variety of ways from online
programs with minimal interaction in physical settings to programs in physical
settings that utilize online content or extend the program using online content.

Family faith formation utilizes five blended strategies (see Display 7.6) in design-
ing new programming, redesigning existing programming, surrounding events
and programs with online content, and selecting a variety of digital programs,
activities, and resources that can be used alone (fully online) or used in conjunction
with face-to-face programs.

Gathered with online content
Design a gathered program using online content from websites, videos from You-
Tube or other video sites, and blogs and other social media. With an abundance of
high-quality digital content, this first option is the easiest way to bring the digital
world into a gathered program.

DISPLAY 7.6

Blended Faith Formation

ONLINE ⟵⟶ FACE-TO-FACE

Fully Online	Mostly Online	Online & Gathered	Gathered & Online Content	Gathered with Online Content
An online program with all learning done online and limited face-to-face, gathered learning settings	A mostly online program with opportunities for regular interaction in face-to-face, gathered settings	Online learning focused on presenting the content of the program *combined with* face-to-face, gathered sessions using active learning methods to discuss, practice and apply the content	A gathered event or program that provides online content and activities to extend and expand the learning from the gathered program	A gathered event or program that uses online content as part of the design of the event or program

Gathered with online content beyond the program

Connect the events of church life (Sunday worship, church year seasons) and programs at church with online content that extends and deepens the experience of parents/families through resources for learning, prayer, ritual, action, and more.

Imagine extending Sunday worship through the week using a variety of digital content that deepens the understanding and practice of the Sunday readings, sermon, and church year season and provides prayer, devotions, rituals, a video of the sermon with a study guide, service/action ideas, conversation activities, and more.

Imagine providing a forty-day Lent "curriculum" that connects the Lent events in church life with a variety of activities for experiencing and practicing Lent in daily and home life—delivered online through the congregation's faith formation website. A Lent "home curriculum" could include activities for fasting, praying, and serving (almsgiving), reflections on the Sunday readings, daily Bible readings, Lent devotions and daily prayer, Lent study resources and videos, children's activities, and much more. This example could be apply to all church year seasons.

Online and gathered

Redesign parent/family programming by moving the content that people would experience in the gathered setting to an online platform using video, audio, and print resources. Now parents or the whole family will engage with the content online, at their own pace and time, in preparation for a gathered session. The gathered session can be redesigned, not to teach the content, but to interact and apply content already experienced—making gathered sessions much more experiential. A variety of interactive activities, discussion, project-based learning, and practice and demonstration activities can be used in the gathered session.

Imagine a baptism preparation process (or first communion or any milestone with a church celebration) in which the content of the program is now available online—in video and audio programs, articles and books, and more—and the gathered sessions focused on interaction, application, and theological reflection activities. A parent mentor/coach could be integrated into this process to assist parents and provide continuity.

Imagine redesigning children's faith formation by moving the teaching content from the classes onto an online classroom (see Edmodo or Schoology) where parents and children could learn together at home and the gathered sessions at church could focus on interactive activities and demonstration with children sharing projects they created at home.

Mostly online

Develop opportunities for parents/families to learn online and provide opportunities for interaction in a gathered setting or web conference format. Imagine offering a monthly online parent education program using a webinar format delivered to parents at home that was organized in four-month semesters (fall and winter/spring) with three webinars followed by a parent gathering at church.

Fully online

Offer online-only faith formation on a variety of topics and issues by using existing online courses, activities, print and e-books, audio podcasts, video programs, and content-rich websites. Imagine offering a monthly seasonal activity for all families that is delivered online with a variety of media and family-based activities for fall, winter, spring, and summer; and for monthly events such as Thanksgiving, Christmas, Martin Luther King Jr. Remembrance Day, Earth Day, Mother's Day/Father's Day, and much more. Imagine an online prayer and spirituality center where families and people of all ages can access daily prayer reflections and devotions, offer prayer intentions pray for others, learn about spiritual practices, download prayer activities for the home, participate in an online retreat experience, and more.

Reimaging Faith Formation for the 21st Century

John Roberto
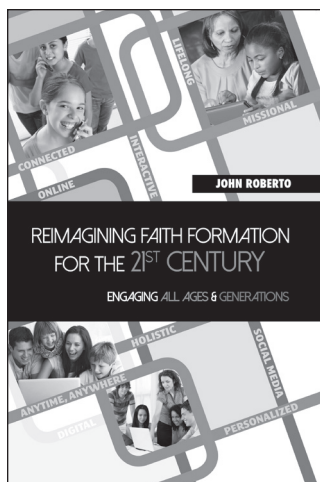
Reimagining Faith Formation is a proposal for what twenty-first century faith formation can look like. Much has been written about the challenges facing Christianity and faith formation. This book seeks to provide a way forward. How can we address the big adaptive challenges facing churches and faith formation? How can we reimagine faith formation with a vision that honors the past and is open to the future? How can we build a new faith-forming ecosystem that supports religious transmission and faith growth? How can we design new models with the best understandings and practices of learning and faith formation? And how can we engage all ages and generations in growing in faith and discipleship for a lifetime?

Chapter One explores four big adaptive challenges facing churches and faith formation to identify the need for a new faith-forming ecosystem and new models of faith formation.

Kindle version available at Amazon.com.

$15 per book / Quantity Discounts
(Published in 2015)

Chapter Two presents a reimagined faith formation ecosystem for the twenty-first century incorporating five, essential, interconnected components: intergenerational faith formation in the congregation, age-group and generational faith formation in a variety of physical places and online spaces, family faith formation at home, missional faith formation to the spiritual but not religious and the unaffiliated, and online and digital faith formation.

Chapter Three presents a reimagined model of faith formation as a *network* of relationships, content, experiences, and resources—in physical places and online spaces that is *lifelong* and *life-wide*—everywhere, anytime learning within a network of mentors, teachers, family, and peers.

Chapter Four presents a reimagined understanding of faith formation curriculum that is holistic, comprehensive and balanced, systemic, lifelong, contextual, digitally enabled, connected, and multi-platform.

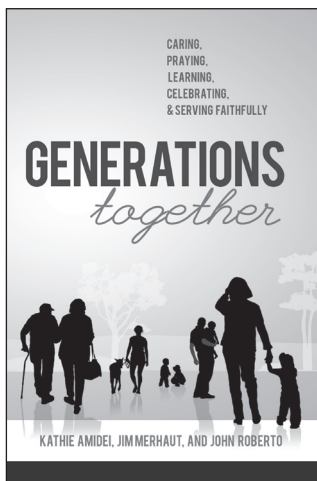**Chapter Five** reimagines the role of faith formation leader as *curator*.

A Lifelong Faith Publication

Available from the Lifelong Faith Store at:
www.lifelongfaith.com/store/c1/Featured_Products.html

Generations Together
Caring, Praying, Learning, Celebrating, & Serving Faithfully

Kathie Amidei, Jim Merhaut, and John Roberto

Faith is transmitted from generation to generation in extended families and intergenerational congregations. Every congregation can discover its intergenerational heart and soul, and become an intentionally intergenerational community that nurtures the faith of all ages and equips them for living as disciples of Jesus Christ in our world today.

Generations Together presents the vision of a congregation that is becoming more intentionally intergenerational through its congregational life of *caring, celebrating, learning, prayer*, and serving. *Generations Together* guides leaders in learning what this vision looks like in practice and how to guide a congregation in envisioning and designing projects and initiative to become more intentionally intergenerational.

Kindle version available at Amazon.com.

$15 per book / Quantity Discounts
(Published in 2014)

Chapter 1. A Vision of an Intergenerational Church

Chapter 2. Faith Development from Generation to Generation

Chapter 3. The Journey to Intergenerationality: One Church's Story

Chapter 4. Outcomes and Practices of Intergenerational Faith Formation

Chapter 5. A Toolkit for Becoming Intentionally Intergenerational

Chapter 6. Intergenerational Faith Formation for People with Disabilities
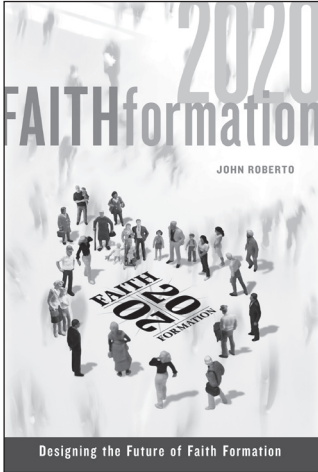
Chapter 7. Leadership for an Intergenerational Church

A Lifelong Faith Publication

Available from the Lifelong Faith Store at:
www.lifelongfaith.com/store/c1/Featured_Products.html

Faith Formation 2020
Designing the Future of Faith Formation

John Roberto

Kindle version available at Amazon.com.

$15 per book / Quantity Discounts
(Published in 2010)

How can Christian congregations provide vibrant faith formation to address the spiritual and religious needs of all ages and generations in the twenty-first century? How can churches envision the shape of faith formation in the year 2020 and design initiatives to respond proactively to the challenges and opportunities in the second decade of the twenty-first century?

Churches across the United States are facing significant challenges in their efforts to provide vibrant faith formation for all ages and generations. The new environment in which Christian faith formation operates will demand new thinking and new models, practices, resources, and technologies to address the spiritual needs of all generations.

Faith Formation 2020: Designing the Future of Faith Formation guides churches in imagining new directions for faith formation and engages leaders in designing faith formation for the second decade of the twenty-first century. The book presents four scenarios for envisioning the future of faith formation with 1) people of vibrant faith and active engagement in the church community, 2) people who participate occasionally but are not actively engaged or spiritually committed, 3) people who are spiritual but not religious, and 4) people who are uninterested in the spiritual life and unaffiliated with religion.

The book offers practical strategies, ideas, innovations, and resources for targeting the spiritual and religious needs of people in all four scenarios.
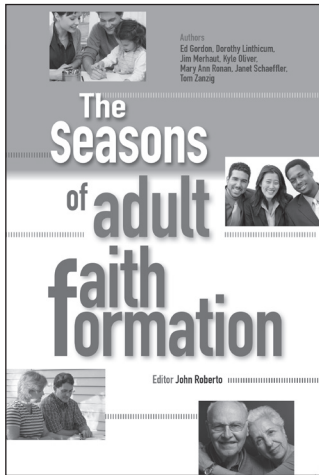
A Lifelong Faith Publication

Available from the Lifelong Faith Store at:
www.lifelongfaith.com/store/c1/Featured_Products.html

The Seasons of Adult Faith Formation

Ed Gordon, Dorothy Linthicum, Jim Merhaut, Kyle Oliver, Mary Ann Ronan, Janet Schaeffler, and Tom Zanzig

John Roberto, editor

It's time for every Christian church to commit itself to developing faith formation for every season of adulthood: young adults, midlife adults, mature adults, and older adults. It's possible today! We will need to learn new ways of thinking and acting. But adult formation for every adult is possible if we use twenty-first century practices, approaches, and resources.

We will need new insights—drawn from research, theory, and practice—to inform us and guide the development of adult faith formation through the four seasons of adulthood. We will need new approaches and practices to engage all the seasons of an adult's life in the lifelong journey of discipleship and faith growth—a process of experiencing, learning, and practicing the Christian faith as we seek to follow Jesus and his way in today's world. We will need a new model of faith formation that provides a platform to reach *every* adult in our faith communities and in the wider community.

Kindle version available at Amazon.com.

$15 per book / Quantity Discounts
(Published in 2015)

The Seasons of Adult Faith Formation is designed to provide pastors, church staff and ministry leaders, adult faith formation coordinators and educators, and all faith formation leaders with a deeper understanding of adulthood today, a vision of twenty-first century adult faith formation, and the tools and processes for designing faith formation for all the seasons of adulthood.

Chapter 1. Faith Formation for All the Seasons of Adulthood–John Roberto

Chapter 2. The Development of Modern Adult Education and Faith Formation–Ed Gordon

Chapter 3. Young Adulthood–Kyle Oliver

Chapter 4. Midlife Adulthood–Jim Merhaut

Chapter 5. Mature Adulthood–Janet Schaeffler

Chapter 6. Older Adulthood–Dorothy Linthicum

Chapter 7. Spiritual Transformation in Adult Faith Formation–Tom Zanzig

Chapter 8. Developing Adult Faith Formation Programming–John Roberto

Chapter 9. Designing Twenty-First Century Adult Faith Formation–John Roberto

A Lifelong Faith Publication

Available from the Lifelong Faith Store at:
www.lifelongfaith.com/store/c1/Featured_Products.html