Lifelong Faith

the theory and practice of lifelong faith formation

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A Lifelong Faith Formation Network for the 21st Century

Lifelong Faith

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Welcome to the Summer 2011 issue of *Lifelong Faith* on the theme of "A Lifelong Faith Formation Network for the 21st Century."

What would a 21st century approach to lifelong faith formation look like? If we were to "start from scratch," what models of faith formation would we create to engage 21st century people in lifelong faith growth and learning? I've spent a lot of time over the past five years thinking about these questions, imaging what faith formation would look like if we develop it using 21st century technologies, just as an earlier era of faith formation adopted the technology of schooling and the printing press to produce instructional educational models using catechisms and textbooks.

This issue of Journal is an attempt to present one vision of a 21st century approach to lifelong faith formation. It is now possible for a congregation to provide faith formation for everyone, anytime, anywhere, 24x7x365. It is now possible to customize and personalize faith formation around the lives of the people in a congregation and offer a wide diversity of programs, activities, and resources in a variety of formats delivered in physical gathered settings and virtual online settings.

We live at a remarkable time for Christian faith formation. We are experiencing a *convergence* of new web and digital technologies that are transforming life and learning *and* the tremendous growth of religious content and experiences in digital form. A Lifelong Faith Formation Network provides one way to integrate this convergence for the good of the whole congregation.

This issue is organized in three sections: Part 1 presents the vision and features of Lifelong Faith Formation Network; Part 2 offers a guide to develop a Network with several illustrations of how to organize content and experiences on the Network; and Part 3 provides an overview of a variety of digital tools that can be integral elements of your Network.

I am developing a website, *CuratingFaithFormation.com*, that will include listings of resources that can be incorporated into an online Lifelong Faith Formation Resource—many which are free. This will help congregations find trusted resources to include on their Network. Look for the launch in Fall 2011.

I hope this issue prompts thinking and discussion about what 21st century models of faith formation might look like. I welcome your thoughts and feedback. Please feel free to email me at: jroberto@lifelongfaith.com.

John Roberto, Editor

"Faith Formation for Everyone, Anytime, Anywhere" – A Lifelong Faith Formation Network for the 21st Century

John Roberto

What would a 21st century approach to lifelong faith formation look like? If we were to "start from scratch," what models of faith formation would we create to engage 21st century people in lifelong faith growth and learning? I've spent a lot of time over the past five years thinking about these questions, imaging what faith formation would look like if we develop it using 21st century technologies, just as an earlier era of faith formation adopted the technology of schooling and the printing press to produce instructional educational models using catechisms and textbooks.

You might have seen the commercials for the Apple iPad2 on TV. (You can also view them online at www.apple.com/ipad). In these commercials I see glimpses of the new world of faith formation and learning. As you read the text, imagine the pictures of people and their iPads, or better yet, stop reading and go view the videos.

Now
Now we can watch a newspaper
Listen to a magazine
Curl up with a movie
And see a phone call
Now we can take a classroom anywhere
Hold an entire bookstore
And touch the stars
Because now there's this (iPad)

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If You Asked
If you ask a parent, they might call it intuitive
If you ask a musician, they might call it inspiring
To a doctor, it's groundbreaking
To a CEO, it's powerful
To a teacher, it's the future
If you ask a child, she might call it magic
If you asked us, we'd say it's just getting started

© 2011 Apple, Inc. (www.apple.com/ipad)

"If you asked us, we'd say it's just getting started." Imagine the potential that awaits churches if we can develop 21st century models of faith formation. This article proposes the vision, practices, and tools for one model of 21st century faith formation that I am calling a "Lifelong Faith Formation Network." It is an attempt to re-imagine congregational faith formation using the technologies and resources of the 21st century.

John Roberto (LifelongFaith Associates) is the editor of the *Lifelong Faith* Journal and author of *Faith Formation 2020: Designing the Future of Faith Formation*. He also works on the staff of Vibrant Faith Ministries in Minneapolis coordinating the Faith Formation Learning Exchange.

Imagine the Possibilities

We live at a remarkable time for Christian faith formation. We are experiencing a *convergence* of new web and digital technologies that are transforming life and learning *and* the tremendous growth of religious content and experiences in digital form—the Bible, Bible studies, prayer and spiritual practices, daily devotions, online courses, to name only a few examples. Think of all the religious content created each day by religious publishers and organizations, seminaries and universities, congregations, and individuals.

Imagine the possibilities of the convergence of the new technologies with the diversity of religious content and experiences now available.

- Imagine creating an online faith formation center where people of all ages and generations can find (and link to) high quality religious content and experiences—worship, prayer, spiritual practices, Bible study, Christian beliefs and traditions, rituals and milestones, music, and so much more.

- Imagine offering a wide variety of online Bible and theology courses for individual and small group adult study by selecting the best offerings on iTunes University and from college and seminary continuing education programs, cataloging and linking to them on the church's faith formation website, connecting adults who want to study a particular course together, and then creating a blog or wiki for people to share their reflections and learning with each other and whole church community.

- Imagine parents having access to the best knowledge for parenting through their church's website (print, audio, video) and starting a parenting wiki to share their experiences and insights—and inviting all parents from the congregation (and around the world) to join them.

- Imagine redesigning children's faith formation so that children are doing projects and activities with their parents online (at a secure site, such as Edmodo, www.edmodo.com), and then refocusing "class time" on presenting projects and demonstrating their learning.

- Imagine offering "versions" of a confirmation program—with online and face-to-face activities—so that young people (with the help of a guide) can select the content and activities most reflective of their religious and spiritual needs.

- Imagine a small group of young adults studying the Bible online, connecting virtually through Skype each week, and sharing their written reflections in their Bible study blog.

- Imagine a small group of young people who want to learn more about Christianity by taking an online college-level theology course together using a free course online from the "catalog" at iTunesU.

- Imagine an adult group studying the Bible from Genesis to Revelation using the videos and study guides online at Bible Mesh (www.BibleMesh.com) and then sharing their reflections with the whole congregation through blog entries on the church website.

- Imagine a group of people who love art exploring images of Jesus in artwork by virtually studying art in the great museums of the world, such as the Vatican museum, and meeting online and in-person to share their reflections.

- Imagine a six-week program for youth and/or adults on understanding the history, tradition, and practices of world religions with guest speakers from around the country/world presenting live via Skype or via YouTube video, and using the Patheos world religions website (www.patheos.com) as a "text" for study.

- Imagine a justice and service center where people of all ages can learn about pressing social issues, explore Biblical and church teaching on justice, and find ways to act

through local and global projects and organizations.

The amazing thing is that all of these resources and technologies exist, *and* that almost all children and their parents, teens, young adults, adults, and increasing numbers of adults 60+ already have the technology tools to make this possible.

Christian churches have the potential for developing 21st century faith formation. It is now possible for a congregation to provide faith formation for everyone, anytime, anywhere, 24x7x365. It is now possible to customize and personalize faith formation around the life tasks and issues, interests, and religious and spiritual needs of people of all ages. It is now possible to offer a wide diversity of programs, activities, and resources that incorporate a variety of ways to learn—on your own, with a mentor, at home, in small groups, in large groups, in the congregation, and in the community and world—delivered in physical gathered settings and virtual online settings.

Why It's Time for a Network Approach to Lifelong Faith Formation

Most Christian churches have similar goals for faith formation. Churches want faith formation that helps people grow in their relationship with God throughout their lives; live as disciples of Jesus Christ at home, in the workplace, in the community and the world; develop an understanding of the Bible and their faith tradition; deepen their spiritual life and practices; engage in service and mission; relate the Christian faith to life today; and participate in the life and ministries of the faith community. Churches want faith formation that touches the head, the heart, and actions of people. They want faith formation that informs, forms, and transforms. They want faith formation that is for a lifetime!

Churches are finding it more and more difficult to accomplish these goals in the 21st century world. Part of the problem is that churches continue to use models of faith formation that were developed for the 19th and 20th world, well before the "flat world" and digital revolutions of the 21st century. There is no need here to present again the difficulties of the older models of church education designed around an instructional, classroom approach or to review the significant forces affecting congregations. (For an analysis of these forces see *Faith Formation 2020* and the website: www.FaithFormation2020.net.) There is also no need to "fix" the problems of the older models—their time has past and we need to begin with life in the 21st century and determine which models are appropriate for this age.

Ronald Heiftez 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. For the past thirty years or so leaders have been trying to apply technical fixes to the older models of faith formation, usually with little long-term success. *Adaptive challenges* require new learning, innovation, and new patterns of behavior. Adaptive challenges require experiments, new discoveries, and adjustments. Without learning new ways—changing attitudes, values, and deep-seated behaviors—people cannot make the adaptive leap necessary to thrive in the new environment.

Churches today face a huge adaptive challenge in developing faith formation for the 21st century. One way to frame this adaptive challenge is to imagine what would faith formation in your church would look like if you "started from scratch" and developed a new approach(s) for a 21st century world and its people. What approach(s) would you use? What types of faith formation opportunities would you offer? What resources would you need? What technologies would you use?

I believe we need a more holistic and comprehensive vision for the 21st century that is formational and transformational, that addresses the diversity of people's spiritual and religious needs; that takes place in a diversity of physical settings (churches, homes, third places) and virtual online settings; that utilizes a variety of formats and technologies for learning; that accesses the vast resources of religious content and experiences available today. I am proposing a congregational ***lifelong faith formation network*** as one response to the adaptive challenge facing Christian faith formation.

Why Formation?

Why use the language of formation and transformation, not education, to describe this new model? Formation does not carry the connotations of schooling and instruction that the older models have. It is more holistic ("whole person"). It incorporates head, heart, and actions/practices. It has the potential of being lifelong, whereas schooling focuses primarily on the first three decades of life.

Formation has a long history in Christianity. The baptismal catechumenate of the first 400 years of Christianity was a formational experience of worship, community life, instruction, mentoring, prayer, service, and moral formation—all leading to membership in the Christian community through baptism. The monastic tradition begun by St. Benedict over 1500 years ago utilizes a holistic formation in Benedictine spirituality and the Christian way of life—times of prayer throughout the day, work, meals, study, worship, and the entire community life. Everything is formational. And the longer the Benedictine monks and sisters are immersed in this environment and live the practices each day the more they are being transformed by this way of life.

People today long for this type of formational environment and experience where they can be immersed into the practices and way of life of a tradition-bearing community and be transformed spiritually. Terrence Tilly reinforces the emphasis on being formed in the practices of the Christian faith within a community. In his excellent article, "Communication in Handing on the Faith," he writes,

> Faith can be understood as a set of practices, even a complex virtue, Faith is not something we first believe, then practice. Rather, we practice the faith and in so doing come to understand it. God's gracious initiative makes this possible. (156)

> Communicating the faith is the complex practice of empowering people, disciples, to engage in the practices that constitute the faith tradition, including practices of participating in the sacraments and worship life of the church, and in distinctively Christian social and moral practices that fit the local community in which we live, and of believing. (156)

> If we are to pass on the faith as a practice, then, we need to have people who are interested in pursuing the practice of living in and living out the tradition, and we need to coach, not teach, the faith. . . . If faith is a set of practices, then portraying and communicating the faith is *shown* in performance more than *said* in dogma, doctrine, or rules. (157)

> . . . . What we need to do, then, is to be a community that attracts people who then want to reach the goals we strive for. That is the only way that "coaching in the faith" becomes possible. The members of a community coach each other in how to live out the faith. Faith is communicated in this (dialectical, not sequential) two step process of desire (to live out the faith) and training (in living out the faith). (170)

In the Roman Catholic tradition, the *General Directory for Catechesis* (GDC) and the National *Directory for Catechesis* (NDC) present a comprehensive formational process through six essential and interdependent tasks for catechesis: "1) knowledge of the faith, 2) knowledge of the meaning of liturgy and the sacraments, 3) moral formation in Jesus Christ, 4) teaching how to pray with Christ, 5) preparing to live in community and participate actively in the life and mission of the Church, and 6) a missionary spirit that prepares the faithful to be present as Christians in society" (See GDC nos. 85-87 and NDC 20, pp. 60-63). "These six tasks constitute a unified whole by which catechesis seeks to achieve its objective: the formation of disciples of Jesus Christ" (NDC 20, p. 63).

This comprehensive formation is rooted in Christ's method of formation: "Jesus instructed his disciples; he prayed with them; he showed them how to live; and he gave them his mission" (NDC 20, p. 59).

> Christ's method of formation was accomplished by diverse yet interrelated tasks. His example is the most fruitful inspiration for effective catechesis today because it is integral to formation in the Christian faith. Catechesis must attend to each of these different dimensions of faith; each becomes a distinct yet complementary task. Faith must be known, celebrated, lived, and expressed in faith. So catechesis comprises six fundamental tasks, each

of which is related to an aspect of faith in Christ. All efforts in evangelization and catechesis should incorporate these tasks. (NDC 20, p. 59-60)

In the Episcopal tradition, *The Charter for Lifelong Christian Formation*, adopted at the Episcopal Church's General Convention in July 2009, offers a comprehensive vision of Christian formation as a lifelong journey with Christ, in Christ, and to Christ. Lifelong Christian faith formation is lifelong growth in the knowledge, service and love of God as followers of Christ and is informed by scripture, tradition and reason.

The Charter's vision of lifelong faith formation incorporates formation in prayer; continuous learning; hearing the Word of God in Scripture; studying Scripture and church teachings; experiencing liturgy and worship; equipping disciples for life in the world; carrying out God's work of reconciliation, love, forgiveness, healing, justice and peace; and sharing one's faith through evangelism. (See *Charter for Lifelong Faith Formation* at www.formationcharter.com.)

Maria Harris, in her now classic book *Fashion Me a People*, explains how the church's educational ministry is embodied and lived in five classical forms: didache, koinonia, kerygma, diakonia, and leiturgia. She says that the church educates *to* all of these five classical forms, as well as *through* all of them:

- to *koinonia* (community and communion) by engaging in the forms of community and communion;
- to *leiturgia* (worship and prayer) by engaging in the forms of prayer and worship and spirituality;
- to *kerygma* (proclaiming the word of God) by attention to and practicing and incarnating the kerygma, "Jesus is risen," in speech of our own lives, especially the speech of advocacy;
- to *diakonia* (service and outreach) by attention to our own service and reaching out to others, personally and communally, locally and globally;
- to *didache* (teaching and learning) by attention to the most appropriate forms of teaching and learning (including schooling in our own communities. (43-44)

The whole church community is formational—it is the curriculum in many of the same ways the monastic life is formational *and* transformational for the monks and sisters. "The whole community as agent is, by its way of living together, speaking together, praying together, and worshiping together, causing a shock of recognition in person after person that reveals them to themselves, saying, 'I am being educated by and in this community to become who I am.' . . . The whole community is coming to know itself as learner, to know itself as the subject of education, and to know itself as the one whose path is unending. (Harris, 49)

How can new models of faith formation bring this vision of comprehensive formation to life in the 21st century?

Why a Network?

Networks are everywhere. The brain is a network of nerve cells connected by axons, and cells themselves are networks of molecules connected by biochemical reactions. Societies, too, are networks of people linked by friendships, familial relationships and professional ties. On a larger scale, food webs and ecosystems can be represented as networks of species. And networks pervade technology: the Internet, power grids and transportation systems are but a few examples. Even the language we are using to convey these thoughts to you is a network, made up of words connected by syntactic relationships. (Barabasi and Bonabeau, 52)

We know that life today is being transformed by digital technology and the emerging biological understanding of life as a network. We are all part of networks: our families, our schools, our workplaces, our religious congregations, our social circles. Networks—collections of people (and their resources) connected to each other through relationships—aren't new. They're as old as human society.

Images of networks appear in the Scriptures. Jesus uses the image of the vine and branches to describe his relationships with the disciples (church) and their relationship with him.

I am the true vine and my Father is the vine-grower. . . . Abide in me as I abide in you. Just as the branches cannot bear fruit by itself unless it abides in the vine, neither can you unless you

> abide in me. I am the vine, you are the branches. Those who abide in me and I in them bear much fruit, because apart from me you can do nothing. (John 15:1, 4-5)

Paul uses the image of the body to describe the early Christian community.

> For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. For in the one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and we were all made to drink of one Spirit. (1 Corinthians 12:12-13)

What *is* new is that in the 21st century this understanding of networks has been expanded to include the digital network we call the Internet and world wide web. New tools and technologies—video chat and conferencing (Skype, FaceTime), blogs, wikis, and twitters—are changing the way we communicate and connect. The changes can be seen in the way people are working together to create and disseminate knowledge through platforms like Wikipedia and in purely social activities, like sharing photos on Flickr and meeting new friends on Facebook. The shift is not just in the new Web 2.0 technologies. It's in the way that increasingly widespread access to these tools is driving a fundamental change in how groups are formed and work gets done. Wikis and other social media are engendering new, networked ways of behaving that are characterized by principles of openness, transparency, decentralized decision-making, and distributed action. These new approaches to connecting people and organizing work are now allowing us to do old things in new ways, and to try completely new things that weren't possible before.

Clay Shirky, author of *Here Comes Everybody*, states "The invention of new tools that facilitate group formation is less like ordinary technological change, and more like an event, something that has already happened. As a result, the important questions aren't about whether these tools will spread, or reshape society, but rather how they will do so."

Religious networks provide a rich set of connections each of us can make to people in both our online and offline worlds who can help us with our spiritual development and faith growth pursuits. While we've always had those types of people in our day-to-day lives, the Internet pushes the potential scope and scale of those networks to unprecedented heights. Today we can turn to people, organizations, and resources anywhere in the world to help us answer questions, connect to relevant content and resources, or just share their own experiences with us. Simply put, online networks change the game by allowing us, in a sense, to create our own "global classrooms" and collect teachers and learners around topics we want to learn about. They allow us to self-direct our learning and faith growth in exciting new ways.

Reflecting on the rise of the virtual global classroom, Will Richardson notes,

> One thing is certain, although schools may continue to fundamentally look and act as they have for more than one hundred years, the way individuals learn has already been forever changed. Instead of learning from others who have the credentials to "teach" in this new networked world, we learn with others whom we seek (and who seek us) on our own and with whom we often share nothing more than a passion for knowing. In this global community, we are at once all teachers and learners—changing roles as required, contributing, collaborating, and maybe even working together to re-create the world, regardless of where we are at any given moment. (287)

Twenty-first century faith formation will look and feel and operate as a network and an ecosystem. It will no longer resemble the linear, one-size fits all model of the industrial age. As a network it will provide a diversity of religious context and experiences for all ages and generations, for a diversity of religious and spiritual needs, 24x7x365, in face-to-face and virtual settings. It will incorporate an immense range of faith formation opportunities.

Reflecting on what a fully networked church looks like, media expert Quentin Schultze says,

> Human beings are inherently multimedia creatures. So "networking" takes many forms across all media, including in-person, print, electronic, and digital media. A full network employs all of the fitting or appropriate means of communication for the purposes of congregational life, from worship to education and fellowship. The notion of "fitting" use of

technology in this networking is crucially important. To be fully networked is not just to be busy, but to be fittingly involved with one another. We constantly have to be asking ourselves not if we are networked per se, but if we are networked appropriately, in tune with the purposes of the church. (Communicating Faithfully, http://quentinschultze.com/faith-technology-worship)

Why Technology?

People bring plenty of online network experiences to a network approach to life. The Internet has made it possible for individuals to pick and choose their way through shopping, entertainment, socializing, and the acquisition of information about everything from health care to music to current events. Here's a quick update on technology usage, drawn from the latest studies by the Pew Internet & American Life Project (http://pewinternet.org).

Online Use

While Millennials, ages 18-33, remain the biggest users of the Internet and the new technologies, all of the generations are increasing their online use: using social networking sites, listening to music, playing online games, reading blogs, watching videos and feature films, getting news, seeking health information, making travel reservations and purchases, online banking, looking for religious information, rating products and services, making online charitable donations, and downloading podcasts.

Even in areas that are still dominated by Millennials, older generations are making notable gains. Some of the areas that have seen the fastest rate of growth in recent years include older adults' participation in communication and entertainment activities online, especially in using social network sites such as Facebook. Among the major trends in online activities:

- While the youngest generations are still significantly more likely to use social network sites, the fastest growth has come from internet users 74 and older: social network site usage for this oldest cohort has quadrupled since 2008, from 4% to 16%.
- The percentage of all adult internet users who watch video online jumped 14 points in the past two years, from 52% in May 2008 to 66% in May 2010.
- 51% of all online adults listen to music online, compared with 34% the last time this question was asked, in June 2004. While Millennials used to be by far the most avid listeners, Gen Xers and Younger Boomers are catching up.
- As of May 2010, 53% of online adults have used a classified ads website such as Craigstlist, up from 32% in September 2007.
- Additionally, searching for health information, an activity that was once the primary domain of older adults, is now the third most popular online activity for all internet users 18 and older.

A Generational View

Online Use

All Adults:	79%
Millennials (18-33):	95%
Gen X (34-45):	86%
Young Boomers (46-55):	81%
Older Boomers (54-64):	76%
Silent Generation (65-73):	58%
G.I. Generation (Age 74+):	30%

Broadband at Home

All Adults:	66%
Millennials (18-33):	81%
Gen X (34-45):	73%
Young Boomers (46-55):	68%
Older Boomers (54-64):	61%
Silent Generation (65-73):	44%
G.I. Generation (Age 74+):	20%

Wireless Use

All Adults:	59%
Millennials (18-33):	82%
Gen X (34-45):	71%
Young Boomers (46-55):	55%
Older Boomers (54-64):	46%
Silent Generation (65-73):	33%
G.I. Generation (Age 74+):	9%

Mobile Devices

Cell Phones

In its first standalone measure of smartphone ownership, the Pew Internet Project finds that one third of American adults—35%–own smartphones. The Project's May 2011 survey found that 83% of US adults have a cell phone of some kind, and that 42% of them own a smartphone. That translates into 35% of all adults. Smartphone adoption is highest among the affluent and well-educated, the (relatively) young, and non-whites. Several groups have higher than average levels of smartphone adoption, including:

- The financially well-off and well-educated – 59% of adults living in a household earning income of $75,000 or more are smartphone owners; 48% of those with a college degree own smartphones.
- Those under the age of 45–58% of Americans between the ages of 25 and 34 now own a smartphone as do 49% of those ages 18-24 and 44% of those ages 35-44. Even among those with a household income of $30,000 or less, smartphone ownership rates for those ages 18-29 are equal to the national average.
- 44% of African-Americans and Latinos are smartphone users.

Mobile phones are a main source of internet access for one-quarter of the smartphone population. Some 87% of smartphone owners access the internet or email on their handheld, including two-thirds (68%) who do so on a typical day. When asked what device they normally use to access the internet, 25% of smartphone owners say that they mostly go online using their phone, rather than with a computer. While many of these individuals have other sources of online access at home, roughly one third of these "cell mostly" internet users lack a high-speed home broadband connection.

E-Readers, Tablets, and Laptops

The share of adults in the United States who own an e-book reader (e.g., Kindle, Nook) doubled to 12% in May, 2011 from 6% in November 2010. In May 2011, 8% of adults report owning a tablet computer such as an iPad, Samsung Galaxy or Motorola Xoom.

Further confirming the overall trend toward adoption of mobile devices, laptop computers are as popular as desktop computers among U.S. adults. Laptops have already overtaken desktops in popularity among adults under age 30, and appear poised to do the same among older adults.

Social Networking

The number of those using social networking sites has nearly doubled since 2008 and the population of SNS (social networking site) users has gotten older. In a 2011 Pew Internet report, 79% of American adults said they used the internet and nearly half of adults (47%), or 59% of internet users, say they use at least one of SNS. This is close to double the 26% of adults (34% of internet users) who used a SNS in 2008. Among other things, this means the average age of adult-SNS users has shifted from 33 in 2008 to 38 in 2010. Over half of all adult SNS users are now over the age of 35. Some 56% of SNS users now are female.

Facebook dominates the SNS space in this survey: 92% of SNS users are on Facebook; 29% use MySpace, 18% used LinkedIn and 13% use Twitter. There is considerable variance in the way people use various social networking sites: 52% of Facebook users and 33% of Twitter users engage with the platform daily, while only 7% of MySpace and 6% of LinkedIn users do the same. On Facebook on an average day:

- 15% of Facebook users update their own status
- 22% comment on another's post or status
- 20% comment on another user's photos
- 26% "Like" another user's content
- 10% send another user a private message

Twitter

As of May 2011, 13% of online adults use Twitter. That represents a significant increase from the 8% of online adults who identified themselves as Twitter users in November 2010. Half of Twitter users access the service on a cell phone

Twitter adoption is particularly high among non-whites. In May 2011, 25% of online African Americans use Twitter, compared with 9% of such whites. African-American and Latino internet users are each significantly more likely than whites to be Twitter adopters. One in ten African-American internet users now visit Twitter on a typical day—that is double the rate for Latinos and nearly four times the rate for whites.

Twitter usage by those ages 25-44 has grown significantly since late 2010. This growth trend is especially pronounced among 25-34 year olds—Twitter use for this cohort roughly doubled from 9% in November 2010 to 19% in May 2011. The growth in Twitter use among internet users ages 35-44 was notable as well (from 8% in late 2010 to 14% in spring 2011).

Key Features of a Lifelong Faith Formation Network

1. A Lifelong Faith Formation Network addresses the diverse life tasks and situations, spiritual and religious needs, and interests of all ages and generations by offering a variety of content, programs, activities, and resources.

Consider for a moment the diversity that churches and faith formation are facing today:

- **Generational Diversity**: iGeneration, Millennials, Generation X, Baby Boomers, and Builders
- **Life Cycle Diversity**: children, adolescents, emerging adults (20s), young adults (30's-mid 40s), mid-life adults (mid 40s-50s), retirement adults (60s-70s), older adults (80s+).
- **Family Diversity**: Married couples with children, married couples without children, single parents, multi-generational families, unmarried couples with children, and more.

The religious and spiritual needs of people today are just as varied. In the *Faith Formation 2020 Initiative* we identified four groups of people with distinct needs.

1) people of vibrant faith and active engagement in the church community
2) people who participate occasionally but are not actively engaged in the church or spiritually committed
3) people who are spiritual but not religious, and not involved in a Christian denomination
4) people who are uninterested in the spiritual life and unaffiliated with religion

To address the diversity in the lives of people today, churches need to offer a wider variety of faith formation offerings in physical and virtual settings. Today churches have available to them the resources and tools to provide lifelong faith formation for *all* ages and generations and to address the diversity of religious and spiritual needs of people. Churches can utilize the life of their faith community; the variety of excellent print, audio, and visual resources in faith formation; the new digital media and online resources; and the innovations and resources of other Christian churches to develop faith formation that is varied in content, expectations, depth, involvement, and timing.

In the past churches have often chosen the "one size fits all" mentality for programming. The culture of our day is all about personalization and customization. In a network model, faith formation shifts from the "one size fits all" curriculum and programming of an earlier era to a Lifelong Faith Formation Network of personalized and customized religious content and experiences that connects with people's spiritual and religious needs. With all of its variety, a Network can provide "differentiated faith formation" that is fashioned around the needs of people.

Faith formation is no longer about finding *the* program for a particular age group or generation. Churches can now meet people at the point of their spiritual, religious, and learning needs and offer personalized pathways for faith growth. Today, as never before, church have access to faith formation programming, activities, and resources that can be personalized and customized to address the diversity of people's religious and spiritual needs. Resources for learning abound in every environment (at home, in the church, in the community, online). A primary task of a Lifelong Faith Formation Network is to identify these resources and link individuals, families, and communities with them effectively. The new reality of faith formation programming is that churches can offer activities that cater to niches— individuals, families, and small groups with a particular spiritual or religious need, interest, passion, concern, or life issue. They

no longer have to worry about reaching a "mass audience" with "one size fits all" programming.

We know from learning sciences research that more effective learning will occur if each person receives a customized learning experience. People learn best when they are placed in a learning environment that is sensitive to their learning needs and flexible enough to adapt strategies and resources to individual needs.

For assistance in researching the needs of your community see Tool #1.

2. A Lifelong Faith Formation Network recognizes that learning is a process of active inquiry with the initiative residing within the individual.

The traditional model of schooling has conditioned people to perceive the proper role of learners as being dependent on teachers to make decisions for them as to what should be learned, how it should be learned, when it should be learned, and if it has been learned. Today people are accustomed to searching out what they want to know, when they want and need to know it. People are becoming more and more self-directed in their learning, and they have almost unlimited access to information through the Internet and the wide variety of print and media learning resources available in our society today.

As learning becomes a process of active inquiry, where the initiative resides within the person, intrinsic motivation becomes a key factor in determining whether or not people will engage in faith formation, and open themselves to learning and faith growth. Extrinsic motivation, such as faith formation participation polices (such as required hours or things that must be done in order to receive a sacrament), rarely motivate people to participate, learn, or grow in faith. In fact, they usually have the opposite effect.

Drawing on decades of scientific research on human motivation, Daniel Pink in his book *Drive: The Surprising Truth about What Motivates Us* exposes the mismatch between what research shows and how we motivate people While carrots and sticks (policies and requirements) worked somewhat successfully in the twentieth century assembly line model, that's precisely the wrong way to motivate people today.

He describes three types of motivation. Motivation 1.0 presumed that humans were biological creatures, struggling for survival. Motivation 2.0 presumed that humans also responded to reward and punishments in their environment. Motivation 3.0 presumes that humans also have a third drive—to learn, to create, and to better the world. It is this third type of Motivation that drives people to be self-directed and engage in learning as a process of active inquiry.

Motivation 3.0 has three essential elements:

- **Autonomy**: the desire to direct our own lives. People need autonomy over task (what they do), time (when they do it), team (who they do it with), and technique (how they do it).

- **Mastery**: the urge to get better and better at something that matters. Motivation 3.0 demands engagement. Only engagement can produce mastery—becoming better at something that matters. Mastery demands deliberate practice.

- **Purpose**: the yearning to do what we do in the service of something larger than ourselves. Humans, by their nature, seek purpose—a cause greater and more enduring than themselves.

Daniel Pink writes, "The secret to high performance and satisfaction—at work, at school, and at home—is the deeply human need to direct our own lives, to learn and create new things, and to do better by ourselves and our world."

As just one example of how autonomy and mastery combine to motivate learners. A recent research study found that students want control of their own learning. When asked why learning through an online class might make school more interesting, 47% of students in grades 9-12, 39% in grade 6-8, and 25% in grades 3-5 responded that they wanted to learn online to control their own learning experience. Students do not expect online courses to be easier. They do, however, expect the online learning environment to facilitate their success because they can review materials when they want and are more comfortable asking teachers for help. And online teachers see great benefits to student online learning: 76% believe that online

learning benefits students by putting them in control of their own learning.

Video Presentation

View Daniel Pink's two videos on motivation at:

- Ted Talks: www.ted.com/talks/dan_pink_on_motivation.html
- RSA Animate: http://youtu.be/u6XAPnuFjJc

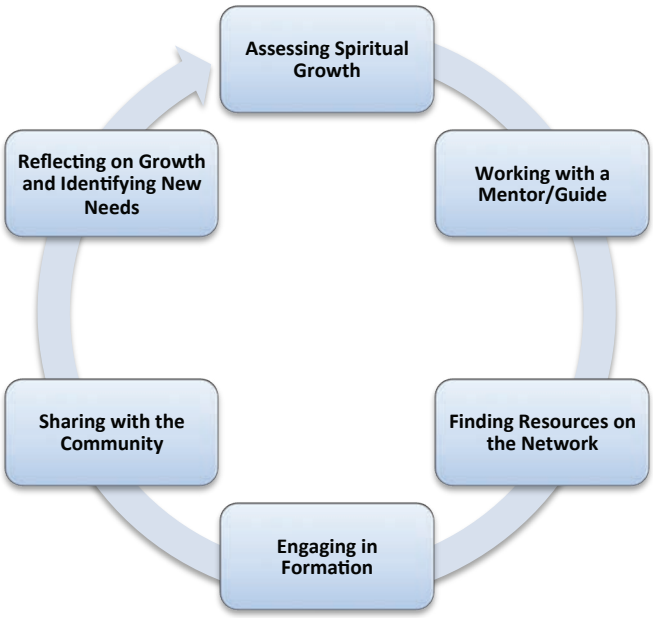
3. A Lifelong Faith Formation Network guides individuals and families in discerning their spiritual and religious needs and creating personal learning pathways for faith growth and learning.

Giving power to individuals and families to shape their own learning does not mean abandoning them to their own devices. Rather, it creates a new role and responsibility for faith formation leaders—to serve as guides and facilitators helping people identify growth needs, finding resources and settings for faith formation, identifying next steps on their journey, and so on.

A Lifelong Faith Formation Network, rich in a diversity of content and a variety of ways to learn, can guide people in creating their own personal learning pathways. Churches can develop processes for helping individuals and families diagnose their religious and spiritual learning needs (online and in-person) and create their own plans for faith growth and learning. A "faith growth learning plan" helps people identify where they are on their spiritual journey, what they need for continuing their growth, who else might share that need, and the resources that could help them meet that need. Churches can provide mentors or guides to assist people in developing their spiritual growth plan and accessing the programs and resources that fit their plan. Mentors or guides can be available for one-on-one conversations as people move through their growth plan.

To review a spiritual assessment tool and accompanying guide for developing a spiritual growth plan go to the website of the United Methodist Church of the Resurrection in Leawood, Kansas. They use the assessment and guide in their adult faith formation process to help the adults in their community grow in faith. (Website: www.cor.org/programs-ministries/the-journey/welcome-to-your-self-assessment)

A Process for a Developing a Personalized Faith Growth Plan



4. A Lifelong Faith Formation Network incorporates *informal* learning, as well as *formal* learning in faith formation.

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

HGTV, promote learning, even though they are not formal educational TV programs.

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

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

Formal Learning

classes speaker series workshops online courses small group Bible study		self-study Bible study social media/networking faith-sharing groups
Intentional		**Unexpected**
reading mentoring service/mission activity program at the library or local bookstore		internet surfing playing watching a movie TV show shopping at a home improvement store

Informal Learning

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

5. A Lifelong Faith Formation Network utilizes a variety of faith formation formats to address the diverse life tasks and situations, religious and spiritual needs, and interests of people.

With such a wide diversity of people and needs, a Lifelong Faith Formation Network provides a diversity of content and activities, *and* a variety of ways for people to engage the content and activities. A Lifelong Faith Formation Network incorporates seven faith formation formats to provide a variety of ways for people to learn and growth in faith that respect their preferred styles of learning, their life situations, and their time constraints. Churches can use the faith formation formats to (1) inventory their current faith formation programs, activities, and resources, (2) uncover new faith formation opportunities, and (3) design faith formation that offers the same "content" in different format, giving people different ways to learn and grow in faith. The seven faith formation formats include:

- **Faith Formation on Your Own**: through reading, online courses, audio and video programs, movies, television programs
- **Faith Formation with a Mentor**: through spiritual direction and one-on-one study
- **Faith Formation at Home**: through Bible reading, storytelling and caring conversation, prayer and devotions, rituals and traditions, and service
- **Faith Formation in Small Groups:** through Bible and theology study groups, social issues study groups, faith sharing groups, lectionary-based groups, service/mission action groups, support groups, special interest groups
- **Faith Formation in Large Groups**; through courses, speaker series, workshops, film festivals, retreats, conferences, intergenerational programs
- **Faith Formation in the Congregation:** through Sunday worship, Church Year events and celebrations, service projects, ministry and leadership in the church and community
- **Faith Formation in the Community and World**: through programs, courses, clinics,

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

Every faith formation activity plan for an age group or family can offer a variety of faith formation formats with differing levels of depth and commitment, in online and face-to-face settings, and at a variety of times and locations that are convenient for people. This approach means that people can have a variety of ways to learn and grow in faith, removing many of the more common obstacles to participating in faith formation.

Seven Faith Formation Formats

6. A Lifelong Faith Formation Network offers programs and activities in face-to-face physical settings; in virtual, online settings, and in blended settings that combine both.

Faith formation programs, activities, and experiences can be offered in a variety of settings, integrating physical and online settings.

- They can be offered only in *physical locations,* such as church facilities, homes, retreat centers, camps, and community settings
- They can be offered only in *virtual settings*, such as an online course, collaborative wiki, and online resource center.
- They can be offered in a *blended approach*, combining a gathering in a physical location with online delivery (activities, group projects, interaction) and some element of individual control over time, place, path, and/or pace.

These settings can be seen as a continuum: ranging from fully online (Model 1) to online resources as purely supplemental (Model 5). Blended faith formation usually combines online delivery of religious content and experiences with the best features of gathered programs to personalize learning and differentiate faith formation instruction across a diverse group. Here is a view of the five models on a continuum.

A Continuum of Blended Faith Formation

Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5
Fully online program or activity with options for face-to-face interaction in physical settings.	Mostly or fully online program or activity with regular interaction and programming in physical settings.	An online platform that delivers most of the program or activities with leaders providing on-site support on a flexible and adaptive as-needed basis through in-person mentoring and small group sessions.	Programs and activities in physical settings guided by a leader with online components that extend beyond the program sessions.	Programs and activities in physical settings that include online resources to supplement the program content.

7. A Lifelong Faith Formation Network offers a variety of faith formation programs, activities, experiences, and resources to address the diverse ways people learn and grow in faith.

A Lifelong Faith Formation Network provides a congregation with a means to offer relevant content that addresses the spiritual and religious needs of people *and* the ability for them to engage with that content in ways that reflect how they learn and grow best. A network approach provides more options for people of all ages to find programs, activities, and resources that match well with how they learn and grow in faith.

We know from Howard Gardner's research that people have different intelligences—that affect how they learn and perform best. While it may be difficult to incorporate all eight intelligences in a particular program or activity, the Network provides a way to offer programs, activities, and resources that emphasize different "intelligences"—one that is word-centered, another musical, another visual, etc.—so as to engage as many people as possible. (Gardner's multiple intelligences include verbal-linguistic, logical-mathematical, visual-spatial, bodily-kinesthetic, musical-rhythmic, naturalist, interpersonal, and intrapersonal.)

We know from research that people have preferred learning styles. Some learn best through direct, hands-on, concrete experiences; some through reflective observation; some through an exploration and analysis of knowledge, theories, and concepts; and others through active experimentation with the new knowledge and practices. While it is possible to address these four learning styles in one program, the Network programs a way to offer programs reflecting the four different learning styles, such as immersion programs, workshops, presentations, small group study, and retreat experiences to name a few.

8. A Lifelong Faith Formation Network incorporates communities of practice to connect individuals and groups throughout the congregation.

One way to keep individuals and groups in faith formation connected to each other in the Lifelong Faith Formation Network is through communities of practice—groups of people who have a shared interest who come together to learn from each other. Communities of practice have three dimensions: the domain (what it's about); the topic (the issues that they are facing); and the community (the people who are involved). Communities of practice use a variety of approaches to connect, such as face-to-face meetings, teleconferences, video conferencing, social networking, working on projects together. It is a mix of formal and informal methods. Some of them are online; some of them are face-to-face. Some of them happen weekly; some of them happen monthly or yearly.

A congregation is a community of practice. Practices like worship, liturgy, pastoral care, outreach, and social justice are important to the congregation's vitality. What you want are people who are passionate about those practices to develop them so that they are thriving in the congregation. An example would be people in a congregation who are engaged in justice and service projects—in the church and in the world—who could regularly connect, and even meet, to share their reflections and insights, communicate their insights to the whole congregation, and continue to support each other in their efforts. They can also invite new people to join their efforts. A community of practice around social justice could include not only church members, but also people in the wider community who have similar interests.

Another example might be people engaged in reading and studying the Bible. They may do this on their own or in small groups, but they are engaged in a large community of practice focused on reading and studying the book. A Lifelong Faith Formation Network connects these people, face-to-face or online, to share what they are learning and how they read and apply the Bible to daily life, to explore common issues in reading the Bible, review new resources, and educate new members (apprentices) in reading the Bible. The community of practice around reading and studying the Bible disseminates their learning throughout the congregation,

providing a learning opportunity for everyone to grow in their understanding of the Bible.

Most of the skills and expertise we learn, we learn from others in practice. We don't learn it in a course or book. It's helpful to have those, but the way we really learn is in practice with other practitioners. If you have a community of practice, someone can say, "I'm calling you about what I saw on your website or on Facebook. I heard that you tried this, and I'd love to talk to you about it." Communities of practice can connect people and diffuse learning and Christian practices across the congregation. There are opportunities through the Lifelong Faith Formation Network to cultivate and support communities of practices around particular topics or issues or Christian practices.

9. A Lifelong Faith Formation Network is guided by curators who find, organize and deliver the most relevant content and experiences to address the specific needs of people.

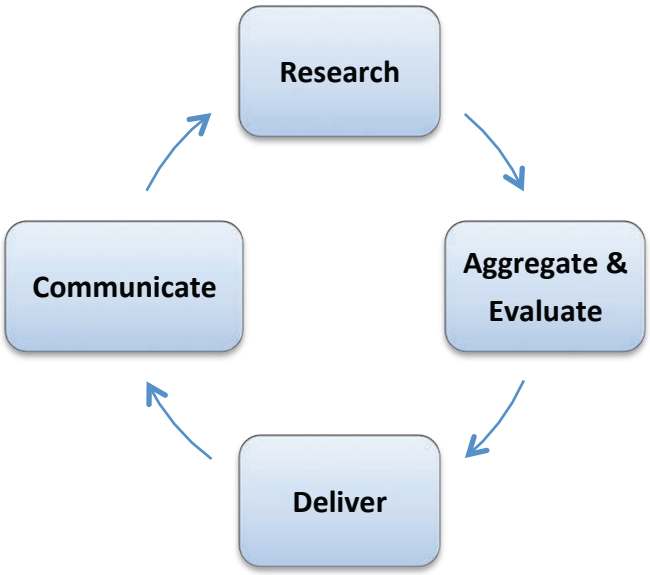
In a Lifelong Faith Formation Network the role of the leaders is shifting from *providing* religious content and programming (although this will still be happening) to *curating* religious content and experiences for all ages. We are all familiar with curating and curation—museum curators collect art and artifacts and identify the most relevant or important to be displayed in an exhibit for the public. Museum curators are subject-matter experts that guide an organization's overall art collection.

A Faith Formation Curator is someone who continually finds, groups, organizes, and shares the best and most relevant content on a specific subject to address the needs of a specific group of people.

The primary task of the faith formation curator is not to create more content and programming, but to make sense of all the content that others are creating (publishers, websites, seminaries and colleges, religious organizations, and so on). Curation is an evolving idea that addresses two parallel trends: the explosive growth in religious content and experiences, especially online, and the need to be able to find information in coherent, reasonably contextual groupings, such as a Lifelong Faith Formation Network.

As religious content and experience curators, faith formation leaders will become less focused on providing "one size fits all" curriculum *for* people, *and* become more focused on addressing people's spiritual and religious growth by offering a wide *variety* of religious content and experiences that they find, group, organize, and share through a Lifelong Faith Formation Network.

How does faith formation curation work? Each of the following elements of curating religious content are year-round tasks. The process of curating is continual.



1. Research Resources & Stay Up-to-Date

What do you curate for the Lifelong Faith Formation Network? Consider these categories of resources in your research: 1) congregational programs and activities; 2) community-based programs and activities; 3) people resources in your congregation, community, and region; 4) print resources in all forms from books to articles; 5) audio and video programs; 6) art, drama, and music; 7) websites; 8) online courses and faith formation activities; and 9) apps and other forms of digital content.

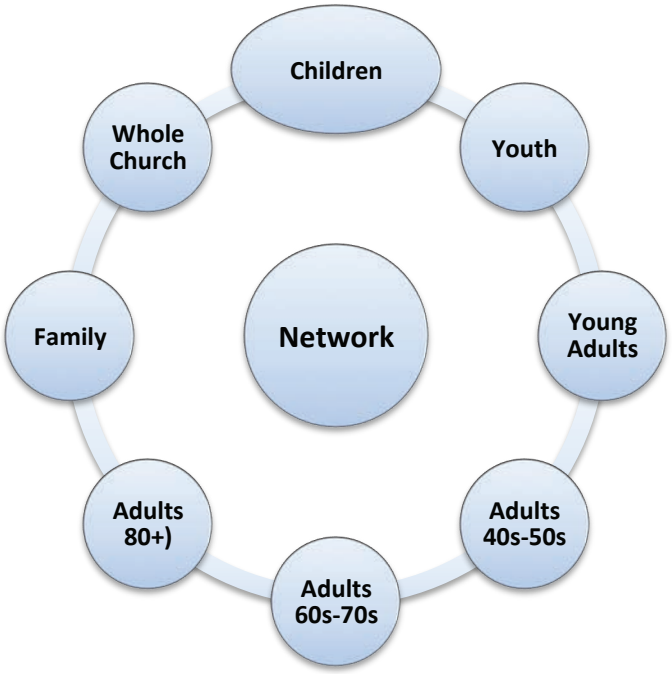
The best librarians have access to hundreds, if not thousands, of information resources that deliver ongoing, real-time information on specific topics of interest to information patrons. Faith formation curators will need to develop sources they can trust for high quality religious content and experiences. They will need to develop ways to stay informed on the latest resources as they become available, for example joining mailing lists (email or RSS feeds) or the Facebook pages and websites of publishers,

colleges/seminaries, religious and community organizations, and online resource centers so that they receive regular updates on the publication and dissemination of new resources.

(To assist congregations in their role as curators, I am developing a new website, *CuratingFaithFormation.com*, that will include listings of resources that can be incorporated into an online Lifelong Faith Formation Resource—many of which are free. This will help congregations find trusted resources to include on their Network. Look for the launch in Fall 2011.)

2. Aggregate & Evaluate

Aggregation is the act of bringing together the most relevant religious content and experiences on a particular topic or religious/spiritual need into a single location—an online Lifelong Faith Formation Network. Religious content and experiences can be aggregated in a variety of ways. One simple model is by "people groupings" (see diagram)—each of which can include content on the Bible, Christian beliefs and practices, theological themes, milestones and life transitions, prayer and spirituality, social justice issues, and so on. There are a variety of ways to aggregate content to address people's spiritual and religious needs.



Faith formation curators find the best resources to address a target audience or particular spiritual or religious needs. They develop standards for evaluating faith formation activities and resources, such as biblical and theological content, developmental appropriateness, ethnic-cultural responsiveness, ease-of-use, quality of learning experience, and so on.

3. Deliver

Faith formation curators deliver the content and experiences through the Lifelong Faith Formation Network.

4. Communicate

Faith formation curators promote the resources available on the Network via email, e-newsletter, Twitter, Facebook, and other social media, as well as printed formats such as the church bulletin. Faith formation curators highlight the relationship between the content and the particular spiritual or religious needs, interests, passions, concerns, or life issues of people. They describe the 2-3 benefits of participating in faith formation; and explain how people can access the resources.

Conclusion

This article has been an attempt to present one vision of a 21st century approach to lifelong faith formation. It is now possible for a congregation to provide faith formation for everyone, anytime, anywhere, 24x7x365. It is now possible to customize and personalize faith formation around the lives of the people in a congregation and offer a wide diversity of programs, activities, and resources in a variety of formats delivered in physical gathered settings and virtual online settings.

We live at a remarkable time for Christian faith formation. We are experiencing a *convergence* of new web and digital technologies that are transforming life and learning *and* the tremendous growth of religious content and experiences in digital form. A Lifelong Faith Formation Network provides one way to integrate this convergence for the good of the whole congregation.

The next two sections provide tools for bringing the Network to life in a congregation.

Summary: The Nine Features of a Lifelong Faith Formation Network

1. A Lifelong Faith Formation Network addresses the diverse life tasks and situations, spiritual and religious needs, and interests of all ages and generations by offering a variety of content, programs, activities, and resources.
2. A Lifelong Faith Formation Network recognizes that learning is a process of active inquiry with the initiative residing within the individual.
3. A Lifelong Faith Formation Network guides individuals and families in discerning their spiritual and religious needs and creating personal learning pathways for faith growth and learning.
4. A Lifelong Faith Formation Network incorporates informal learning, as well as formal learning in faith formation.
5. A Lifelong Faith Formation Network utilizes a variety of faith formation formats to address the diverse life tasks and situations, interests, and religious and spiritual needs of people.
6. A Lifelong Faith Formation Network offers programs and activities in face-to-face physical settings; in virtual, online settings, and in blended settings that combine both.
7. A Lifelong Faith Formation Network offers a variety of faith formation programs, activities, experiences, and resources to address the diverse ways people learn and grow in faith.
8. A Lifelong Faith Formation Network incorporates communities of practice to connect individuals and groups throughout the congregation.
9. A Lifelong Faith Formation Network is guided by curators who find, organize and deliver the most relevant content and experiences to address the specific needs of people.

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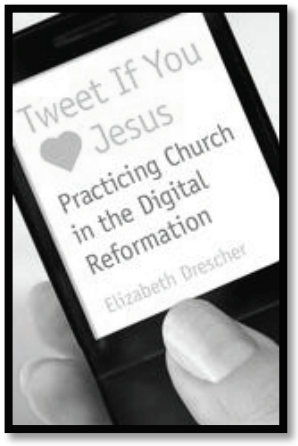


Book Excerpt

"Welcome to the Digital Reformation"

Tweet If You ♥ Jesus: Practicing Church in the Digital Reformation

Elizabeth Drescher
(www.elizabethdrescher.net)
New York: Morehouse Publishing, 2011

For people engaged in the life of the Church, whether as believers, seekers, or observers, the cultural changes associated with new digital social media practices mark the early stages of a reformation of the Church—a Digital Reformation. This reformation is not entirely about digital technologies and their effect on human consciousness, relatedness, and communication. It's also driven by economic, environmental, political, intellectual, and a whole host of other issues that have been reconfigured at an increasingly rapid pace since the end of World War II, as the period of modernity that shaped the last great religious enlightenment reached its zenith and began to wane. However, the recent ascendency of digital technologies—particularly digital social media such as Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube—functions as an animated symbol of radical new globalized modes of access, participation, co-creativity, and distributed authority to an extent that makes clear that any reshaping or (we hope) revitalizing of the Church will largely be defined in relationship to the digital milieu.

Like the reformations of the twelfth and sixteenth centuries, the Digital Reformation has some revolutionary elements, but it is not about replacing one form of religious practice with another, in the way that eighteenth-century political revolutionaries in France and America sought to replace monarchy with democracy. Rather, the Digital Reformation has in common with earlier projects of reform the impulse to reclaim something of the spiritual practices of early church communities for believers today. Where the Digital Reformation is different, however, is that it is more plainly driven by the often ad hoc spiritualities of ordinary believers— clergy and laity alike—who have, on the one hand, new access to the resources of the Christian tradition not unlike those afforded by the printing press, but who, on the other, have access to technological means of connection, creativity, and collaboration with those resources that remained in the hands of a narrow élite even after the Protestant Reformations.

Unlike earlier church reforms, the Digital Reformation is driven not so much by theologies, dogmas, and politics—though these are certainly subject to renewed questioning—but by the digitally enhanced spiritual practices of ordinary believers with global access to each other and to all manner of religious knowledge previously available only to clergy, scholars, and other religious specialists. This pretty much puts everything in play—our traditions, our histories, our understanding of the sacred, even the structure and meaning of the sacred texts that we thought had been secured into an enduring canon way back in the fourth century.

The purpose of this book, then, is to provide insight into the opportunities and challenges presented by new digital social media for mainline churches, and to suggest ways that lay and ordained leaders in ministry—clergy, chaplains, community organizers, religious educators, social justice workers, spiritual caregivers, and so on—can participate in this Digital Reformation by way of nurturing and sustaining the Christian Church as a force for spiritual and social transformation.

In keeping with the distributed nature of digital social media itself, even within a mainline denominational framework, I understand "church" in relatively broad terms. Thus, I see the Church as extending from the institutionalized community that gathers in identifiable bricks-and-mortar structures to the less formally structured Body of

Christ constituted by believers as they live out their faith in diverse ways in the world.

What is the Digital Reformation?

A revitalization of the Church driven by the often ad hoc spiritualities of ordinary believers as they integrate practices of access, connection, participation, creativity, and collaboration encouraged by the widespread use of new digital social media into all aspects of daily life, including the life of faith.

I approach this project from a decidedly historical and cultural perspective, setting the changes related to new digital media within the longer sweep of Church history. I take this approach because the Church, unlike other institutions that are also affected by recent technological changes, derives much of its identity from an explicit understanding of its development within the long sweep of human history. For people who see themselves as connected to a narrative of faith and hope that extends from the beginning of creation to the end of earthly time, attending to a phenomenon that seems to have sprung up over the last few years can feel like jumping onto the wave of a passing fad. Setting a new approach to communication, relationship, and community within the wider historical context of the Church allows us to see it in terms of continuities as well as differences. This, in turn, invites a deeper exploration of the Christian tradition for resources that will help us to more productively navigate and narrate what I believe is the most profound social and ecclesiological change encountered by the Church since the Protestant Reformation.

I also write from the perspective of a "digital optimist"— someone who believes that on balance the social benefits of digital technologies outweigh the very real risks. But I would nonetheless characterize myself as a "digital realist." So what I argue is that, like them or not, digital social media and mobile computing define the social reality with which we must contend if we are to participate in any meaningful way in the contemporary world. Thus, I see the challenge at the core of this book as developing a historically—and culturally-contextualized understanding of the impact of digital technologies on religion that balances an appropriate embrace of new ways of communicating, leading, and creating community with a deep appreciation for the resources of the Christian tradition that have long sustained believers through successive waves of cultural change.

Indulgences of the Digital Reformation: What Digitally-Integrated Religious Practice Looks Like

Of course, the signs and wonders of the Digital Reformation are everywhere. Indeed, many think of them as late modern indulgences that promise to smooth the path to whatever counts as redemption for believers and seekers today. And like the medieval indulgences that preceded the Bible as the first mass-produced product of Gutenberg's press, there are so many of them that it's almost impossible to keep up.

It seems that almost everywhere you turn on the internet, there are commentators considering the relative merits of online prayer, or of "tweeting" or "texting" during church services. All manner of advice is available on whether and how your church should have a presence on Facebook, Flickr, Twitter, and YouTube (a bit of it from me). Even the pope has directed Roman Catholic priests to dive into the digital domain

The increasing mobility of computing devices—lightweight laptops and tablet computers, smart phones, MP3 players (e.g., iPods), and portable gaming consoles—means that digital engagement is integrated into the fabric of daily life. No longer need we imagine the lonely geek sitting before the numbing glow of the computer screen, leaving behind the embodied uncertainties of "the real world" for the constructed delights of "virtual" reality. Virtual reality is embedded in physical reality to an ever-growing extent in the lives of most Westerners, Asians, and significant populations in the developing world. Internet access goes with most of us everywhere we go, connecting us to friends and family with an ease that all but obliterates the anxieties of digital isolation that were at the root of Robert D. Putnam's 2000 bestseller, *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community*. Indeed, researchers from the University of Southern California and the University of Toronto have found an increase in friendships

reported among American adults between the ages of twenty-five and seventy- four. This research indicated that heavy internet users have the most friends both on- and off-line and, importantly, that these friendships are no more or less superficial than those tracked in previous studies.

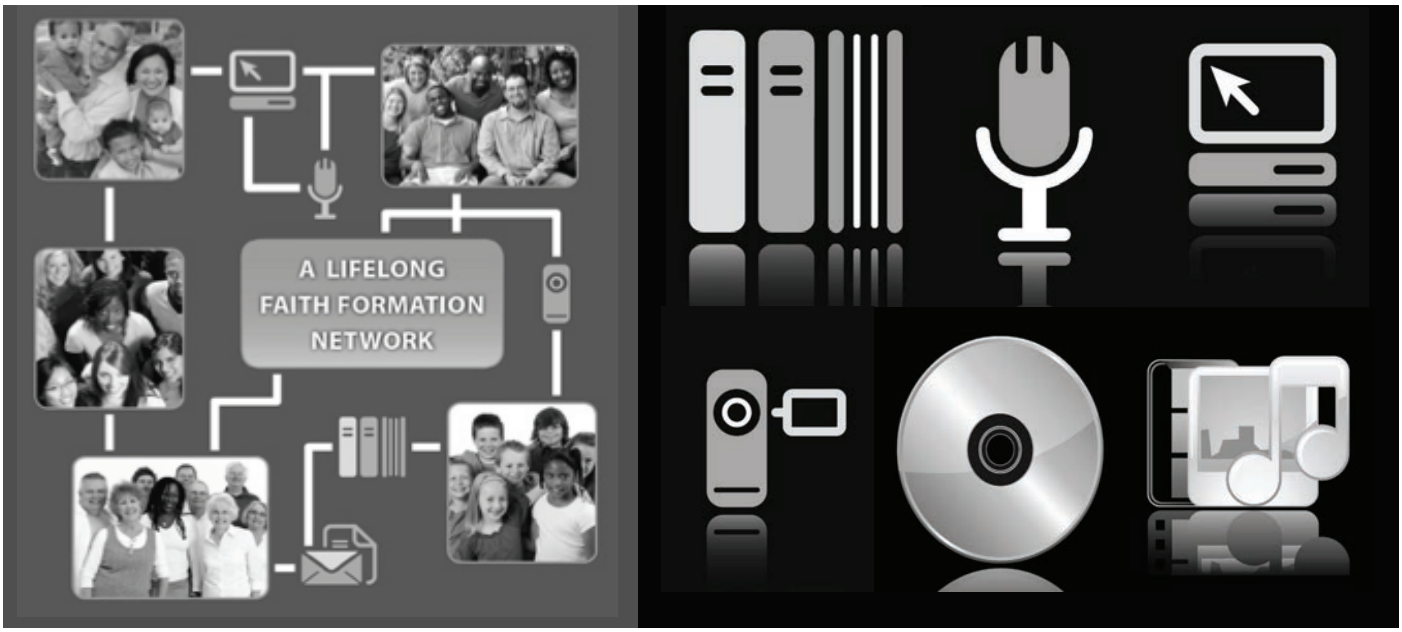
The blurring of the line between digital and physical reality has not passed religious life by, either. A church in Texas, for instance, hands out MP3 players to children attending worship services with their parents so that the kids can "hear the gospel in their own child language" while simultaneously "absorb[ing] the ritual and the hymns and the fellowship." The integration of digital resources and connectivity to others in daily life likewise impacts the spiritual lives of adults well beyond the bricks-and-mortar church. An Anglican priest in Nova Scotia has adapted a medieval practice of blessing farming equipment to offer "grace for gadgets:" blessings for cell phones, laptops, and other digital tools of common work and life.

Need some spiritual guidance to sort through the multiple, competing demands confronting you each day? There's an app for that. Dozens of them. A search on iTunes for iPhone applications with the keyword "Bible" yields hundreds of results; dozens more (some overlapping) come up for a search on "Jesus." There are more mundane resources like the Bible (in various translations and a multitude of languages), the *Episcopal Book of Common Prayer*, and the Reformed *Westminster Confession of Faith*. But opportunities for easy access to spiritual encouragement, enrichment, and guidance go well beyond digitized traditional Christian meat-and-potatoes fare. The "Love Dare" app offers "fifty-two weekly [biblically-based] dares to help you express love in your marriage." The Mormon "Bible Signs of the Times" app provides insight into more than sixty-five biblical signs predicting earthquakes, tsunamis, natural disasters, and wars along with information about the seven seals in Revelation. One of my favorites, the "Holy Roller" app, allows users with pressing spiritual questions to find scriptural wisdom that speaks to both "blessings" and "burdens" in their lives by scrolling through a list of topics such as inner peace, health, frustration, and courage. "Simply scroll through the Holy Roller to find what you are feeling," users are instructed, "hit next or shake your iPhone, and your scripture will appear." And that doesn't count the religiously themed music, movies, television shows, podcasts, audiobooks, and games with which the smart phone of today's tech-savvy believer might be stocked.

Lest we mark digital religiosity as superficially social or theologically thin, we might also consider the treasure trove of academic theology that is now available, most of it at no cost, to seekers, believers, and critics around the globe through GoogleBooks, scholarly websites (for example, the American Academy of Religion or the Society for the Study of Biblical Literature), as well as digital religion magazines and blogs such *Immanent Frame*, *Killing the Buddha*, and *Religion Dispatches*. Beyond this, up-to-the-minute religious commentary and reflection is available on a wide range of online versions of religious journals such as *Sojourners* and *Commonweal* as well as in religion sections of online secular news sites, including the *Washington Post* "On Faith" blog; the Guardian religion section; and the Australian Broadcasting Corporation's "Faith and Ethics" page. Add to this *Huffington Post* blogs by religion writers like Diana Butler Bass and James Martin, S.J., or academic theologian Serene Jones.

And let us not forget the numerous personal websites and blogs of leading scholars in religion, theology, and related fields (not to mention YouTube videos of their various public talks and classroom lectures) that provide insight into developing and published work, as well as career trajectories mapped in online curriculum vitae. Stanley Hauerwas' blog comes to mind, for instance, or Martin Marty's popular "Sightings." If you're not sure how to get to all this theological bounty, aggregation sites like *Religion News Service*, *Get Religion*, and *The Revealer* will help you sort through it all. A regular feed of headlines from the Faith in Public Life Center will keep you up-to-date on breaking religion news and emerging trends.

The sheer volume of opportunities to connect to others of similar religious affiliation or inclination and the range of material of religious interest now available in digital forms that can be accessed via the internet would seem to point to something of a resurgence in religious practice across almost all faith groups. From right-wing religious extremists, to New Age gurus, to fundamentalist New Atheists, and everything in between, digital media have clearly been at the center of a global explosion in religious creativity, conversation, critique, and cross-cultural connection over the past two decades. Even the Amish have an online newspaper.



A Guide to Building a Lifelong Faith Formation Network

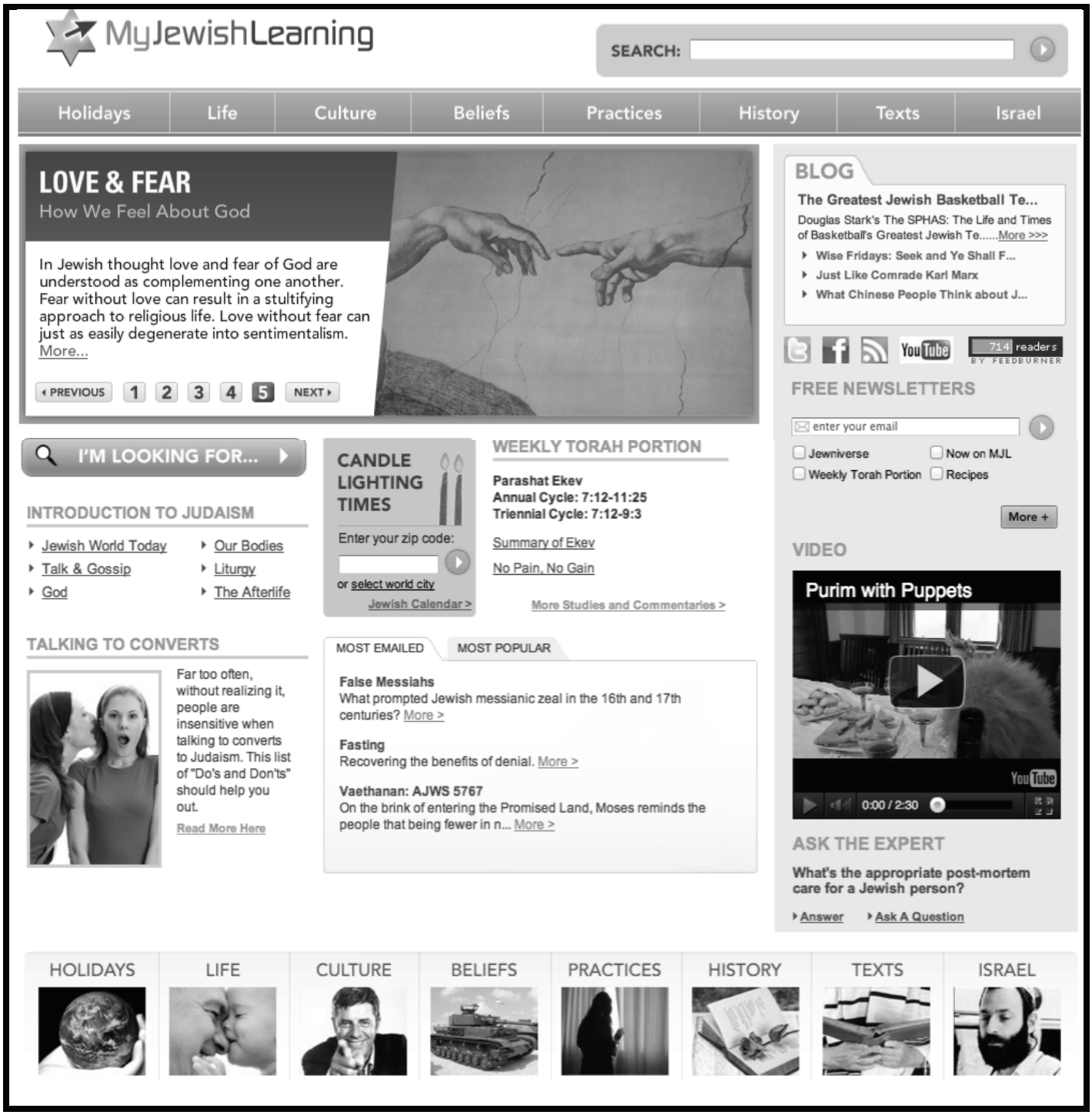
Building a Lifelong Faith Formation Network is not like writing a book where everything must be completed before publication. A Network is dynamic resource that is developed over time with new materials, revisions of current material, deleting material, and so on. A Network is in constant development as it addresses the spiritual and religious needs of people, finds new religious content and experiences, and utilizes new technologies to deliver content and experiences. Here are several suggestions for building a Lifelong Faith Formation Network in your church.

1. Developing a Website Platform

Determine if you need to build a dedicated website for your website. Many church websites are not equipped with the capacity to become a faith formation resource center. Sometimes it may be easier to developed a new dedicated website for faith formation that is linked to the parish website. If you are going to build a new website there are two free services that offer a variety of features you will need for a Network. The first is *Weebly.com*. The pre-designed templates make it simple to create a powerful, professional website without technical skills required. Content elements (like text, photos, maps, and videos) are added by dragging and dropping them into place. Text is edited just like in a word processor. Building a website is done in real time, right from within a web browser. Weebly.com is a free service that also includes free hosting your website with no ads (a premium upgrade is about $50 per year). (Note: I have used Weebly.com to build the LifelongFaith.com, FaithFormation2020.net, and FaithFormationLearningExchange.net websites. I highly recommend its functionality and reliability.) *Webs.com* is a second free website provider whose site-builder is easy to use and has most of the same features as Weebly.com. To offset the costs associated with web hosting and maintenance, free websites are supported with advertising banners. In addition to the free site-building solutions, Webs offers optional Premium Service upgrades.

A great example of a fully-feature faith formation website is MyJewishLearning.com. Check out the site online. It has many of the features a congregational website would want.

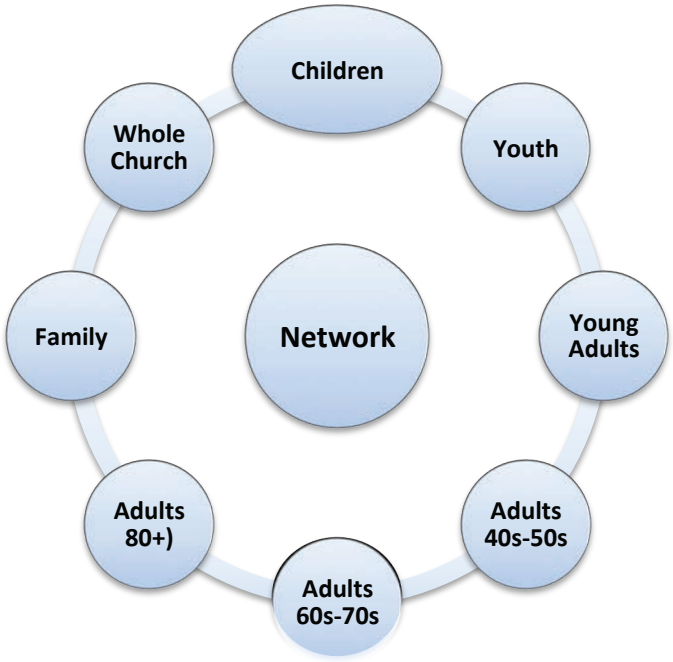
Example of a Lifelong Faith Formation Network
MyJewishLearning.com



2. Adding Current Programs and Content to the Network

Once you have a website service and design, add all of your current faith formation programming and resources onto the Network website. First, create a ***catalog*** all of the existing faith formation programming organized by age groups, interest groups, families, and whole church or intergenerational, with descriptions of each offering and a calendar of locations and times. Second, create a ***library*** by adding digital content that you have already created or purchased that can be published online, such as weekly Lectionary reflections and activities, Church Year seasonal reflections and activities, and so on. Many congregations have a treasure chest of content that can re-purposed and added to the Network library. Add audio and video podcasts of past presentations and programs at the church. This can become a regular website feature by videotaping church presentations and sermons.

Website Design



3. Building the Network Node-by-Node

Build your Lifelong Faith Formation Network node-by-node. Over time your Network grows as you add content and experiences for age groups, families, and the whole community. In a few short years your congregation will be able to provide faith formation for everyone, anytime, anywhere, 24x7x365, that customized and personalized faith formation around the lives of people, and that is delivered in a variety of formats and settings, physical and virtual.

There are a variety of ways to build your Network. Over the course of time you may use many of these ideas and create new ones of your own. Here are six examples:

1. Develop a comprehensive faith formation resource center (programs, activities, resources) for a particular group. (Example 6.)
2. Offer faith formation on one theme in a variety of formats. (Example 1)
3. Transform a "one-size fits-all" program with a variety of faith formation formats. (Example 2)
4. Extend Sunday worship into everyday life. (Example 3)
5. Extend monthly family or intergenerational faith formation through continuing learning and practice through the month. (Example 4)
6. Target a milestone or family life stage with comprehensive faith formation. (Example 5)

As you develop each node, it's important to remember the seven faith formation formats so that you can offer people a variety of ways to learn and grow in faith:

1. On Your Own
2. With a Mentor
3. At Home
4. In Small Groups
5. In Large Groups
6. In the Congregation
7. In the Community and World

4. Finding the Resources

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

Consider these categories of resources in your research: 1) congregational programs and activities; 2) community-based programs and activities; 3) people resources in your congregation, community, and region; 4) print resources in all forms from books to articles; 5) audio and video programs; 6) art, drama, and music; 7) websites; 8) online courses and faith formation activities; and 9) apps and other forms of digital content.

Consider developing an "inventory" of the gifts, talents, skills, and knowledge of your community using a survey format, such as SurveyMonkey.com, to administer an inventory. Invite people to go online to take the survey and then compile the results using the SurveyMonkey tools.

See Tools #2 and #3 for worksheets to assist you in identifying resources and developing content for the Lifelong Faith Formation Network.

5. Promoting Your Network Offerings

It is important to promote the offerings and resources on your Lifelong Faith Formation Network continuously. Many times you will have "built-in" promotion because a Network node is directly connected to an event or program in the congregation. To reach a wider audience of people, use communication and social media tools such as e-newsletters (check out services such as Constant Contact and Mail Chimp), Facebook, and Twitter. Don't use one tool, use them all. Oftentimes they reach different audiences.

Create a compelling message. You may need to develop several "messages" for each target audience. Be sure to pay careful attention to the titles so that they capture people's interests. Develop descriptions that are positive in tone, indicate clearly the content or focus. Here are several questions to consider:

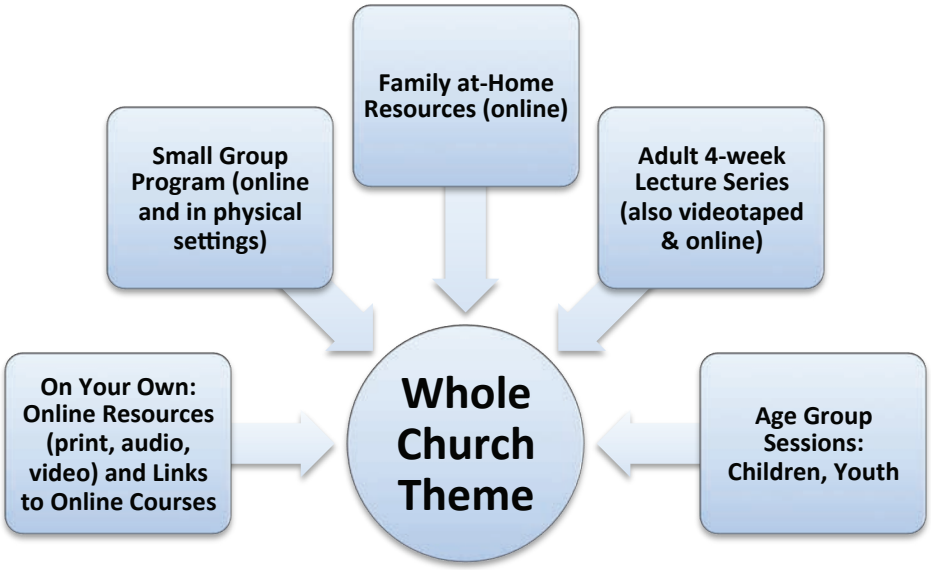
- What's interesting in your project? How does it respond to something within the lives of people?
- What are the major benefits in participating? Why should people respond?
- How will you get people's attention and interest?
- How will you explain to people how to use the Network and what they need to do.

Use as many promotional methods as you can. Consider the following ideas:

- Use your church's website to promote the *Network*, post regular announcements, new program offerings, calendar, etc.
- Establish a Facebook page for your project and include a calendar of events with descriptions, locations, times, a link to your church's website, current news, stories from people who are participating, etc.
- Send email or regular e-newsletters to targeted groups.
- Have the pastor share the benefits and information about the *Network* at Sunday worship.
- Host information sessions to describe the *Network* and how to use it after Sunday worship, at the beginning of a program, and so on.
- Promote the *Network* in the community: coffee shops, YMCA/YWCA, gyms, bookstores, theaters, schools/colleges, and so on.
- Include information about the *Network* in new member packets. Send a personalized invitation to new members.
- Promote the *Network* at all gathered programs and events in the church.

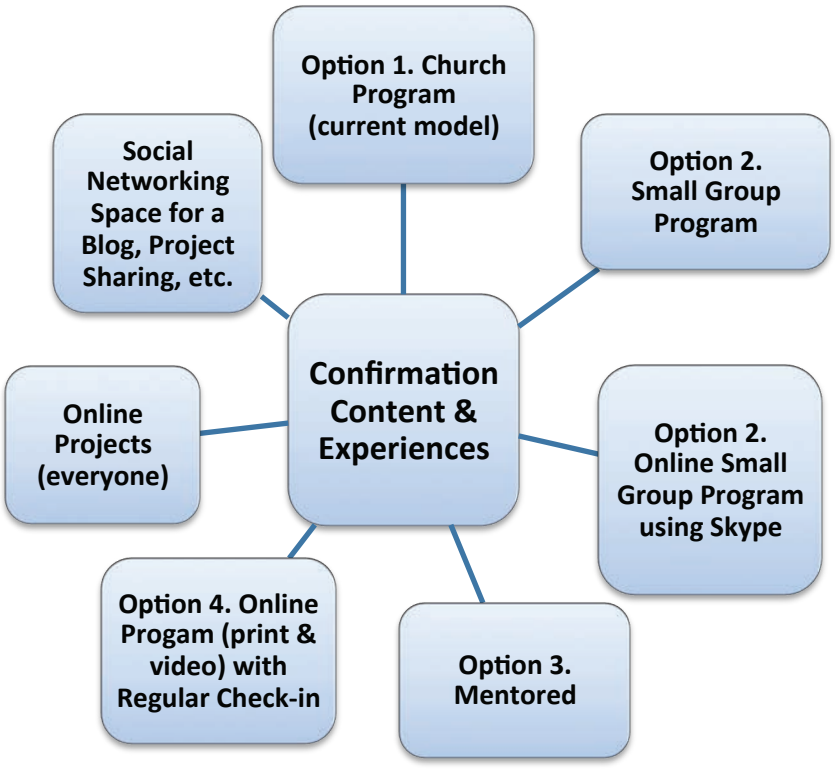
Example 1: Offer Faith Formation on One Theme in a Variety of Formats

Imagine offering a variety of options for faith formation on one theme. For example, a congregation can prepare all of its people for the start of a new Lectionary cycle in October and November using a variety of formats, face-to-face and virtual, that might culminate in a whole church gathering to share learning, pray, sing, eat, and celebrate the end of one Lectionary cycle and the beginning of a new one. A congregation can build a node on their Lifelong Faith Formation Network for the new Lectionary cycle—and once this node is built it is always available and can easily be updated in the future.



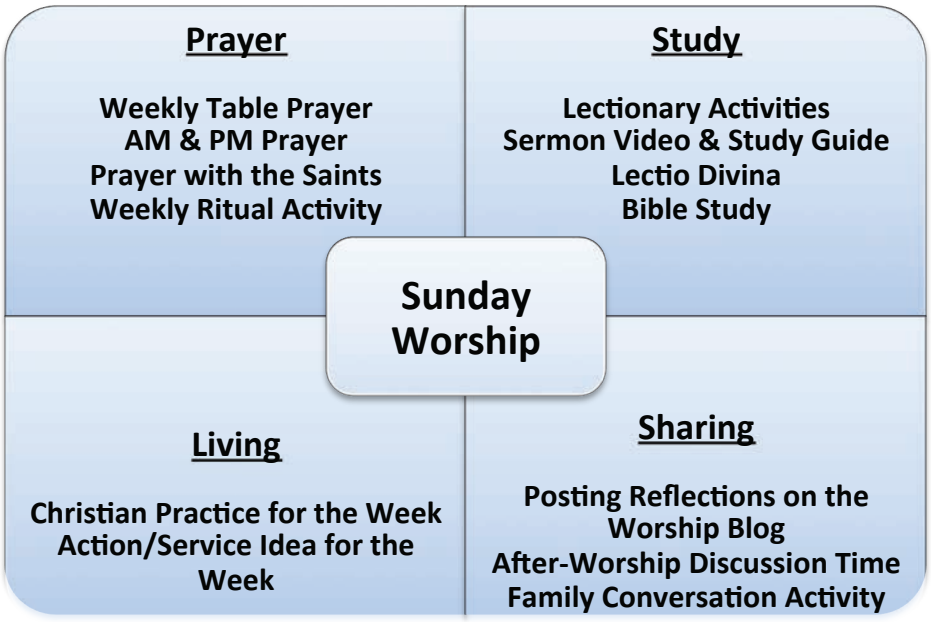
Example 2: Transform a "One-Size-Fits-All Faith" Program with a Variety of Faith Formation Formats

Imagine transforming a "one-size-fits-all" program by offering a variety of options in the Lifelong Faith Formation Network to engage people with the program's content and experiences. Using this approach a congregation can differentiate faith formation by addressing the religious and spiritual needs of people through certain formats. This approach also addresses issues such as time constraints, scheduling, and location by offering a variety of options for faith formation. Here is an example of a confirmation program for adolescents using this approach.



Example 3: Extend Sunday Worship into Everyday Life

Imagine a congregation extending Sunday worship throughout the week using a variety of formats, face-to-face and virtual. A congregation can build a node on their Lifelong Faith Formation Network for Sunday Worship. Once this node is built it can be updated every week with new content for that particular Sunday's Scripture readings and Church Year season. The prior Sunday's content goes into the online library and can be used again at another time.



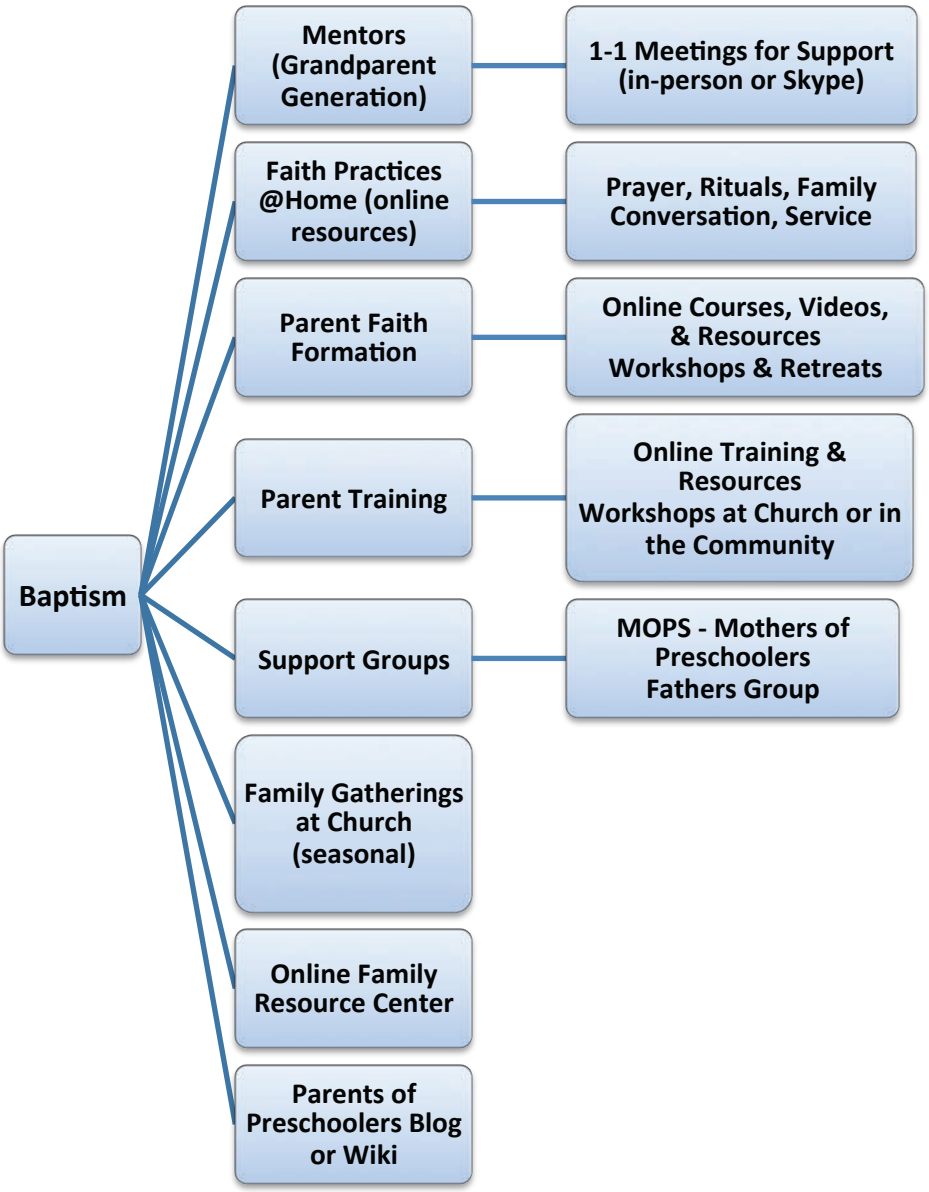
Example 4: Extend Monthly Family or Intergenerational Faith Formation through Continuing Learning and Practice throughout the Month

Imagine a congregation with a monthly intergenerational or family program extending the theme of the monthly gathering throughout the month using a variety of formats, face-to-face and virtual. A congregation can build a node on their Lifelong Faith Formation Network for their intergenerational or family program. It also provides a way to engage people who are not participating to experience the content of the monthly program on their own. Each month the intergenerational or family program adds another node with new content and experiences to extend the new theme throughout the month.

Example 5: Target a Milestone or Family Life Stage with Comprehensive Faith Formation in a Variety of Formats

Imagine developing a Network just for parents of young children, beginning with the baptism of their child, blending faith formation in virtual and physical settings and using the seven faith formation formats to provide a diversity of content and activities.

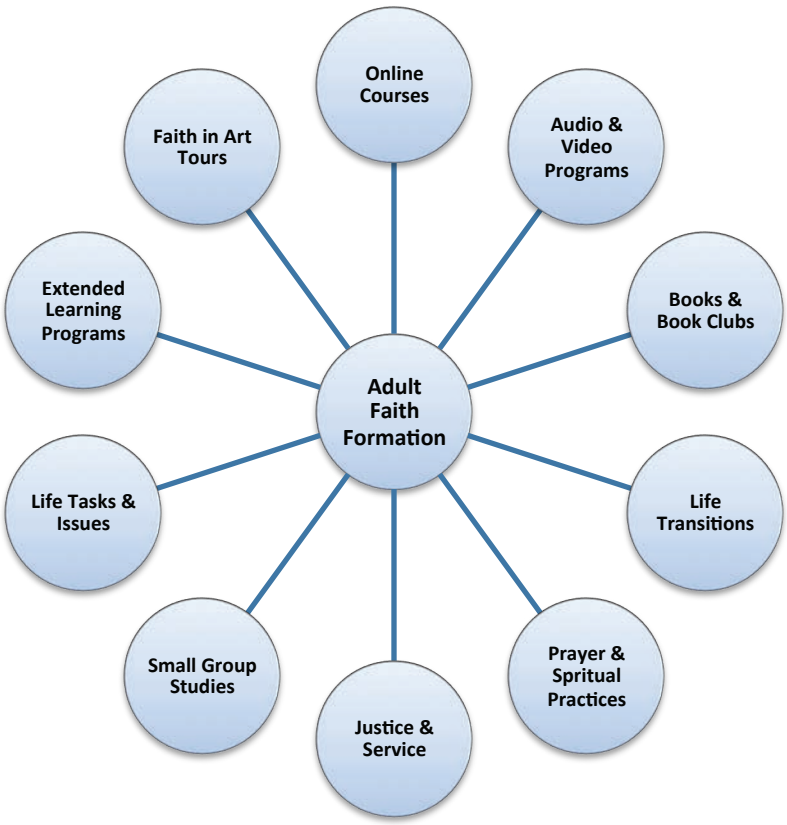
1. **Mentors**: provide 1-1 mentoring by connecting parents to adults in the grandparent generation who can meet with them regularly: in person, by phone or video conference
2. **Faith Practices @Home:** provide parents with faith practices resources geared to the age of their growing child and family
3. **Parent Faith Formation**: offer a variety of formation opportunities for parents to grow in faith: workshops, presentations, retreats; and online courses, videos, and print resources
4. **Parent Training**: offer a variety of programs at church or through community organizations; and online training and resources using websites such as ParentFurther.com and Tumblon.com.
5. **Support Groups**: organize groups in the church, host community groups, or connect parents to existing support groups.
6. **Family Gatherings**: 3 or 4 times per year
7. **Parent Blog or Wiki**: give parents the opportunity to connect, share ideas, and ask for assistance online



Example 6: Develop Comprehensive Adult Faith Formation

Imagine developing an online resource center for adult faith formation around the life issues, transitions, and spiritual and religious needs of adults. With the great diversity among the ages of adulthood (20s-90s+), adult faith formation needs to provide a wide variety of content, experiences, and faith formation formats. Instead of trying to first organize programming in physical spaces, why not begin with an online resource center and then create church-based programs that utilize the online resource center. Think of the possibilities for an adult faith formation resource center. Even the smallest churches can offer a great diversity of adult faith formation opportunities. Here are a few ideas.

- **Online Courses**: Develop a "course catalog" of online courses and webinars (with descriptions and website links) from seminaries, universities, and publishers, religious organizations, iTunes University, and other online course providers. These courses can be offered for "on your own" study or small group study (online or face-to-face), as well as the primary content for a course at the church with a facilitator.
- **Audio and Video Programs**: Develop a library of audio and video programs (with descriptions and links) from iTunes, YouTube, Vimeo, and other providers, organized into categories such as Bible, theology, life issues, and so on. In addition to individual use, audio and video programs can be organized into the primary content for small group study (online or face-to-face) or a course at the church with a facilitator.
- **Books**: Develop a library of books and e-books and invite people to form in-person and online book groups. Check out the social networks for book lovers which let people create a virtual bookshelf to catalog their collection, post reviews or recommendations, see what others are reading, make a reading wish list, or join an online book discussion. Popular sites include Shelfari (www.shelfari.com), LibraryThing (www.librarything.com), and Goodreads (www.goodreads.com).



- **Prayer & Spiritual Practices**: Develop a spiritual life center with content from online sources: daily prayer online (e.g., 3-minute Retreat from Loyola Press), spiritual life reflections, spiritual life videos (e.g., Mindy Caliguire's YouTube videos), prayer forms (e.g., Ignatian prayer), daily liturgy of the hours, praying with the saints, daily Bible reading, lectio divina, links to retreat centers, online spirituality courses (Spirituality& Practice), and so much more.

- **Justice & Service**: Develop a clearinghouse of mission and service opportunities: local, national, and international. Develop links to websites with content on social issues and with Bible and church teachings.

- **Small Group Studies**: Offer opportunities and resources for small groups to organize for faith sharing, Bible study, and book discussions. You can develop small groups around audio and video content and link people to online Bible studies, topical small group programs.

- **Life Transitions**: Create an adult milestones and life transitions center for rituals, blessings, commentaries, personal stories, a blog for sharing stories and ideas, and links to websites with information about adult transitions.

- **Life Tasks and Issues**: Connect people to websites and online programs and resources that address adult life tasks and issues, such as marriage (TwoofUs.org), finances (Financial Peace University, www.daveramsey.com), and retirement (AARP.org).

- **Extended Learning Programs**: Link to resources for adult learning experiences such as *Road Scholar* by Elderhostel (RoadScholar.org).

- **Faith in Art Tours:** Offer online "tours" of religious art at museums around the world, as well as a trip to art museums to experience faith in art. (See Museum of Online Museums, Vatican Museum, Smithsonian Museum, The British Library: Gallery and Virtual Books, and Museum of Biblical Art.)

Tool 1. Researching the Needs of People

Target Group (life cycle stage, generation, families, etc.): _____

1. Research

Life Issues

- What are some of the issues your group is experiencing today? Consider the following: family, work, leisure, relationships, sexuality, suffering and grief, social and political issues, community issues.

Life Cycle Tasks and Generational Characteristics

- What are the developmental life tasks facing people in your group? (For example: children, adolescents, emerging adults in their 20s, young adults in their 30s-mid 40s, midlife adults in their mid 40s-50s, retirement adults in their 60s-70s, and older adults 80+)
- What are the unique generational characteristics of your group? (For example: the iGeneration (2000 and later), the Millennial Generation (1980–1999), Generation X (1964–1979), Baby Boom Generation (1946–1964), and the Builder Generation (1945 and earlier)

Milestones and Transitions

- What are the significant milestones/transitions your group is experiencing? (For example: marriages, births, graduations, geographic relocations, family formation and re-formation, career changes, empty nests, retirement, unanticipated illness, divorce, and the loss of loved ones.)

Spiritual Needs

- What are the significant spiritual needs of people in your group? (For example: growing in their relationship with God; living as disciples of Jesus Christ in their daily life at home, in the workplace, in the community and the world; spiritual disciplines and traditions; prayer, etc.)

Religious Needs

- What are the significant religious needs of people in your group? (For example: understanding the Bible and relating it lie today, understanding the faith tradition and beliefs and how to live them today, making Christian moral decisions, etc.)

Ethnic/Cultural Needs

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

2. Interview/Focus Group Questions

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

Tool 2. Finding Resources

Target Group (e.g., age group, families, interest group): _____

1. People Resources

Identify the gifts/skills/knowledge of the people resources in your church, the community, colleges and seminaries, and church-related organizations who can be invited to take a leadership role in the Network plan. Consider people who teach courses or specialized programs, guest presenters on specialized topics, leaders for small groups and Bible studies, prayer guides/spiritual directors, leaders for service/mission programs, and so on.

Person	Particular Gifts/Talents/Skills/Knowledge

2. Face-to-Face Faith Formation Programs and Activities

Identify face-to-face faith formation activities. There are a variety of options: (1) programs that your church is already sponsoring, (2) an opportunity that you are not utilizing (e.g., design reflection activities around Sunday worship), (3) a new program that your church can design or adopt, and (4) a program sponsored by another organization that you can integrate as part of your plan. Consider programs in your church, the community, retreat and conference centers, colleges and universities, and religious organizations. Indicate the faith formation format(s) used in the program: on your own, with a mentor, at home, in small groups, in large groups, in the congregation, and/or in the community and world.

Program	Faith Formation Model	Location	Date/Timing	Cost

3. Print and Media Faith Formation Resources

Identify print and media resources from publishers and religious organizations that you can use. Indicate which of the faith formation format(s) are used in the resource.

Resource	Publisher	Faith Formation Model	Cost

4. Online and Digital Faith Formation Programs, Activities and Resources

Identify websites with faith formation content (programs, activities, resources), online courses and small group programs, webinars, digital books and Bibles, apps, social networks, audio podcasts, video programs, and so on. Research the online resources of your own denomination or religious tradition, religious organizations, and colleges, and seminaries

Program, Activity, Resource	Website & Address Producer	Faith Formation Models	Cost

Tool 3. Developing Network Offerings

Target Group (e.g., age group, families, interest group): _____

Format	**Programs, Activities, & Resources** Physical Settings & Virtual/Online Settings	**Location** Physical or Virtual	**Date**
On Your Own			
With a Mentor			
At Home			
In Small Groups			
In Large Groups			
In the Congregation			
In the Community and World			

Digital Tools for a Lifelong Faith Formation Network

Blogs

A blog is a website or feature of a website that provides regular commentary in the form of postings with the most recent at the top of the page (often referred to as "reverse-chronological order"). Blogs can have a single author or several, such as a team in an organization or a group of people in an educational program. Blogs can be focused on a particular topic area or can be wide ranging. They are most often text-centric; making them highly searchable, though they can also include embedded static images, animations, or videos. Unlike wikis, readers do not edit blog postings, but rather communicate with the blog author and other readers via comments for each posting. As a result, a blog's primary value can come from the blog postings themselves, the comments to the postings, or a combination of both.

- Connect the blog to program content: provide updates, post assignments or activities, relate the formal content to current events, give additional examples of concepts, raise reflective questions for people to respond to, and so on.

- Make people responsible for the material in the blog by making it fair game for assessments, group discussions, projects and learner-created content, and so on.

- Set up a group blog for people to blog. Encourage them to share their thoughts about what they are learning, how they will apply the new concepts, and so on.

Blog Services

Use one of these services to create your own Network blog or topic specific blog. All of these services are free.

- **Blogger: www.blogger.com**
- **WordPress: http://wordpress.com**
- **Blog.com: http://blog.com**
- **Edublogs: http://edublogs.org**
- **CoveritLive: www.coveritlive.com**
  CoveritLive is a live blog with the ability for people to interact in real-time with a teacher or guest speaker, to participate in a debate, to host a Q&A session with an academic expert, and so on. CoveritLive's ease of use, web interface and multimedia features make it an excellent tool for educators to share their in-depth perspective with learners.

Wikis

A wiki is a collection of web pages that users can directly modify by adding new content and editing or deleting existing content. Users often collaborate in creating the content, as one person can start a page and others can add to it later. Wiki pages are often referred to as "living documents." Wikis invariably have strong history and versioning features, so that content can be easily reverted back to earlier versions, if desired. Wikis are usually very text-centric, but allow for static graphics in the pages as well as attached documents. As such, wikis are useful for creating highly searchable knowledge bases, such as the most well-known public wiki, the large user-generated encyclopedia, Wikipedia. But they can also be used for less formal collaborations, such as brainstorming sessions where users in diverse locations can all contribute through a common browser interface.

- Use wikis for people to post projects. If the program involves creating projects or activities, offering reflections and commentary, and so on, users can post their work to a wiki for others to review and comment on.

- Use wikis for in-session brainstorming. Use wikis as collaborative brainstorming whiteboards, for people to tackle a problem together as part of a group activity. This can be particularly useful during virtual programs, where people are geographically distributed and not in the same location.

- Provide additional content in a wiki. Use wikis as a knowledge base of additional information and examples not found in the program, and then reference that material during the formal instruction.

- Use wikis to let people learn more about each other. Wikis can be useful in extended programs and events where social networking profiles are not otherwise available. Create a template and ask people to describe themselves (background, interests, expertise, etc.) on their own wiki page.

Wiki Services

- **WikiSpaces: www.wikispaces.com**
  For a project or your small group looking for a place to collaborate, you can sign up for a single wiki on *Wikispaces* for free. You can get started right away with a free Basic wiki or upgrade for extra features, starting at $50/year. All Wikis Include: easy WYSIWYG editing, unlimited members, unlimited pages, 2+ GB file storage, built-In discussion forums. There are also Wiki services for K-12 education and higher education.

- **Wikiversity (Wikimedia Foundation): http://en.wikiversity.org/wiki/Wikiversity:Main_Page**
  Wikiveriisty is a Wikimedia Foundation project devoted to learning resources, learning projects, and research for use in all levels, types, and styles of education from pre-school to university, including professional training and informal learning. Teachers, students, and research are invited to join in creating open educational resources and collaborative learning communities.

Social Networking in a Safe Environment

Creating a "back channel" is a new-media strategy for inviting everyone into the conversation. Think of a back channel as a private chat room just for your group. When people use an instant-messaging tool like iChat or Twitter for micro-blogging, they can pose questions, make observations while watching a video or student presentation, or share a dissenting viewpoint. Here are three private and secure social networking sites.

- **Edmodo: www.edmodo.com**
  Edmodo is a free, secure, social learning platform providing leaders and the group with an easy way to post program materials, share links and videos, and access activities. People can store and share all forms of digital content—blogs, links, pictures, video, documents, presentations, and more. *Edmodo* first became popular as a secure platform for classroom micro-blogging where teachers and students could organize course work, share files, conduct polls, and

communicate with one another via mobile devices. The space looks and feels similar to mainstream social-media sites, which means all those who regularly use Facebook or Twitter will be right at home.

- **Chatzy: http://chatzy.com**
  Chatzy is a free private chat service which you can use to communicate with people you already know or people who visits your blog or website. With Chatzy you can create a chatroom and send out email invitations very quickly and easily. No registration is required.

- **TodaysMeet: http://todaysmeet.com**
  TodaysMeet is a free service that helps you embrace the backchannel and connect with your audience or group in real time. Imagine you're giving a presentation where you can read the mind of every person in the room. You'd have an amazing ability to adjust to your audience's needs and emotions. That's the backchannel. Using Twitter at social media conferences has become a great way to do just that. But Twitter isn't appropriate for every situation. Your audience isn't on Twitter. You don't want the discussion to be public. You need to see only relevant updates. *TodaysMeet* gives you an isolated room where you can see only what you need to see, and your audience or group doesn't need to learn any new tools like hash tags to keep everything together. People use the live stream to make comments and ask questions in real time.

Video Conferencing using Skype

- **Skype: www.skype.com**
  Skype is a voice and video software application allowing users to talk to others across the world. Skype to Skype calls are free, making it the perfect technology tool for learning. Group Skype, allowing multiple people to be on a video conference, is $8.99 per month (or cheaper with special offers). Skype is an excellent tool for incorporating voices, text, and video into learning programs. Here are several suggestions for using Skype.
  - Virtual field trip
  - Interviewing experts and resource people
  - Guest appearances from experts on a subject
  - Presenting a project
  - Mentoring, spiritual direction., and one-on-one tutoring
  - Group discussions online
  - Connecting with other groups of learners anywhere in the world

Digital Creativity Tools

- **Wallwisher: www.wallwisher.com**
  Wallwisher is an Internet application that allows people to express their thoughts on a common topic easily. A wall is basically the "web page" where people actually post messages. Once you set up a free account, you can quickly create a virtual wall. Name your wall and use the subhead field to add a prompt: What's the best book you read this summer? What's your number one goal for this school year? If you could take a field trip anywhere, where in the world would you choose? Note the URL for your page, and then send people to your wall. With a click, they'll create a new "sticky note" where they can post their response. Even people who may be reluctant to speak up will have a voice in this conversation.

- **AnswerGarden: http://answergarden.ch**
  AnswerGarden is a feedback tool you can use as an educational tool or a creative brainstorming tool. Or you can embed it on your website or blog to use it as a poll or guestbook. represented in your *AnswerGarden* in the form of a growing word cloud. *AnswerGarden* is for anyone interested in using an easy and powerful way to get feedback from a group. AnswerGarden is used by teachers to establish the knowledge level of a class on a certain topic. It is used at conferences and workshops to break the ice with the audience in a fun and interactive fashion. *AnswerGarden* is used by creative teams for digital brainstorming sessions. *AnswerGarden* is free.

- **VoiceThread: http://voicethread.com**
  With *VoiceThread*, group conversations are collected and shared in one place from anywhere in the world. All with no software to install. A

VoiceThread is a collaborative, multimedia slide show that holds images, documents, and videos and allows people to navigate slides and leave comments in 5 ways—using voice (with a mic or telephone), text, audio file, or video (via a webcam). VoiceThreads might best be described as interactive media albums. They are essentially online slide shows of images, documents, or videos that enable viewers to comment on any slide (or at any point in the video) by typing, recording an audio or video comment, or drawing on the image itself.

Digital Collaboration Tools

- **Sync.in (http://sync.in)**
  Sync.in is a handy tool for collaborating on a document in real time. It's free and there's no registration required. One click opens a new page (with its own URL) where you'll see a chat window and space for word processing. Multiple authors can work simultaneously, and you'll see one another's edits and additions.

- **Google Docs: http://google.com/educators/tools.html**
  Part of the Google for Educators tool kit, *Google Docs* is a useful resource for managing collaborative work. After people set up free accounts, they'll be able to access their spreadsheets, documents, and presentations anytime, from any connected computer. People can use Google Docs to view and respond to one another's work while it's in progress. That's helpful for collaborative tasks such as doing peer reviews, sharing notes, or developing a project presentation together.

Digital Presentation Tools

- **Glogster EDU: http://edu.glogster.com**
  Glogster EDU is a ad-free version of a popular site for making multimedia posters. "Glogs" can incorporate text, graphics, images, links, audio, video, and more. Because people can use these online posters to layer and sort digital content, Glogster can be a useful tool for organizing big projects. Glogster EDU is a Web 2.0 platform that allows you to easily upload photos, videos, text, audio and more to create an interactive online poster. Glogster EDU is a creative, dynamic, and innovative digital outlet that captures learners' excitement for online creations, keeps them engaged in course content, and makes teaching and learning more fun. It is a private and safe platform, monitored directly by the leader.

- **Prezi: http://prezi.com**
  Prezi is an online tool for producing dynamic digital presentations. There's no additional software needed, which means people can work on presentations from any computer that has Internet access. Unlike other presentation tools that arrange slides in a linear order, Prezi starts with a blank page. You can move between elements however you choose—zooming in, changing directions, or creating new paths between features. Prezi lets you bring your ideas into one space and see how they relate, helping you and your audience connect. Zoom out to see the big picture and zoom in to see details — a bit like web-based maps that have changed how we navigate through map books.

- **Nota: http://notaland.com**
  Nota is a unique, cutting-edge collaborative web platform that allows users to create, share and collaborate on presentations and virtually any other form of online material. Using Nota's proprietary toolset, users can instantly integrate text, video, maps, clip art, photos from web album or on the local computer, or license-free images from Flickr, and material from an ever-expanding array of sources. Users can then instantly embed their work in Facebook or blogs, and can share and collaborate with friends

- **Masher: www.masher.com**
  If you are a little hesitant to create videos, Masher makes it's easy. You can "mix, mash, and share: video clips, audio files, and photos into polished movies. Students own content as well as media from the BBC Motion Gallery and Rip Curl free for the mashing, and can then be shared on social media sites or via email.

Digital Portfolios

- **LiveBinders: http://livebinders.com**
  The *LiveBinders* site allows users to create virtual three-ring binders and organize digital documents in one place. People might create a single LiveBinder to present one project, or they can combine several projects into a digital portfolio. *LiveBinders* is dedicated to helping people empower others with the information they work hard to collect. It's hard to put a group of links together in any meaningful format. And sharing a group of URLs is cumbersome for everyone—the sender and the receiver. Have you ever looked through your bookmarks list and forgotten what they are all for? *LiveBinders* was created so that people could do with digital information what they do with the papers on their desk—organize them into nice containers—like 3-ring binders on your shelf. With online-binders people can also upload their documents and easily combine them with their links in a neat and organized way.

- **Evernote: www.evernote.com**
  Evernote keeps important information in one place where it is easily searchable and accessible. Notes, reflections, documents, and research can easily added to your *Evernote* account. Once in *Evernote*, it is all made fully searchable. In addition, people can organize content by notebooks, as well as tags to keep everything in perfect order. People can type text notes directly into *Evernote* or take handwritten notes on paper, then scan them into *Evernote* where they will become searchable and available wherever and whenever needed. *Evernote* offers powerful search features: all of the notes, research and documents added to an account can be easily found. *Evernote* offers a web clipper that allows people to capture web research with a single click, and it even preserves the source URL so people can easily put together reference pages and bibliographies.

Digital Book Groups

Social networks for book lovers let you create a virtual bookshelf to catalog your collection. You can post reviews or recommendations, see what others are reading, make a reading wish list, or join an online book discussion. Popular sites include:

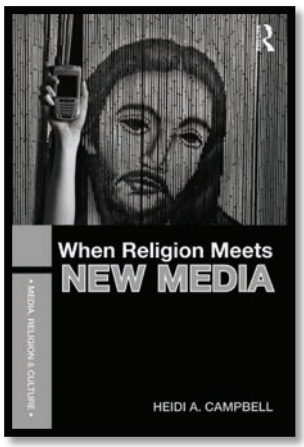
- **Shelfari: http://www.shelfari.com**
- **LibraryThing: http://www.librarything.com**
- **Goodreads: http://www.goodreads.com**

Resources & Digital Tools at Edutopia.org

The George Lucas Educational Foundation

Edutopia.org spreads the word about ideal, interactive learning environments and continually updated best practices, from classroom tips to recommendations for educational change. **Edutopia.org** provides in-depth and interactive resource offering practical, hands-on advice, real-world examples, lively contributions from practitioners, and invaluable tips and tools. Through an extensive offering of documentaries, **Edutopia Video** is a catalyst for innovation by helping educators and parents, as well as business and community leaders, see and understand pioneering best practices. Sign up for their e-newsletter and free resources by going to www.edutopia.org.

Resources
Educational Innovations
Digital Tools



When Religion Meets New Media.

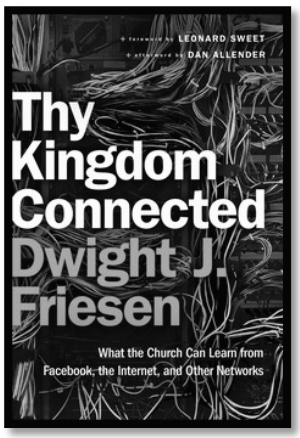
Heidi A. Campbell (New York: Routledge, 2010)

When Religion Meets New Media focuses on how different Jewish, Muslim, and Christian communities engage with new media. Rather than simply reject or accept new media, religious communities negotiate complex relationships with these technologies in light of their history and beliefs. Heidi Campbell suggests a method for studying these processes she calls the "religious-social shaping of technology" and students are asked to consider four key areas: religious tradition and history; contemporary community values and priorities; negotiation and innovating technology in light of the community; communal discourses applied to justify use. A wealth of examples such as the Christian e-vangelism movement, Modern Islamic discourses about computers and the rise of the Jewish kosher cell phone, demonstrate the dominant strategies which emerge for religious media users, as well as the unique motivations that guide specific groups.

Tweet If You ♥ Jesus: Practicing Church in the Digital Reformation

Elizabeth Drescher (New York: Morehouse Publishing, 2011)

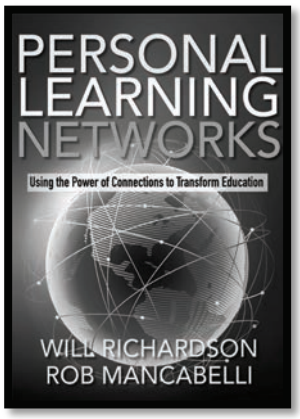
Churches everywhere are scrambling to get linked with Facebook, Twitter and YouTube. But are they ready for the Digital Reformation: the dramatic global shift in the nature of faith, social consciousness and relationship that these digital social media have ushered in? Tweet If You ♥ Jesus brings the wisdom of ancient and medieval Christianity into conversation with contemporary theories of cultural change and the realities of social media, all to help churches navigate a landscape where faith, leadership and community have taken on new meanings.



Thy Kingdom Connected: What the Church Can Learn From Facebook, the Internet, and Other Networks

Dwight J. Friesen (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2009)

Networks are everywhere. From our roads to our relationships, from our food supply to our power grids, networks are an integral part of how we live. Similarly, our churches, denominations, and even the kingdom of God are networks. Knowing how networks function and how to work with rather than against them has enormous implications for how we do ministry. Rather than bemoaning the modern disintegration of things like authority and structure, Friesen inspires hope for a more connective vision of life with God. He shows those involved in ministry how they can maximize already existing connections between people to spread the Gospel, get people plugged in at their churches, and grow together as disciples.



Personal Learning Networks: Using the Power of Connections to Transform Education

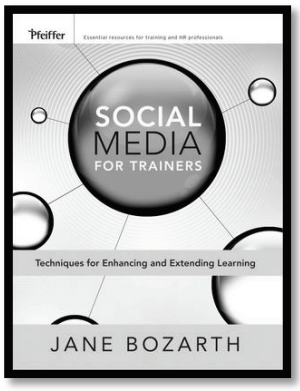
Will Richardson and Rob Mancabelli (Bloomington: Solution Tree, 2011)

The Internet connects us in unprecedented ways. New tools allow us to build global learning networks where we can pursue our intellectual and creative passions with people around the world. *Personal Learning Networks* helps educators understand the power of learning networks and become networked individuals. Learn how to use learning networks in education with step-by-step advice and real-world stories. This book aims to narrow the technological divide, put educators on the same footing as students, and provide a recipe for incorporating these tools into every classroom.

The World Is Open: How Web Technology is Revolutionizing Education

Curtis J Bonk (San Francisco: Jossey Bass, 2009)

In *The World Is Open*, education technology guru Curtis Bonk explores ten key trends that together make up the "WE-ALL-LEARN" framework for understanding the potential of technology's impact on learning in the 21st century: 1) Web Searching in the World of e-Books, 2) E-Learning and Blended Learning, 3) Availability of Open Source and Free Software, 4) Leveraged Resources and OpenCourseWare, 5) Learning Object Repositories and Portals, 6) Learner Participation in Open Information Communities, 7) Electronic Collaboration, 8) Alternate Reality Learning, 9) Real-Time Mobility and Portability, and 10) Networks of Personalized Learning. Using the dynamic "WE-ALL-LEARN" model, learners, educators, executives, administrators, instructors, and parents can tap into the power of Web technology and unleash a world of information.



Social Media for Trainers: Techniques for Enhancing and Extending Learning

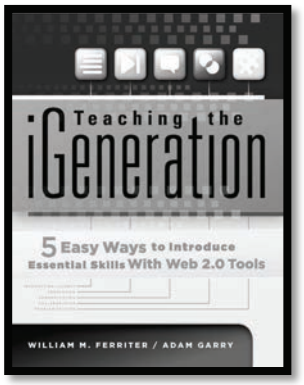
Jane Bozareth. (San Francisco: Pfeiffer, 2010)

Whether you work in a traditional or virtual classroom, social media can broaden your reach and increase the impact of training. In *Social Media for Trainers*, e-learning and new media expert Jane Bozarth provides an overview of popular tools, including blogs, wikis, Twitter, Facebook, YouTube, SlideShare, Flickr, and others. You'll learn to leverage each medium's unique features and applications to deliver training, facilitate discussions, and extend learning beyond the confines of a training event. This key resource offers a new set of powerful tools for augmenting and enhancing the value of training.

Blogs, Wikis, Podcasts, and Other Powerful Web Tools for Classrooms (3rd Edition)

Will Richardson (Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press, 2010)

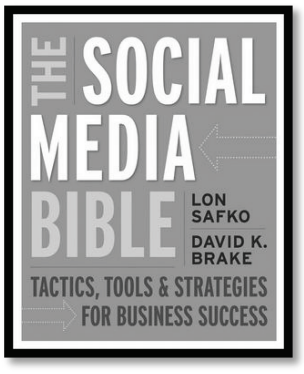
This book provides real examples from K–12 teachers around the world who are at the forefront of bringing today's Web tools into their schools and to their students. This book is filled with practical advice on how teachers and students can use the Web to learn more, create more, and communicate better. This fully updated resource opens up a new technology toolbox for both novice and tech-savvy educators. Will Richardson provides clear explanations of specific teaching applications, with how-to steps for teaching with: weblogs, wikis, Really Simple Syndication (RSS) feeds and aggregators, social bookmarking, online photo galleries, Facebook and Twitter. Updated with materials on Web publishing and information literacy, this invaluable handbook helps students and teachers use Web tools within the classroom to enhance student learning and achievement.



Teaching the iGeneration: 5 Easy Ways to Introduce Essential Skills with Web 2.0 Tools

William M. Ferriter, and Adam Garry (Bloomington: Solution Tree, 2010)

The iGeneration are often willing to experiment their way through anything, confident that trial and error can crack the code better than reading manuals or following directions. They're turning to the Internet first and the library second when assigned research projects. Their minds are working fast, but not always as deeply or as accurately as the adults in their lives would like. Yet teachers and leaders can capture the attention of the iGeneration and help them grow by integrating technology into programs and classrooms in a way that focuses on the skills that have been important for decades. Each chapter of *Teaching the iGeneration* introduces an enduring skill: information fluency, persuasion, communication, collaboration, and problem solving. Then, the authors present a digital solution that can be used to enhance traditional skill-based instructional practices. A collection of handouts and supporting materials tailored to each skill and tool type ends each chapter.

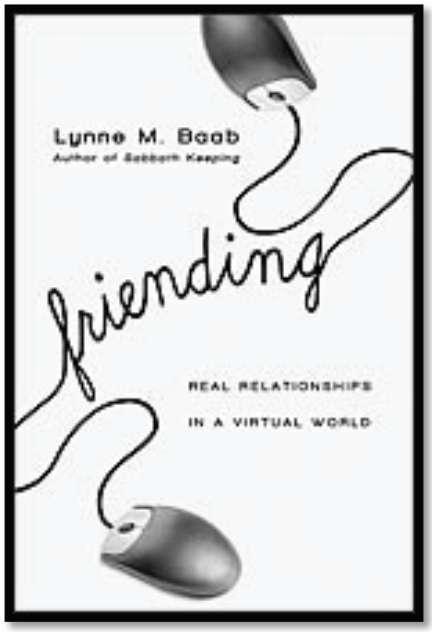


The Social Media Bible: Tactics, Tools & Strategies

Lon Safko and David K. Brake (Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley Publishers, 2009)

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

New Book



Friending: Real Relationships in a Virtual World

Lynne M Baab (Downers Grove: IVP Books, 2011)

The notion of friendship is under broad review. A highly mobile and increasingly busy society—rootless, some might argue—means that most of our relationships can't depend solely on face-to-face contact to flourish. The increasing prominence of the virtual landscape—where the language of friendship has been co-opted to describe relationships ranging from intimate to meaningless—requires that we become fluent in ever-expanding relational technologies. It's never been easy to be a friend, but it seems to be getting tougher by the nanosecond.

In *Friending*, Lynne Baab collects the insights, hopes and regrets of people from across the spectrum of age and life circumstance and syncs them with the wisdom of the Bible. Using Colossians 3 and 1 Corinthians 13 as touchpoints, Lynne shows us how we can celebrate and strengthen our relational ties while continuing to practice the timeless discipline of friending in our time.

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