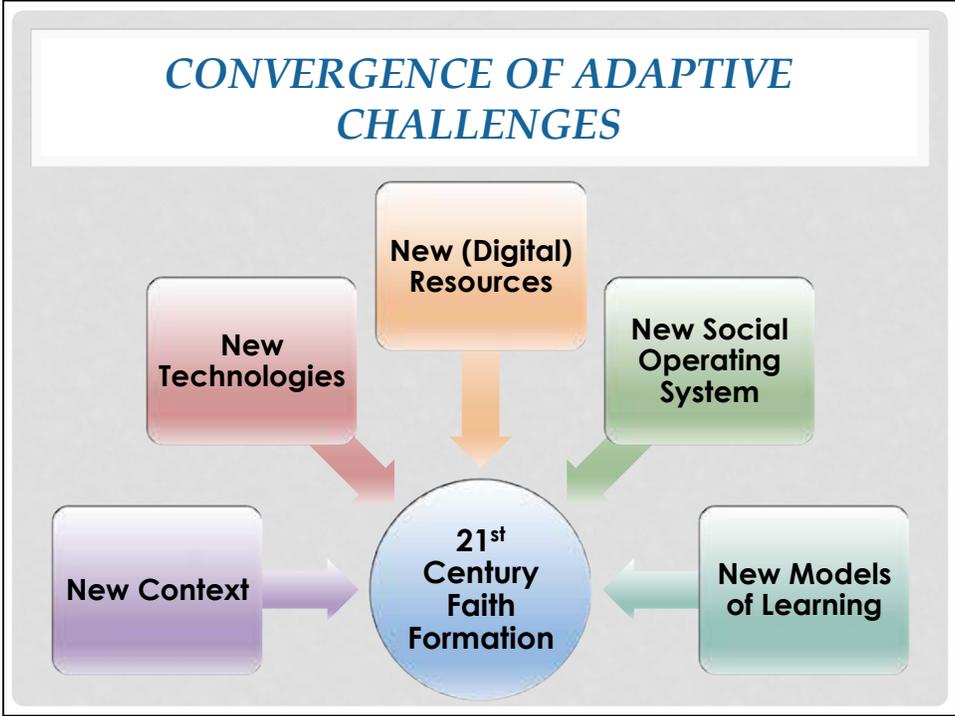# THE CHANGING LANDSCAPE FOR 21ST CENTURY FAITH FORMATION

VISION & PRACTICE OF 21ST CENTURY FAITH FORMATION
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CONVERGENCE OF ADAPTIVE CHALLENGES

New (Digital) Resources

New Technologies

New Social Operating System

New Context

21st Century Faith Formation

New Models of Learning

KEY STUDIES

AMERICAN GRACE

How Religion Divides and Unites Us

ROBERT D. PUTNAM
Author of the National Bestseller BOWLING ALONE
and DAVID E. CAMPBELL

AFTER THE BABY BOOMERS

CHRISTIANITY AFTER RELIGION

DIANA BUTLER BASS

AMERICAN RELIGION

Contemporary Trends

MARK CHAVES

www.PewResearch.org
www.FaithCommunitiesToday.org

DIVERSITY IN SOCIETY & CHURCH

➢ Generational
➢ Developmental
➢ Ethnic & Cultural
➢ Family Structures
➢ Faith Practice & Community Engagement
➢ Religious & Spiritual Needs

AGE-GROUP DIVERSITY

1. Children
2. Adolescents
3. Emerging Adults
4. Young Adults
5. Mid-Life Adults
6. Mature Adults
7. Older Adults

GENERATIONAL DIVERSITY

- iGeneration (2000 -)
- Millennials (1980-99)
- Generation X (1961-79)
- Baby Boomers (1946-60)
- Builders (pre 1946)

GENERATIONAL CHANGE

GENERATIONAL CHANGE

⊙ Significant **Generational Change** began in the early 1990s among the younger generations and is influencing society and the older generations.

⊙ These trends are having a significant impact on a **Life Cycle** approach to faith formation and church life, in general.
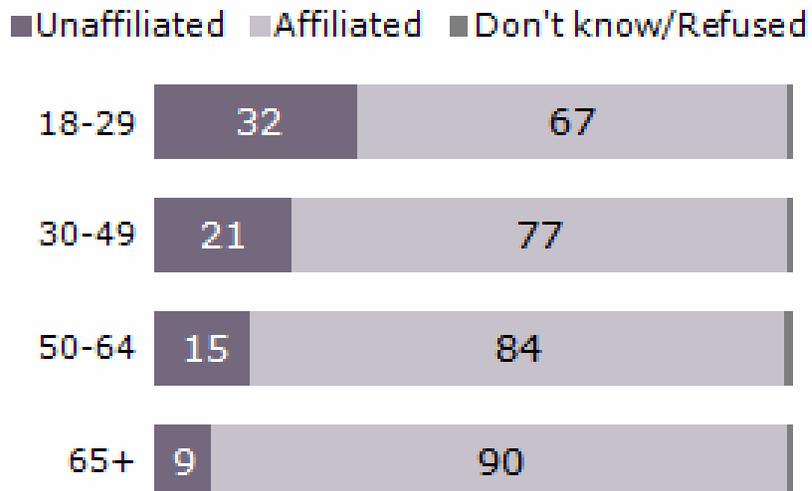
CHANGING GENERATIONS

1. Increasing number of "Nones" – no religious affiliation
2. Increasing number of "Spiritual but not Religious"
3. Embracing diversity – cultural, ethnic, sexual
4. Declining participation in Sunday worship and sacraments (marriage, baptism)
5. Declining levels of family faith practice & socialization

RELIGIOUS DIVERSITY

➢ 20% of Americans claim no religious affiliation

➢ 32% of 18-29 year olds

➢ 18% of 18-39 year olds say that are "spiritual, but not religious"
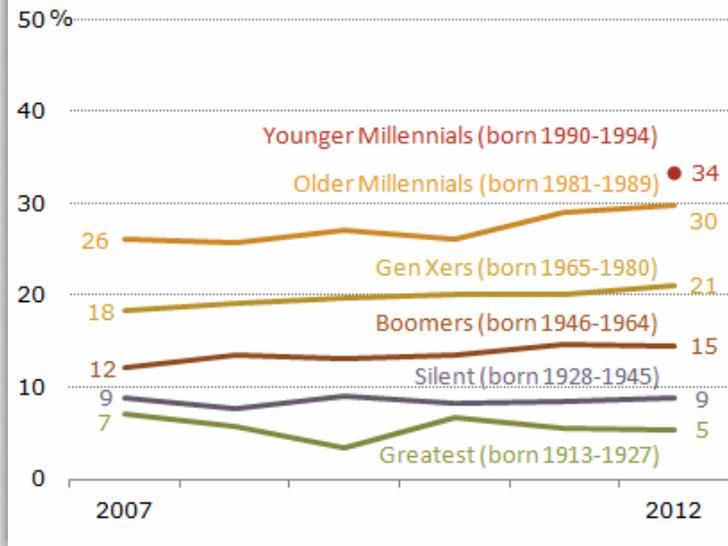

Religious Affiliation by Age

■ Unaffiliated ■ Affiliated ■ Don't know/Refused

Age	Unaffiliated	Affiliated
18-29	32	67
30-49	21	77
50-64	15	84
65+	9	90

Recent Trends in Affiliation, by Generation

% of each age cohort that is unaffiliated

50%

40

Younger Millennials (born 1990-1994)

Older Millennials (born 1981-1989) ● 34

30

30

26

Gen Xers (born 1965-1980)

21

20

18

Boomers (born 1946-1964)

15

12

Silent (born 1928-1945)

10

9   9

7   5

Greatest (born 1913-1927)

0

2007   2012

RELIGIOUS DIVERSITY

➢ According to Pew Research, Americans do **not** generally become more affiliated as they move through the life cycle from young adulthood through marriage, parenting, middle age and retirement.

RELIGIOUS DIVERSITY

➢ With few exceptions the unaffiliated say they are _**not**_ looking for a religion that would be right for them. Overwhelmingly, they think that religious organizations are too concerned with money and power, too focused on rules and too involved in politics.
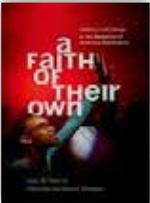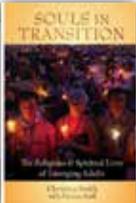
RELIGIOUS DIVERSITY

The number of religiously unaffiliated is growing . . . .

>   ➢ because of Americans who rarely go to services are more willing than in the past to drop their religious attachments altogether.

>   ➢ because of generational replacement, the gradual supplanting of older generations by newer ones.

DIVERSITY IN FAITH PRACTICE & RELIGIOSITY

| Not Religiously Affiliated | Spiritual but Not Religious | Minimal Engagement with Faith and Community | Vibrant Faith & Active Engagement |

RELIGIOUS DIVERSITY

Youth (teens)

Abiders	Adapters	Assenters	Avoiders	Atheists
20%	20%	31%	24%	5%

Emerging Adults (20s)

Committed Traditionalists	Selected Adherents	Spiritually Open	Religiously Indifferent	Religiously Disconnected	Irreligious
15%	30%	15%	25%	5%	10%

YOUTH & EMERGING ADULT RELIGIOSITY

Youth (teens)

Abiders	Adapters	Assenters	Avoiders	Atheists
20%	**20%**	**31%**	**24%**	**5%**

Emerging Adults (20s)

Committed Traditionalists	Selected Adherents	Spiritually Open	Religiously Indifferent	Religiously Disconnected	Irreligious
15%	**30%**	**15%**	**25%**	**5%**	**10%**

YOUTH RELIGIOSITY

➢ **Abiders**: highest levels of religiosity and practice: believe in God, pray regularly, engage in personal religious practice, attend services, serve others, think about the meaning of life; most likely to say their religion is the only true faith

➢ **Adapters**: high levels of personal religiosity + accepting of other people's faiths + attend religious services more sporadically

➢ **Assenters**: believe in God and feel somewhat close to God, but they are minimally engaged with their faith and practice only occasionally. Religion is tangential to other aspects of their lives.

➢ **Avoiders**: believe in God but have low levels of religious practice; God is distant, impersonal; and often don't name a religious affiliation.

➢ **Atheists**: don't believe in God and don't attend services.

EMERGING ADULTS RELIGIOSITY

- ➤ **Committed Traditionalists:** strong religious faith; articulate beliefs; active practice; commitment to faith is a significant part of their identities and moral reasoning, at least somewhat regularly involved in some religious group

- ➤ **Selected Adherents:** believe and perform certain aspects of their religious traditions but neglect and ignore others; more discriminating about what they are willing to adopt of their religious tradition's beliefs and practices

- ➤ **Spiritually Open:** not very committed to a religious faith but are nonetheless receptive to and at least mildly interested in some spiritual or religious matters.
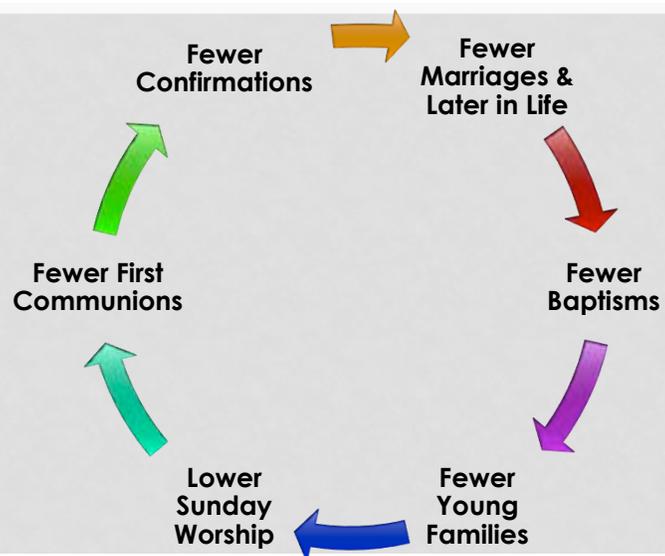
EMERGING ADULTS RELIGIOSITY

- ➤ **Religiously Indifferent:** neither care to practice religion nor oppose it; simply not invested in religion either way; too distracted with and invested in other things in life and unconcerned with matters of faith to pay any real attention to religion.

- ➤ **Religiously Disconnected:** have little to no exposure or connection to religious people, ideas, or organizations; neither interested in nor opposed to religion; faith simply has not been a part of their lives in any significant way.

- ➤ **Irreligious:** hold skeptical attitudes about and make critical arguments against religion generally, rejecting the idea of personal faith

DECLINING RELIGIOUS PARTICIPATION

➢ Declining worship attendance
➢ Declining participation in celebration of sacraments & rites of passage

CHANGING PARTICIPATION PATTERNS

Fewer Confirmations → Fewer Marriages & Later in Life → Fewer Baptisms → Fewer Young Families → Lower Sunday Worship → Fewer First Communions → Fewer Confirmations

CHANGING FAMILIES

The 1950s Family

CHANGING FAMILIES

The 1950s Family   **The 2010s Family**

CHANGING FAMILIES

⦿ Changing family patterns and structures
  ➢ Delaying marriage: marrying later and having children later in life
  ➢ Growing diversity in family structures
  ➢ Increasing number of unmarried couples living together
  ➢ Not marrying and having children
  ➢ Decreasing number of children in two-parent households

⦿ Declining levels of family faith practice & socialization

CHANGING VIEWS OF FAMILY

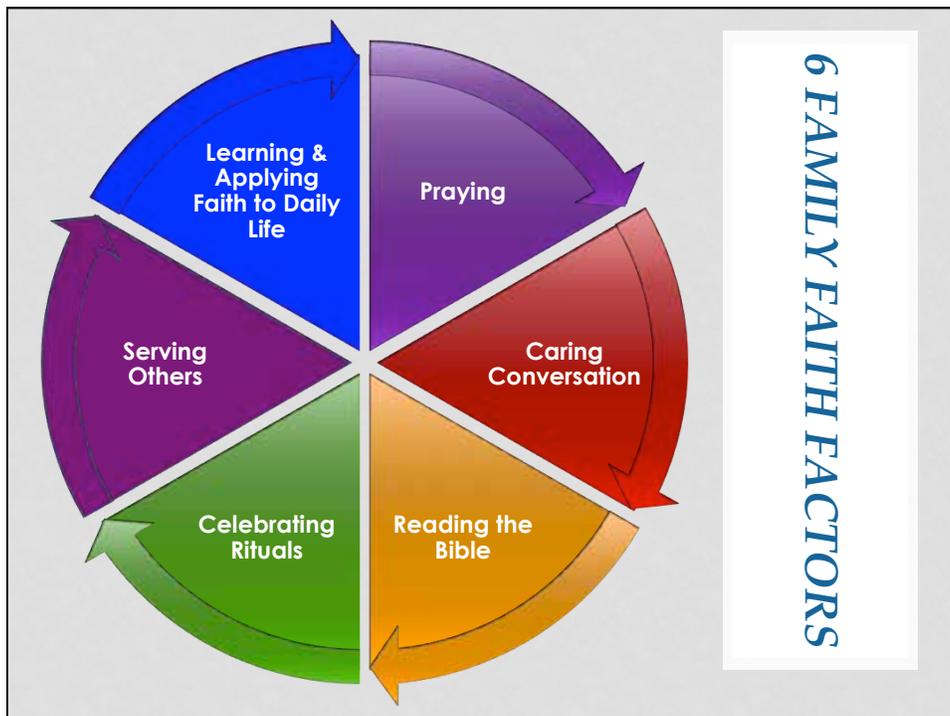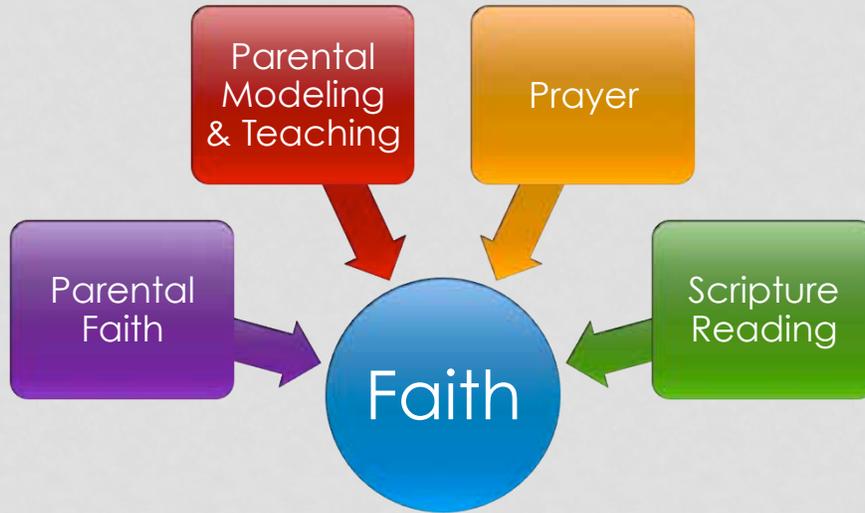|	A Family	Not a Family
Married Coupled with Children	99	1
Married Couple without Children	88	10
Single Parent with Children	86	12
Unmarried Couple with Children	80	18
Same-Sex Couple with Children	63	34
Same-Sex Couple without Children	45	52
Unmarried Coupled without Children	43	54

Pew Research, 2011

CHANGING VIEWS OF FAMILY

➢ Fully eight-in-ten adults younger than 30 say a same-sex couple with children is a family, more than double the proportion of those 65 and older who share this view (80% vs. 37%).

➢ Among those ages 30 to 49, two-thirds (67%) see a same-sex couple with children as a family, compared with 58% of all 50- to 64-year-olds.

(Pew Research, 2011)

FAMILY RELIGIOUS SOCIALIZATION

➢ ***Parental Influence***: The single most important social influence on the religious and spiritual lives of children and adolescents is their parents.

➢ ***Embedded Family Religious Practices***: Effective religious socialization comes about through specific religious activities that are firmly intertwined with the daily habits of family life

FAMILY RELIGIOUS SOCIALIZATION

Parental Modeling & Teaching

Prayer

Parental Faith

Scripture Reading

Faith

6 FAMILY FAITH FACTORS

Learning & Applying Faith to Daily Life

Praying

Caring Conversation

Reading the Bible

Celebrating Rituals

Serving Others

FAMILY RELIGIOUS SOCIALIZATION

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

(*Souls in Transition: The Religious & Spiritual Lives of Emerging Adults* by Christian Smith with Patricia Snell)

INTERGENERATIONAL CONNECTIONS

Intergenerational connection and involvement during high school promotes mature faith in both high school and college – a "sticky faith."

- Welcoming and valuing young people's participation in the life of the church
- Worshipping with all of the generations
- Serving and building relationships with younger children
- Having significant relationships with adults in the church and having the community show interest in them

INTERGENERATIONAL CONNECTIONS

Churches and families wanting to instill deep faith in youth should help them build a web of relationships with committed and caring adults.

Becoming a 5:1 Church

5 Adults to 1 Young Person
in
Worship, Teaching, Mentoring, Rituals, and all of Community Life

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INTERPRETING THE RELIGIOUS & SPIRITUAL NEEDS OF PEOPLE

TWO CRITICAL UNCERTAINTIES

1. Will trends in U.S. culture lead people to become *more receptive* to organized religion, and in particular Christianity <u>or</u> will trends lead people to become *more resistant* to organized religion and Christianity?

2. Will people's hunger for and openness to God and the spiritual life *increase* over the next decade <u>or</u> will people's hunger for and openness to God and the spiritual life *decrease*.

FAITH FORMATION 2020

Dominant Cultural Attitude toward Organized Religion

Receptive

Low ←——————→ High
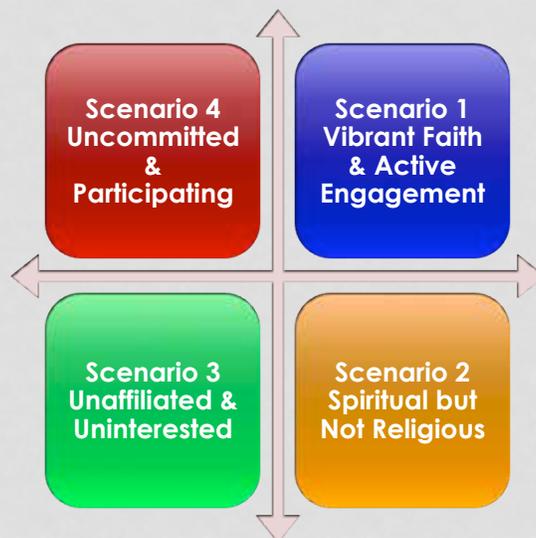
People's Hunger for God and the Spiritual Life

Resistant

Faith Formation 2020 Scenarios

RELATIONSHIP WITH ORGANIZED RELIGION AND CHRISTIANITY

RECEPTIVE TO ORGANIZED RELIGION

Scenario #4:
Participating but Uncommitted

Scenario #1:
Vibrant Faith and Active Engagement

LOW — HUNGER FOR GOD AND THE SPIRITUAL LIFE — HIGH

Scenario #3:
Unaffiliated and Uninterested

Scenario #2:
Spiritual but Not Religious

RESISTANT TO ORGANIZED RELIGION

4 SCENARIOS FOR THE FUTURE

Scenario 4 Uncommitted & Participating

Scenario 1 Vibrant Faith & Active Engagement

Scenario 3 Unaffiliated & Uninterested

Scenario 2 Spiritual but Not Religious

SCENARIO #1

- People are actively engaged in a Christian church, are spiritually committed, and growing in their faith.
- People have found their spiritual home within an established Christian tradition and a local faith community that provides ways for all ages and generations to grow in faith, worship God, and live their faith in the world.
- The future of faith formation in Scenario #1 is being significantly impacted by people in their 20s & 30s leaving established Christian churches, and the decline in family religious socialization and practice at home.

SCENARIO #4

- People attend church activities occasionally, but are not actively engaged or spiritually committed.
- They may participate in significant seasonal celebrations and celebrate sacraments and milestones (marriage, baptism). Some may even send their children to religious education classes.
- Spiritual commitment is low and the connection to the church is more social and utilitarian than spiritual.
- While receptive to an established church, their occasional engagement in church life does not lead them toward spiritual commitment, and their spiritual commitment does not lead them to engagement.

SCENARIO #2

- People are spiritually hungry and searching for God and the spiritual life, but most likely are not affiliated with organized religion and an established Christian tradition.
- Some may join a nondenominational Christian church focused on their spiritual needs, while others may find an outlet for their spiritual hunger in small communities of like-minded spiritual seekers, in local or global acts of service, or in online spiritual resources and communities.
- The Spiritual but Not Religious reflect a growing minority of the American population, especially among the eighteen- to thirty-nine-year-olds.

SCENARIO #3

- A world in which people experience little need for God and the spiritual life and are not affiliated with organized religion and established Christian churches.
- The Unaffiliated and Uninterested reject all forms of organized religion and reflect an increasing percentage of the American population, especially those in their 20s and 30s.