



Developing Faith Formation for the Baby Boom Generation

John Roberto

Are churches ready for the coming tsunami of aging Baby Boomers. In 2011 the first members of the Baby Boomer Generation turn sixty-five years old. In the United States today Americans over sixty-five now outnumber teenagers by nearly two to one. What used to be referred to as the “graying of America” is now understood to be a social revolution. Some thirty-nine million Americans, or 13% of the U.S. population, are ages sixty-five and older—up from 4% in 1900. By 2050, according to Pew Research projections, about *one-in-five* Americans will be over age sixty-five, and about 5% will be ages eighty-five and older, up from 2% now. Nearly every industry in society, from health care to entertainment, is scrambling to respond to this age wave that is crashing on our shores.

America is in the midst of a demographic revolution, but this revolution is about much more than longevity. It’s about the changing perspective of the Baby Boomers as they reach what was traditionally viewed as a time to enjoy the golden years. We are witnessing the emergence of a new stage of life between adult midlife—typically focused on career and child-rearing—and old age, traditionally marked by increasing frailty and decline. This new stage of life spans several decades and is characterized by generally good health, relative financial stability, and an active, engaged lifestyle.

Phyllis Moen, in her article “Midcourse: Navigating Retirement and a New Life Stage” writes, “[This is] the period in which individuals begin to think about, plan for, and actually disengage from their primary career occupations and the raising of children; develop new identities and new ways to be productively engaged; establish new patterns of relating to spouses, children, siblings, parents, friends; leave some existing relationships and begin new ones. As in adolescence, people in the midcourse years are thinking about and enacting role shifts that are both products of their past and precursors of their future life course.”

This article is organized into two sections. Part 1 offers insights on approaching faith formation with Baby Boomers from experts in the field. Part 2 is a guide to developing congregational faith formation with Baby Boomers, that utilizes the process I developed in my Fall 2009 (Volume 3.3) *Lifelong Faith* article, “Faith Formation for Every Adult in Your Church—It’s Possible Today!”

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Part One. Approaching Faith Formation with Baby Boomers

1. Perspectives & Practices for Ministry with Baby Boomers - Gary McIntosh

(Excerpts from: "Trends and Challenges for Ministry Among North American's Largest Generation." *Christian Education Journal*, Series 3, Vol. 5, No. 2, pages 300-303; <http://wisdom.biola.edu/cej>)

Gary McIntosh describes the Baby Boomer generation as educated, media-oriented, independent, cause-oriented, fitness conscious, activists, quality conscious, and questioning of authority. He says that as church members Boomers are (1) committed to relationships, rather than organizations; (2) want to belong, rather than join; (3) supportive of people, rather than programs; (4) long to live their faith, rather than talk about it; (5) wish to be seen as unique individuals, rather than a monolithic group; (6) desire to design their own programs, rather than attend ones developed for them; (7) yearn to serve others, rather than only being served; and (8) crave meaningful activity, rather than empty days. In this excerpt he describes how to approach faith formation with Baby Boomers.

Perspectives

I have followed the boomer generation since 1983, tracking the impact of their lifestyle, attitudes, and interests on general church ministry. Like others, I have noticed that Boomers have always made their own rules, and now they are redefining how to grow old. As Boomers reinvent old age, gerontologist Ken Dychwald says they "will age rebelliously." And, as Boomers push the age profile of churches in the United States higher, they are also demanding a different array of services than the same age group a generation ago. My observations lead me to conclude the following regarding aging Boomers.

First as Boomers age they continue to be different than the generation preceding them.

Generational personality does not change much after the bulk of the generation reaches 30 years old, and Boomers are not likely to suddenly wake up and like older forms of ministry. Expect Boomers to ask why, tell it like it is, let it all hang out, prefer informal activities, like change and variety, think the system is the problem, be cause-oriented, desire to experience life, and have a low view of institutions. In short, expect Boomers to act and think much like they always have, except with more maturity.

Second, as Boomers age, they are offended by "old" stereotypes. They like to be characterized by the following words: active, alert, contributor, experienced, healthy, independent, and worker. Most Boomers think of themselves as 10-15 years younger than they actually are. They dislike being labeled "senior citizens," "old," or "retired." In short, expect Boomers to be turned off by any ministry that portrays them as frail, aged, or sedentary.

Third, as Boomers age they aspire to be unique individuals. They want to be part of the decision-making for any ministry that they are expected to attend and will not respond to a program that is developed for them without their input. They resist the "poor dear syndrome" and senior discounts. In their way of thinking, a 10% discount means they are 10% depreciated. Boomers never wished to wear fashions that made them look mature, and they continue to appreciate the music of their youth. Any church ministry that is designed for their parents will not attract aging Boomers. They are attracted to ministries that help them look back with pride to their youth, while helping them launch the next chapter in their lives. To be successful, ministry to Boomers must appear youthful, healthy, vibrant, and worthy of their time and energy.

Fourth, as Boomers age they continue to search for the next new adventure. Whether it is short-term mission trips or ski outings, older boomer still look for new experiences. Most recently, they have made sports utility vehicles extremely popular. It is true that they rarely drive them off the road, but they have an adventure from their driveway to the grocery store and back. In short, they are attracted to church ministry that is challenging and adventuresome.

Fifth, as Boomers age, they continue to accelerate their careers. Boomers are changing their lifestyles but staying involved in the work force. They are buying vacation and second homes, as well

as enlarging their nests to include home offices and fitness centers. While churches continue to offer noontime luncheon meetings for seniors, working Boomers cannot come due to their jobs. In a word, aging Boomers are attracted to ministries that are high quality and make allowances for their work schedules.

Sixth, as Boomers age, they continue to search for spiritual meaning. While Boomers have always demonstrated a “spiritual” bent, whether in a mystical or a traditional religious sense, throughout most of their lives many Boomers have simply ignored the church. However, it is now apparent that age Boomers struggle with the same spiritual, emotional, and life-stage issues with which previous generations have wrestled. All the instincts of the baby Boomers are saying, “Slow down. Figure out what’s important.” They are attracted to church ministries that speak clearly and specifically to their concerns, and ones that make a difference in their lives.

Seventh, as Boomers age, they continue to break the rules. Boomers have always challenged the status quo, and they are doing so as they reinvent themselves today. Aging Boomers will need room to re-frame traditional seniors’ ministry to fit their own needs and desires.

Practices

As church leaders think through the challenges and opportunities present by the aging boomer generation, I believe they should consider trying to do the following:

1. Build a ministry for Boomers that is **adventurous**. Rather than mall walking, consider hiking in the mountains, cross-country skiing, or snowshoeing. Remember: Boomers have always seen themselves as a youthful generation, and they still do!
2. Build a ministry for Boomers that is **fun**. Rather than potluck luncheons, consider catered parties, fishing trips, paint ball competitions, and team-building camps. Remember: Boomers are not looking for a seniors’ ministry; they are seeking an older youth ministry.
3. Build a ministry for Boomers that is **significant**. Rather than being served,

consider serving others by building a home for Habitat for Humanity, assisting missionaries, helping out-of-work people to find a job, or tutoring children. Remember: Boomers desire to make a difference in the world by taking on great causes.

4. Build a ministry for Boomers that is **educational**. Along with Bible studies, consider CPR, basic first aid, personal health, managing finances, and public speaking classes. Remember: Boomers are an educated generation, and they wish to continue learning to the end of their days.
5. Building a ministry for Boomers that is **spiritual**. Rather than offering simplistic formulas, consider prayer walks in the neighborhood, intercession teams, and a variety of small group sharing. Remember: Boomers are a mosaic of sub-groups, and it will take a multi-dimensional approach to spiritual formation to reach them.

There are three approaches we can take with aging Boomers. One, we can simply write off Boomers and focus on the emerging generations. Two, we can try to reach and keep Boomers with ministries that currently exist and are popular with the oldest generation. Or, three, we can scrap our conventional thinking about seniors’ ministry and start from scratch, building a new ministry that is fruitful in reaching and keeping aging Boomers. For churches that desire to be fruitful, my advice is to choose the third option.

Ministry By and For Those Beyond the Age of 55

Christian Education Journal
Series 3, Volume 5, No. 2, Fall 2008 [\$15]
(Biola University, <http://wisdom.biola.edu/cej>)

The Fall 2008 issue of Christian Education Journal focuses on older adults (55+) with a series of excellent articles, including “Perspectives on the Spiritual Development of ‘Aging’ Boomers” by Hal Pettegrew, and “Trends and Challenges for Ministry Among North America’s Largest Generation” by Gary McIntosh. Purchase this back issue, or individual articles, from the Biola University website.

2. Three Components of Ministry with Baby Boomers - Amy Hanson

(Excerpts from *Baby Boomers and Beyond: Tapping the Ministry Talents and Passions of Adults Over Fifty*. San Francisco: Jossey Bass, 2010.)

Amy Hanson, in *Baby Boomers and Beyond*, proposes three essential components for creative ministries with maximum impact on Baby Boomers: 1) service, 2) spiritual growth, and 3) intergenerational relationships.

Service

Boomers want to do something interesting and challenging. They are ready to jump into a worthwhile cause where they feel that can make a significant difference. Boomers want service opportunities that have a mission. They want to do things that give their lives purpose, meaning, and fulfillment. They want to know their contributions truly matter. There is no greater mission for Boomers to immerse themselves in than the mission of Christ to redeem and heal a broken world. Encourage Boomers to serve in an area where they've always had an interest, and provide them with exposure to a variety of service opportunities. Short term trips can be a great way for people over fifty to discover the one thing they want to invest themselves in. Show Boomers how they might use their past work experiences as tools for service. Help them tap into their passion.

Engaging Boomers to make a major impact for Christ in the world should be a primary foundation for ministry with Boomers—if not *the* primary foundation. We have an open window of time right now to help individuals refocus their priorities and recognize how God wants to use them for his purposes in this season of their lives. (Hanson, 143)

Spiritual Growth

There are several fundamental resources why Boomers are responsive to the message of the gospel and to spiritual growth. Later Adulthood is a season of significant life transitions and people are more responsive to religion. A second reason is Boomers quest to find meaning and purpose in life as they

enter the second half of life and evaluate the things that really provide lasting fulfillment. A third reason adults are open to faith and spiritual growth is their desire for meaningful relationships. The church can be a primary place of social interaction where people can connect with one another and talk about life issues. “All three factors—help dealing with life’s changes, a search for purpose, and a desire for meaningful relationships—can powerfully work together in drawing adults to Christ’s saving grace. (Hanson, 151)

Effective ways to bring older adults into a relationship with Christ include: (1) small group faith formation, (2) hanging out in the places where Boomer adults gather, (3) hosting events that appeal to Boomer’s interests and needs, and (4) service opportunities.

Intergenerational Relationships

Ministry with Baby Boomers includes an intergenerational component. Developing intergenerational relationships is one of the best ways to break age-related stereotypes, to share faith across generations, and to help the church become more unified. There are a variety of ways to connect the generations and develop intergenerational relationships: (1) encourage generations to serve together on a worthy cause; (2) form groups according to similar interests rather than age; (3) encourage adults to intentionally pray for young people and vice versa; (4) host strategic intergenerational events that are fun for all, have ready-made questions that permit age groups to engage easily in conversation, and encourage relationships to continue after the event is over; (5) ask adults to tell their stories, at workshop or events or programs, and capture them on video and/or in print; (6) develop intergenerational small group and large group programming; (7) integrate all ages in Sunday worship; and (8) educate people as to the uniqueness of each generation.

As multiple generations work, worship, serve, and play together, the result will be that people lay down their own self-centeredness and take up the attitude of Christ. True, we may have to do church a little differently, but when all ages are regularly interacting and loving one another, God is honored, and we become an example to our hurting world. (Hanson, 185)

3. Keys to Baby Boomer Faith Formation: Variety & Choice

We know from research that adult learners will chose the learning activity that best fits their learning needs, preferred modes of learning, and time constraints. In order to accomplish this, faith formation with Baby Boomers needs to provide a variety of content and learning activities, and a variety of models for faith formation that include activities in physical places and virtual spaces.

A Variety of Models

Six models that should be part of adult faith formation offerings for Baby Boomers include:

1. **Faith Formation on Your Own:** through reading, online courses, audio and video programs, movies, television programs
2. **Faith Formation at Home:** through Bible reading, storytelling and caring conversation, prayer and devotions, rituals and traditions, service
3. **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
4. **Faith Formation in Large Groups;** through courses, speaker series, workshops, film festivals, retreats, conferences, intergenerational programs
5. **Faith Formation in the Congregation:** through Sunday worship, church year events and celebrations, service/mission activities, ministry and leadership in the church and community
6. **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

A Variety of Settings: Face-to-Face & Online

Adult faith formation includes learning activities in physical places and virtual spaces, blending face-to-face, interactive learning with virtual, online learning. Online websites, social networking services, and digital technologies (e.g., an iPod Touch, smart cell phones) mean that churches can deliver faith formation experiences and resources anytime and anywhere, reaching people wherever they go online (home, work, school, vacation, coffee house). The interplay between learning in physical places, face-to-face, and virtual online spaces can revolutionize adult faith formation in a church.

Suggestions & Ideas for Baby Boomer Faith Formation

1. Develop a Lifelong Learning Institute at your church or as a collaborative effort among churches in your community.

Baby Boomers are looking for stimulating learning experiences that run the gamut of topics and interests. Imagine your church (or a group of local churches) as a “college” where courses and learning events are offered throughout the week—daytime, evenings, weekends—on campus and out in the community/world.

The Osher Lifelong Learning Institutes can serve as a model for establishing an institute for adults 50 or older. Osher Institutes are found on the campuses of 118 colleges and universities from Maine to Hawaii and Alaska. Each provides a distinctive array of non-credit courses and activities specifically developed for adults aged 50 or older who are interested in learning for the joy of learning.

For example the University of Dayton Osher Institute offers courses in art, current events, health and fitness, history, literature, music, religion and science. A curriculum committee selects courses on the basis of member requests, the expertise of moderators, variety, and balance. Moderators include University of Dayton professors and community professionals who lead peer-to-peer informal discussion seminars that meet once a week for two hours, for four to eight weeks. The summer session is two one-day sessions. At Duke University

the Osher Institute utilizes a mix of peer teachers, Duke professors, graduate students, independent scholars, and community experts.

Your church(s) can develop courses and learning activities around the interests of Baby Boomers, as well as around the expertise of teachers/leaders in your church and community. Topics which emerged from the survey of research in this journal issue included:

- personal finances and financial security,
- physical health and exercise
- personal interests (e.g., hobbies, dance, writing, arts)
- travel and new adventures
- family relationships and responsibilities (e.g., caring for an older parent),
- spiritual health (meaning and purpose in life, deepening and strengthening relationship with God)
- changing living situations
- multiple life transitions

Courses at the Duke University Osher Lifelong Learning Institute cover a wide range of topics and interests: art and architecture, hands-on art, computer programs, culture and social sciences, economic/financial issues and retirement issues, health and wellness, history and current affairs, literature, language and drama, natural science and technology, performing arts, religion and philosophy, and writing.

Ginghamsburg Church in Tipp City, OH takes a similar “institute” approach, offering courses and learning activities throughout the week on a wide variety of topics and interests. The Winter/Spring 2011 courses include: Encountering the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; A Study of David: Anointed, Transformed, Redeemed; Crown Financial Study and Financial Peace University; Secrets of a Prayer Warrior; A Follower’s Life; Boundaries (relationship course); Forgive for Good; Ministry by Strengths; Love is a Choice: Letting Go of Unhealthy Relationships; C.L.A.R.I.T.Y. in Communications; Christian 12-Step; GriefShare; Zumba with Toning; Insanely Fit; Healthy Cooking Class; Yoga Café; Yoga/Pilates Fusion; Quilting Group; and Basic Car Maintenance.

For More Resources and Examples

- Osher Lifelong Learning Institute: <http://usm.maine.edu/olli/national>

- Aquinas College: www.aquinas.edu/olli
- Duke University: www.learnmore.duke.edu/olli
- Ginghamsburg Adult Faith Formation: <http://ginghamsburg.org/adult>
- Santa Clara University: www.scu.edu/osher
- University of Dayton: <http://artssciences2.udayton.edu/continuingeducation/udlli.asp>

2. Utilize online resources to develop programs and activities in a variety of faith formation models.

Online learning resources continue to increase dramatically. Many of these resources are free and can be used in a variety of faith formation models: on your own, at home, in small groups, and in large groups. Here are two examples of the rich resources online.

Ted Talks

TED is a small nonprofit devoted to Ideas Worth Spreading. It started out (in 1984) as a conference bringing together people from three worlds: Technology, Entertainment, Design. Since then its scope has become ever broader. The annual TED conferences bring together the world’s most fascinating thinkers and doers, who are challenged to give the talk of their lives (in 18 minutes). The TED website has been developed around TEDTalks, with the goal of giving everyone on-demand access to the world’s most inspiring voices. There are more than 700 TEDTalks now available.

Website: www.ted.com/index.php/talks

iTunes University

iTunes University, part of the iTunes Store, is possibly the world’s greatest collection of free educational media available to lifelong learners. With more than 350,000 free lectures, videos, films, and other resources—from all over the world, iTunes U has become the engine for the mobile learning movement. Almost 400 universities—including Stanford, Yale, MIT, Oxford, and UC Berkeley—distribute their content publicly on the iTunes Store. In the Beyond Campus section of iTunes U, people can access a wealth of content from distinguished entities such as MoMA, the New York Public Library, Public Radio International, and PBS stations.

Website: www.apple.com/education/itunes-u

3. Offer a variety of justice and service involvements for Baby Boomers.

Churches can respond to Boomers' interest (and increasing time availability) to address social issues and their willingness to make their community and world a better place by offering a variety of age-specific and intergenerational projects that are geared to different levels of involvement and challenge, such as:

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

Utilize existing projects and organizations—locally, nationally, and globally—to offer a variety of involvements. Develop an annual “catalog” of service/mission opportunities. For an example of this approach go to Ginghamburg Church Adult Global Missions: <http://ginghamsburg.org/missions>.

Churches can also develop small groups that combine the study of justice and social issues with experiential hands-on action projects. Groups can be organized around issues or themes. One example of a small group program that weaves study, small group learning, retreat experiences, and action projects is *JustFaith* (www.justfaith.org). *JustFaith* is a thirty-week justice formation and transformation process that focuses on discipleship—engagement in the life of Jesus—and the call to be about God's dream of justice and compassion in a world scarred by the domestic and global crisis called poverty. Meeting weekly, small groups of 10–15 people employ books, videos, discussion, prayer, retreats and hands-on experiences. Opening and closing retreats are part of the commitment each participant makes to the group. Four immersion experiences provide face-to-face contact with people living on

the margins of society, and include social analysis and spiritual/theological reflection.

4. Develop faith formation around Baby Boomer milestones and life transitions.

Faith formation with Baby Boomers (adults currently in their 50s and 60s) can be developed around their many life transitions or “trigger events” as Richard Leider calls them (see the “Discovering What Really Matters” article in the survey of research reports for more information.) The most significant life transitions in the 50s and 60s include:

- starting a new job
- losing a job
- child beginning college
- child graduating from college
- adult child moving back home
- child getting married
- birth or adoption of a grandchild
- caregiving for a grandchild
- surviving a major illness/accident
- death of someone close
- caregiving for an elderly relative
- retirement
- selling the “family home”
- relocating to a new home

Churches can develop faith formation around these significant life transitions or milestones by creating:

1. a ritual celebration or a blessing marking the milestone with the whole church community
2. a home ritual celebration or blessing marking the milestone
3. a learning program—often for the whole family or community—that prepares the individual for the milestone
4. a tangible, visible reminder or symbol of the milestone being marked
5. resources for pastoral care and for continuing faith growth after the milestone experience

Resources

Hater, Robert. *Journeys of Discovering*. New London: Twenty-Third Publications, 2009.
Milestones Ministry Manual for Home and Congregation. Bloomington: Vibrant Faith Ministries, 2007. (www.vibrantfaith.org)

5. Develop spiritual formation focused on “spirituality for the second half of life.”

As Baby Boomers enter the second half of life, churches can respond by helping them explore spirituality from a new perspective. A resource such as Richard Rohr’s *Falling Upward: A Spirituality for the Two Halves of Life* (Jossey-Bass, 2011) can provide content for a variety of programs and activities, including a course, a retreat program, small group study, etc.

Churches can respond to the hunger for growing in relationship and intimacy with God and exploring more deeply the life of the Spirit by providing formation in spiritual disciplines and practices for the second half of life. Churches can offer educational programs, retreat experiences, spiritual guides who serve as mentors on the spiritual journey, and resources on the spiritual disciplines and practices. Churches can also equip Baby Boomers to serve as spiritual mentors and guides for other ages.

Churches can assist Baby Boomers in (re)discovering and experiencing spiritual practices such as Lectio Divina, Scripture reflection, spiritual reading, contemplation, fixed-hour prayer, the examen, solitude and silence, Sabbath, praying with art and music, discernment, fasting, and prayer styles and traditions.

Spiritual formation in small groups provides a flexible way to explore and experience the spiritual practices and disciplines, and apply them to daily life. Offer small groups in a variety settings (church, home, coffee shop), times, and lengths suited to people’s lifestyles. Offer a variety of content topics such as “Spiritual Disciplines Bible Study Groups” focused on the core spiritual practices in the Bible (see *Spiritual Disciplines Companion: Bible Studies and Practices to Transform Your Soul* by Jan Johnson); and small groups focused on a single spiritual practice, such as Sabbath, prayer, contemplation, fasting, Scripture reflection, pilgrimage, discernment, and liturgical year.

Set aside a prayer room stocked with resources about prayer and spiritual practices and connect people to online spiritual formation and prayer resources, as well as to online communities that nurture spiritual formation.

A Sampling of Spiritual Formation Resources

Ancient Christian Practices Series (Thomas Nelson)

- Allender, Dan. *Sabbath*.
- Benson, Robert. *In Constant Prayer*
- Chittister, Joan. *The Liturgical Year*.
- Gallagher, Nora. *The Sacred Meal*.
- McLaren, Brian. *Finding Our Way Again: The Return of the Ancient Practices*.
- McKnight, Scott. *Fasting*.

Barton, Ruth Haley. *Sacred Rhythm: Arranging Our Lives for Spiritual Transformation*. Downers Grove: Intervarsity, 2006.

Calhoun, Adele Ahlberg. *Spiritual Disciplines Handbook: Practices that Transform Us*. Downers Grove: Intervarsity, 2005.

Caliguire, Mindy. *Discovering Soul Care, Spiritual Friendship, Simplicity, and Soul Searching*. Downers Grove: Intervarsity, 2007-2008.

Dawson, Gerrit Scott, Adele J. González, E. Glenn Hinson, Rueben P. Job, Marjorie J. Thompson, and Wendy M. Wright. *Companions in Christ: A Small-Group Experience in Spiritual Formation*. Revised Edition. Nashville: Upper Room, 2006.

Foster, Richard. *Life with God: Reading the Bible for Spiritual Transformation*. San Francisco: HarperOne, 2008.

Foster, Richard. *Celebration of Discipline: The Path to Spiritual Growth*. 20th Anniversary Issue. San Francisco: HarperCollins, 1998.

Johnson, Jan. *Spiritual Disciplines Companion: Bible Studies and Practices to Transform Your Soul*. Downers Grove: Intervarsity, 2009.

Redmont, Jane. *When in Doubt, Sing: Prayer in Daily Life*. Jane Redmont. Notre Dame: Sorin, 2008.

Rhodes, Tricia McCary. *Sacred Chaos: Spiritual Disciplines for the Life You Have*. Downers Grove: Intervarsity, 2008.

Rupp, Joyce. *Prayer*. Joyce Rupp. Maryknoll: Orbis, 2007.

Thompson, Marjorie. *Soul Feast: An Invitation to the Christian Spiritual Life*. Westminster/John Knox, 2005.

Wicks, Robert. *Prayerfulness: Awakening to the Fullness of Life*. Notre Dame: Sorin, 2009.

Wolpert, Daniel. *Creating a Life with God: The Call of Ancient Prayer Practices*. Nashville: Upper Room, 2003.

5. Connect Baby Boomers with the other generations in the congregation through intergenerational events, programs, and relationships.

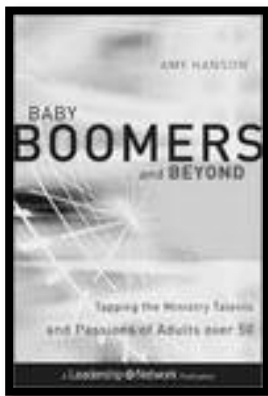
Churches can connect Baby Boomers to other generations in a variety of ways. Here are several suggestions.

- Offer simple, one-time opportunities for Baby Boomers and the younger generations to get to know each other: social events, service projects, or educational experiences. Make a concerted effort to invite people from all generations to plan and participate in the activities.
- Encourage Boomers to share their faith journey, beliefs, and values with young people. Invite young people to share their stories, too.
- Link people of different generations (older-to-younger or younger-to-older) in the church who have insights and life experiences that may be helpful to the other, such as Boomers helping young adults and new parents with money management and household management, or young people helping Boomers navigate the online world.
- Structure age-group programs with an intergenerational connection, such as an educational program that includes interviews, a

panel, and/or storytelling with people of different ages.

- Incorporate intergenerational dialogues into programming—opportunities for the generations to experience the wisdom, faith, and interests of other generations through presentations, performances, and discussions.
- Develop mentoring relationships between youth and Baby Boomers, such as prayer partners, learning-to-pray spiritual direction, service involvement, and Confirmation mentors.
- Design intergenerational service programs (or redesign existing programs) that accommodate the needs and interests of all generations.
- Sponsor music and art projects such as a community concert where musicians of all ages perform together, or an intergenerational art exchange or exhibit, or an Advent or Lent music festival.
- Organize social-recreational activities, such as an intergenerational Olympics or a Wednesday night simple meal and Bible study during Lent.
- Offer intergenerational learning programs throughout the year that involve all generations in learning, relationships building, faith sharing, prayer and celebrating.

(For more insights and ideas about connecting the generations see the Spring 2009 (Volume 3.1) issue of *Lifelong Faith*—“Generations Learning Together.”



Baby Boomers and Beyond: Tapping the Ministry Talents and Passions of Adults over 50

Amy Hanson. (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2010) [\$24.95]

With more discretionary time and increased longevity, Baby Boomers are searching for a way to make a meaningful impact with their lives. *Baby Boomers and Beyond* explores the opportunities and challenges that the older adult population presents for the Christian community. Amy Hanson dares church leaders to let go of stereotypes about aging and embrace a new paradigm, that older adults are for the most part active, healthy, and capable of making significant contributions for the Kingdom of God. Hanson offers a realistic view of the Boomers and reveals what matters most to this age group: staying young, juggling multiple relationships, and redefining retirement. By tapping into their needs, pastors can engage this burgeoning group and unleash the power of the Boomer generation to enhance and strengthen the mission of the church. The book address questions such as: How do we let go of "one-size-fits-all" ministry? What spiritual growth can we encourage? How do we meld multiple generations? And, most important, how do we harness the potential of this new generation? There are numerous examples from churches across the country.

Part Two. A Guide to Developing Faith Formation with Baby Boomers

(Note: This process is adapted from “Faith Formation for Every Adult in Your Church—It’s Possible Today!” by John Roberto in *Lifelong Faith* Volume 3.3, Fall 2009.)

Addressing the Diversity of Baby Boomers

As we have seen in the survey of research reports, there is a great diversity of experiences, concerns, and spiritual and religious needs among Baby Boomers. To address this diversity, churches need to offer a wide variety of faith formation topics and activities. In the past churches have often chosen the “one size fits all” mentality for adult faith formation: How do we get every adult to participate in a small faith sharing group or to come to the Lenten series or to study the Bible? Adult faith formation is no longer about finding *the* program to attract all adults. It is about addressing the diversity of adult learning needs with a variety of faith formation activities. It is offering faith formation programming that is varied in content, expectations, depth, involvement, and timing. It is meeting individuals at the point of their spiritual and learning needs and offering personalized pathways of faith growth. Adults can create their individual “faith growth learning plans” to help them identify where they are on their spiritual journey, what they need, who else might share that need, and the resources that could help them meet that need. By expanding the options for adult learning (offering “something for everyone”), churches can engage more adults in faith formation, even if some of the offerings involve only one person.

Today, as never before, a local church has access to adult faith formation programming, resources, and networks, that can address the diversity. Resources for learning abound in every environment, for example iTunes University, part of

the iTunes Store, is possibly the world’s greatest collection of free educational media available to lifelong learners. With over 200,000 educational audio and video files available, iTunes U has quickly become the engine for the mobile learning movement. It puts courses and resources from over 150 universities and learning organizations into the hands of individuals, groups, and organizations.

The new reality of faith formation programming is that churches can offer activities that cater to niches— individuals and small groups with a particular spiritual or religious need, interest, passion, concern, or life issue. They no longer have to worry about reaching a “mass audience.” It is the end of the “one size fits all” mindset.

Designing Faith Formation for Baby Boomers

Begin by develop a task force of adults in their 50s and early 60s (the Baby Boom generation). Ministry and faith formation with Boomers should be designed, organized, and led by Boomers. The Task Force is responsible for designing a plan, organizing the implementation logistics, finding leaders and resources for the plan, monitoring progress, and conducting evaluations. The Task Force needs a coordinator/convener who facilitates the work of the Task Force and serves as a liaison between the task force and the church staff and church community.

Design Task 1. Develop an Inventory of Your Church’s Current Adult Faith Formation Programming.

Develop an inventory of your church’s current adult faith formation activities and programs that targeted at Baby Boomers and/or that involve Boomers. The inventory is developed around six models of faith formation: 1) faith formation on your own, 2) faith formation at home, 3) faith formation in small groups, 4) faith formation in large groups, 5) faith formation in the congregation, and 6) faith formation in the community and world. Use the format outlined on the worksheet to organize your inventory. After completing the inventory, discuss the state of your church’s response to Baby Boomers:

- What are the strengths in your current approach? What are the weaknesses?
- What is most effective in your current approach (programs, activities, etc.)? What is not?
- Which of the six models are being used most effectively? Which are not?
- Who is being served? Who is not?
- Where are the greatest needs or gaps? What are the priority areas for growth and improvement?

Design Task 2. Research the Life Issues and Spiritual/Religious Needs of Adults in Your Church.

By consulting research findings and listening carefully to Baby Boomers, the Task Force can determine foundational spiritual and religious needs, interests, and life tasks that faith formation with Baby Boomers should address. Analyze the information from the survey of the nine research studies on Boomers earlier in this journal issue to determine priority needs, interests, and concerns. (see “How Well Do You Know the Baby Boom Generation”). Using this knowledge, churches can expand their faith formation programming to offer enough variety to address the diversity of spiritual and religious needs, life tasks, and/or interests of Boomers.

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

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

- **Life Tasks:** What are the developmental life tasks facing 50- and 60-year-olds? How can faith formation integrate continued faith growth with the life tasks of adults in their 50s and 60s?
- **Milestones and Transitions:** What are the significant milestones/transitions in the life of Boomers that can be a focus of adult faith formation, such as geographic relocations, family formation and re-formation, career changes, empty nests, retirement, unanticipated illness, and the loss of loved ones? How can faith formation help people find meaning in their lives during these transitions and bring a faith perspective to the transitions adults are experiencing?
- **Religious Needs:** What are the significant religious learning needs of Baby Boomers? How can faith formation provide them with opportunities to deepen their understanding of the Bible and their faith tradition and beliefs, and relate their Christian faith to life today?
- **Spiritual Needs:** What are the significant spiritual needs of Baby Boomers? How can faith formation assist them in growing in their relationship with God and in living as disciples of Jesus Christ in their daily life at home, in the workplace, in the community and the world? How can faith formation deepen their practice of the spiritual disciplines and traditions in their daily lives?
- **Ethnic/Cultural Needs:** Who are the ethnic/cultural communities in your church? What are the unique lived experiences, needs, and aspirations of people from each ethnic/cultural community in your church? How can your church offer *culturally-specific* adult faith formation for each ethnic/cultural community in the church, and, when appropriate, in the language of the people? How can faith formation be *inclusive* of the traditions, heritages, and unique gifts of each ethnic/cultural community in your church?

Focus Groups

Consider organizing at least two focus groups of 10-12 people—one or more for Boomers in their 50s, and one or more for Boomers in their 60s. Be sure to select a diversity of adults who reflect the ethnic and socio-economic character of your church, and the various states in life (single, married, divorced, etc.) Use the following questions as the basis of your focus group interviews. Feel free to adapt the questions to your church.

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

A Profile of Life Issues and Learning Needs

Based on the results of your research, discussion, and focus group interviews, develop a profile of the life issues and learning needs of Boomers in their 50s and a profile of Boomers in their 60s organized around the following categories: 1) Life Issues, 2) Life Tasks, 3) Milestones and Transitions, 4) Religious Needs, 5) Spiritual Needs, 6) Ethnic/Cultural Needs, and 7) What They Want the Church to Offer.

Complete your research by identifying ***the most important life issues and learning needs your church's adult faith formation should address in the coming year(s)***.

Design Task 3. Research Learning Activities, Leaders, and Resources to Address the Important Life Issues and Learning Needs.

Today, as never before, a local church has access to an abundance of adult faith formation programming, resources, and networks that can address the diversity of adult learning needs. Using the list of the most important life issues and learning needs as a guide, research the resources available to your church that will address these needs and eventually become part of your plan (see worksheet). Consider the following categories:

- **People Resources:** Conduct a gifts/talents/skills/knowledge survey of the people resources in your church, the wider community, the diocese/synod/regional church body, colleges and universities, church-related organizations, etc. who can be invited to take a leadership role in the adult faith formation plan. Consider people who teach courses or specialized programs, guest presenters on specialized topics, leaders for small groups and Bible studies, prayer guides/spiritual directors, leaders for service/mission programs, etc.
- **Physical, Face-to-Face Learning Activity Resources:** Identify face-to-face learning activities that you can use to address the priority issues and learning needs. There are a variety of options: 1) programs that your church is already sponsoring, 2) an opportunity that you are not utilizing (e.g., design reflection activities around Sunday worship), 3) a new program that your church can adopt, and 4) a program that you can promote as part of your plan and encourage adult participation. Consider programs in your church, the wider community, the diocese/synod/regional church body, retreat and conference centers, colleges and universities, church-related organizations, etc. Indicate the learning model(s) used in the program: Learning on Your Own, Learning in Small Group, Learning in Large Group, Learning in the Congregation, and/or Learning in the Community and World.

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

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

Design Task 4. Design and Implement a Faith Formation Plan

1. Timeframe

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

2. Development of Integrated Adult Faith Formation Activity Plans

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

Six Faith Formation Models

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

Six models that should be part of adult faith formation include:

1. **Faith Formation on Your Own:** through reading, online courses, audio and video programs, movies, television programs
2. **Faith Formation at Home:** through Bible reading, storytelling and caring conversation, prayer and devotions, rituals and traditions, service
3. **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
4. **Faith Formation in Large Groups;** through courses, speaker series, workshops, film festivals, retreats, conferences, intergenerational programs
5. **Faith Formation in the Congregation:** through Sunday worship, church year events and celebrations, service/mission activities, ministry and leadership in the church and community
6. **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

Face-to-Face & Online

Adult faith formation includes learning activities in physical places and virtual spaces, blending face-to-face, interactive learning with virtual, online learning. Online websites, social networking services, and digital technologies (e.g., an iPod Touch, smart cell phones) mean that churches can deliver faith formation experiences and resources anytime and anywhere, reaching people wherever they go online (home, work, school, vacation, coffee house). The interplay between learning in physical places and virtual online spaces can revolutionize adult faith formation in a church.

An Adult Faith Formation Activity Plan incorporates a variety of options for learning in face-to-face, physical places and in virtual, online spaces.

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

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

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

Each Adult Faith Formation Activity Plan seeks to incorporate a variety of ways to learn: differing levels of depth and commitment, a variety of learning models reflecting the diversity of learning styles, online and face-to-face learning, and times and locations that are convenient for adults. This approach means that

adults can have a variety of ways to learn a topic, removing many of the more common obstacles to adult learning in churches.

3. Balance

Review each Adult Formation Activity Plan to make sure you have balance among the six faith formation models (on your own, at home, in small groups, in large groups, in the congregation, in the community/world) and between learning in physical places and in virtual spaces.

4. Leadership

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

5. Church Website

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

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

6. Program Guide

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

7. Spiritual/Learning Assessment

Create an assessment tool (with a print and online version) that can help adults in your church assess their spiritual growth and identify their needs for learning. The United Methodist Church of the Resurrection in Leawood, KS has

developed a tool to assist adults in their church to assess where they are in their faith journey and their needs of continuing growth and learning.

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

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

8. Marketing

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

9. Evaluate

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

Programming Resources

- Gentzler, Richard H. *Aging and Ministry in the Twenty-First Century: An Inquiry Approach*. Nashville: Discipleship Resources, 2008.
- Hanson, Amy. *Baby Boomers and Beyond: Tapping the Ministry Talents and Passions of Adults Over Fifty*. San Francisco: Jossey Bass, 2010.
- Hanson, Amy. “Breaking Down the Age Barriers: How Churches are Becoming Intentionally Intergeneration.” Leadership Network. (www.leadnet.org/Resources_Downloads.asp)
- Hanson, Amy. “Churches Responding to the Age Way: Top Innovations in Older Adult Ministry.” Leadership Network. (www.leadnet.org/Resources_Downloads.asp)
- McIntosh, Gary. “Trends and Challenges for Ministry among North America’s Largest Generation.” *Christian Education Journal*, Series 3, 5/2.
- Pettegrew, Hal. “Perspectives on the Spiritual Development of ‘Aging’ Boomers.” *Christian Education Journal*, Series 3, 5/2.
- Vogel, Linda. “Creating Learning Environments for Mature Adults that Foster Creating and Faith Formation.” *Christian Education Journal*, Series 3, 5/2.

Websites

- AARP: www.aarp.org
- Any Hanson (*Baby Boomers and Beyond*):
<http://amyhanson.org>
- Christian Association Serving Adult Ministries Network (CASA): <http://gocasa.org>
- Civic Ventures: www.civicventures.org
- Encore Generation at Leadership Network:
www.leadnet.org
- Faith Formation Matters (Janet Shaeffler, OP):
www.janetschaeffler.com/
- Older Adult Ministries (United Methodist Church):
www.gbod.org/site/c.nhLRJ2PMKsG/b.3784737/k.7977/Older_Adult_Ministries.htm
- Presbyterian Older Adult Ministries Network (POAMN): www.poamn.org
- Senior Adult Ministry (Johnson Institute):
www.senioradultministry.com
- Senior Evangelism Partnership:
www.seniorevangelism.org/index.cfm

An Inventory of Faith Formation for Baby Boomers

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

1. Learning on Your Own

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

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

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

2. Learning in Small Groups

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

What types of small groups does your church offer?

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

3. Learning in Large Groups

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

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

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

4. Learning in the Congregation

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

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

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

5. Learning in the Community and World

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

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

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

Researching Baby Boomer Life Issues and Needs

Together as a team research and discuss the important issues and learning needs of Baby Boomers in their 50s and Baby Boomers in their 60s.

Life Issues

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

Life Tasks

- What are the developmental life tasks facing adults in 50s and 60s?

Milestones and Transitions

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

Religious Needs

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

Spiritual Needs

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

Ethnic/Cultural Needs

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

Researching Faith Formation Resources

Use this format to research and catalog your learning resources.

1. People Resources

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

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

2. Face-to-Face Learning Activity Resources

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

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

3. Print and Media Learning Activity Resources

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

Life Issue/Learning Need	Resource	Producer	Learning Models	Cost

4. Online Learning Activity Resources

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

Life Issue/Learning Need	Website	Learning Activity	Website Address	Cost

Integrated Adult Faith Formation Activity Plan

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

An Activity Plan addresses a life issue or learning need with learning opportunities and resources using the six faith formation models:

1. faith formation on your own
2. faith formation at home
3. faith formation in small groups
4. faith formation in large groups
5. faith formation in the congregation
6. faith formation in the community/world

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

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

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

Example

Spiritual Formation Activity Plan

Focus: Learning Spiritual Disciplines and Practices

On Your Own

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

In Small Groups

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

In Large Groups

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

In the Congregation

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

Adult Faith Formation Activity Plan Worksheet

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

Life Issue or Spiritual/Religious Need: _____

Target Participants: _____

Faith Formation Activities

Faith Formation Model <small>List each activity.</small>	Resources <small>List resources to be used.</small>	Leaders <small>List leaders involved.</small>	Date <small>Time</small>
Faith Formation on Your Own			
Faith Formation at Home			
Faith Formation in Small Groups			
Faith Formation in Large Groups			
Faith Formation in the Congregation			
Faith Formation in the Community & World			

Marketing Suggestions

Creating Your Message

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

1. **Find the inherent drama within your offering:** What’s interesting in your program offerings? How does it respond to something within the lives of people? Connect the program offerings to the real needs of adults.
2. **Translate that inherent drama into a meaningful benefit:** What are the major benefits in participating in adult faith formation? Why should people respond? The benefit should come directly from the inherently dramatic feature. And even though you have four or five benefits, stick with one or two—three at most.
3. **Get people’s attention:** How will you interest people in adult faith formation? People pay attention to things that interest them. So you’ve just got to interest them.
4. **Motivate your audience to do something:** What do you want people to do once you’ve introduced the adult faith formation offerings? You must tell people exactly what you want them to do. Tell them to go online a register for a program, complete an interest finder, send in a registration form, call someone, etc.
5. **Be sure you are communicating clearly:** Do adults understand what you’re talking about? Make sure you are putting your message across. Show your promotion or booklet or advertising to ten people and ask them what the main point is. If one person misunderstands, that means 10 percent of the audience will misunderstand. Make revisions so your message is clear.

Developing Your Marketing Strategies

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