

Archdiocese of Hartford

New Approaches to Parish Evangelization

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Goal

- Envision and implement new parish-based, evangelization approaches and strategies to reach a diversity of the religious and spiritual needs of people today: people who participate occasionally in parish life but are not spiritually committed, people who are spiritually hungry but not engaged in a parish community, and people who once engaged but have left the Catholic Church.

Parishes will custom-design evangelization approaches and strategies to address the unique needs of their parish communities. For example, a parish might focus on developing new evangelization initiatives with families with young children from Baptism to first Eucharist that develop faith-filled parents and families and engage them in parish life. Or a parish might focus on young adults in their 20s and 30s who are spiritual but not involved in a faith community. Or a parish might focus on reaching people who are spiritually hungry but not involved in parish life through the utilization of digital and online technology. Or a parish might focus on empowering the actively engaged to share their faith with others and invite them to participate in the parish community.

Process

1. **Gather an Evangelization Team.** Each participating parish forms an “Evangelization Task Force” consisting of the pastor, parish staff, ministry leaders, and selected parishioners reflecting a diversity of ages, who will participate in the workshops, and develop and implement new evangelization initiatives.
2. **June 2011: Evangelization Design Workshop.** Parish teams will participate in a workshop to design evangelization initiatives and create an implementation plan. A variety of resources, approaches, and models will be available for parish teams to use in designing their initiatives.
3. **Summer 2011: Design Work in Parishes with Consultation Assistance Available**
4. **September 2011: Workshop—Preparing to Pilot Evangelization Initiatives (evening meeting)**
5. **Fall 2011: Piloting.** Parish teams will implement pilot projects with a small group of their target audiences (e.g. young families, young adults) before scaling-up the initiative to reach a wider audience. Through prototyping, parishes can test an initiative and the implementation plan, get feedback from the target audience, improve the initiative, and then develop plans to reach a wider audience.
6. **Winter-Spring 2012. Reaching a Wider Audience with the New Evangelization Initiatives**

Facilitator

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1. Eight Significant Driving Forces Influencing Evangelization & Faith Formation

- 1. Declining Number of Christians and Growing Number of People with No Religious Affiliation.** The U. S. population continues to show signs of becoming less religious: In 2008, 15-16% of Americans claimed no religious affiliation, nearly double the 1990 figure. Among Americans ages 18-29, one-in-four say they are not currently affiliated with any particular religion. The number of American adults identified as Christians dropped 10% from 86% in 1990 to 76% in 2008. Similar to the general American public, Latinos have become less identified with Christianity—down from 91% in 1990 to 82% in 2008. No religious affiliation increased fourfold among Latinos from 900,000 or 6% in 1990 to nearly 4 million or 12% in 2008. It appears that the challenge to Christianity in the U.S. does not come from other religions but rather from a rejection of all forms of organized religion. This growing non-religious minority reduces the traditional societal role of congregations in family celebrations of life-cycle events. Forestalling of religious rites of passage, such as marriage and baptism, and the lowering expectations on religious funeral services, could have long lasting consequences for religious institutions.
- 2. Increasing Number of People Becoming More “Spiritual” and Less “Religious.”** A small but growing minority of the U.S. population describe themselves as spiritual but not religious (meaning not connected to organized religion): 9% of Americans were spiritual but not religious in 1998, rising to 14% in 2008; and 18% of 18-39 year olds say they are “spiritual but not religious,” compared to only 11% a decade ago. If what people mean when they say they are spiritual but not religious is that they are generally concerned with spiritual matters but are not interested in organized religion, then this trend indicates a growing minority of the population whose spiritual inclinations do not lead them to become involved in churches, synagogues, or mosques. In our increasingly pluralistic society, to be “spiritual” is more likely to represent an eclectic spirituality, drawing not only from the various streams of Christianity, but including elements of other religious traditions.
- 3. Declining Participation in Christian Churches.** By all measures of participation, the trends point toward declining participation in church life in mainline Protestant and Catholic churches, including worship attendance, marriages and baptisms in the church, and children and youth participation in faith formation programming. Among young Hispanics, immigrants attend church services more regularly than do the native born (second and third generation). Combined with the trend toward fewer Christians and the growing numbers of religiously unaffiliated, it appears that succeeding generations of Christians are less likely to be exposed to formation in the Christian faith because worship attendance is down, and therefore participation in church life, education, and activities is down. This means less exposure to the Christian tradition and teachings, reduced opportunities to experience the Christian way of life, and far less reinforcement of the Christian faith in church settings. The effect of these trends can be found in research on emerging adults (20-30 year olds): only 15% embrace a strong religious faith and another 30% believe and perform certain aspects of their religious traditions; at least 40% have no connection to a religious tradition (see *Souls in Transition*).
- 4. Increasing Diversity and Pluralism in U.S. Society.** U.S. society reflects a growing diversity of ethnic cultures and nationalities and their traditions, customs, foods, and languages, and also a growing diversity of religious traditions from the East and the West. Pluralism creates both richness and tensions. We live next door to other nations; we’re engaged in conversation with people from all parts of the world, with customs and expectations vastly different from our own. We also live in a pluralistic society in which no single authority exercises supremacy and no single belief or ideology dominates. Christian culture is no longer at the center of American life; it has been replaced by a tapestry of religious and spiritual alternatives and choices. The range of religious practice and belief in

U.S. society today is enormous, and it is all around us. The increasing diversity and the pluralism of belief and practice undermines the plausibility and truth-claims of any single religious tradition. The diversity of religious choice and openness to everything religious results in people crisscrossing religious boundaries as they construct their own personal spiritualities. We have become a society of “spiritual tinkerers” (Robert Wuthnow), which makes developing and sustaining a Christian identity and religious commitments exceeding difficult.

5. **Increasing Influence of Individualism on Christian Identity and Community Life.** The influence of individualism means that religious identity is more autonomous and deliberate today and that religion is less anchored in a sense of belonging. There is a decline in connectedness; a weakening or severing of the *social* basis of religion in family, marriage, ethnicity, and community; a decline in the perceived necessity of communal or institutional structures as constituent of religious identity. Religious identity today is not only less bounded by doctrine or creed; it is also less nurtured and reinforced by community. Significant numbers of Americans see little necessary connection between being spiritual and being part of a historic tradition, or part of a disciplined community of faith. This is reinforced by the mass media’s not-so-subtle message that you don’t need a religious community to engage “God issues.” Nominal membership increasingly replaces active involvement, a development paralleling national civic trends. Religion is less perceived as an inherited phenomenon, or as a binding community of discipleship and obligation. Religious leaders and institutions, which traditionally provided the framework within which religious meaning was constructed, have become increasingly peripheral to the spirituality and “lived religion” of private personal enterprise.
6. **Changing Patterns of Marriage and Family Life.** It appears that one of the reasons for the decline in church participation is that younger Americans are marrying later, having fewer children, and having them later—all of which means that far more younger Americans are single and childless than was true a generation ago and that the same younger Americans are not settling into religious congregations at the same rate as their parents did in the 1970s. Religious practice is especially influenced by marrying, settling down, having children and raising them. Since individuals who marry are more likely to attend religious services than are those who delay marriage, the postponement of marriage and childbearing has contributed to the decline in church attendance. Also, there has been a dramatic increase in religiously mixed marriages and partnerships: more than one-in-four (27%) American adults who are married or living with a partner are in religiously mixed relationships. If people from different Protestant denominational families are included, for example a marriage between a Methodist and a Lutheran, nearly four-in-ten (37%) marriages are religiously mixed.
7. **Declining Family Religious Socialization.** Family religious socialization has always been the foundation for the development of faith and faith practices in children, and for participation in church life and worship. As Christian Smith observes, “teenagers with seriously religious parents are more likely than those without such parents to have been trained in their lives to think, feel, believe, and act as serious religious believers, and that that training “sticks” with them even when they leave home and enter emerging adulthood. Emerging adults who grew up with seriously religious parents are through socialization more likely (1) to have internalized their parents religious worldview, (2) to possess the practical religious know-how needed to live more highly religious lives, and (3) to embody the identity orientations and behavioral tendencies toward continuing to practice what they have been taught religiously.” (Smith, 232) Significant indicators, such as religious identification as a Christian, worship attendance, marriages and baptisms in the church, and changing generational patterns, point to a decline in family religious socialization across all denominations, but especially among Catholic and Mainline traditions. Religious practice among the next generation of parents (young adults in their 20s and 30s) is especially influenced by marrying, settling down, having children and raising them. Since individuals who marry are more likely to attend religious services than are those who delay marriage, the postponement of marriage and childbearing has contributed to the decline in church attendance.

Complicating this picture, is the fact that an ever growing percentage of Christians (at least 30%) are not getting married in a religious ceremony. The less contact that young adults have with the Christian tradition through participation in a local church, the less family religious socialization that is likely to take place when they marry and have children.

- 8. Increasing Impact of Digital Media and Web Technologies.** Technology and digital media are transforming the ways we live. Globalization and pluralism are driven by this unprecedented technological change. People meet on Facebook and share their inspirations on YouTube all the while Twittering to an assortment of friends. Groups of people at opposite ends of a continent or around the globe don't need to leave their own contexts in order to meet in real time and in video, on Skype or some Webinar format. Social connectivity is being leveraged globally online. People's use of the internet's capabilities for communication—for creating, cultivating, and continuing social relationships—is undeniable. However, time spent online often takes time away from important face-to-face relationships. Virtually all of those 29 and younger in the U.S. today are online (as of 2010): 93% of teens (12-17) and young adults (18-29), 81% of adults 30-49 years old, 70% of adults 50-64 years old, and 38% of adults 65 and over. Increasingly people are accessing the internet on smart phones like the iPhone: sending or receiving text messages, taking a picture, playing a game, checking email, recording video, instant messaging, playing music, getting maps or directions, or recording and watching video. Media are among the most powerful forces in young people's lives today. Eight- to eighteen-year-olds spend more time with media than in any other activity besides (maybe) sleeping—an average of more than 7½ hours a day, seven days a week. The TV shows they watch, video games they play, songs they listen to, books they read, and websites they visit are an enormous part of their lives, offering a constant stream of messages about families, peers, relationships, gender roles, sex, violence, food, values, clothes, and an abundance of other topics too long to list. How will these new digital technologies transform our lives and our religious identities? What will be the impact of this technological revolution on faith formation and Christian congregations?

2. Two Critical Uncertainties for Evangelization & Faith Formation

Relationship with Organized Religion & Christianity

Resistant ←-----→ Receptive

Will trends in U.S. culture lead people to become more receptive to organized religion, and in particular Christianity, over the next decade or will trends lead people to become more resistant to organized religion and Christianity?

Hunger for and Openness to God & the Spiritual Life

Decrease ←-----→ Increase

Will people's hunger for and openness to God and the spiritual life increase over the next decade or will people's hunger for and openness to God and the spiritual life decrease.

Relationship with Organized Religion and Christianity

This uncertainty refers to the social and cultural trends regarding people's attitudes and responses to organized religion and, in particular Christianity, in the U.S. Will people be more or less receptive to Christianity and involved in churches in the next decade? Several of the eight significant forces describe the current trajectory of this uncertainty: declining number of Christians; growing number of people with no religious affiliation; increasing number of people becoming more "spiritual" and less "religious;" declining participation in Christian churches; increasing influence of individualism on Christian identity and community life; changing patterns of marriage and family life, especially delaying marriage and having

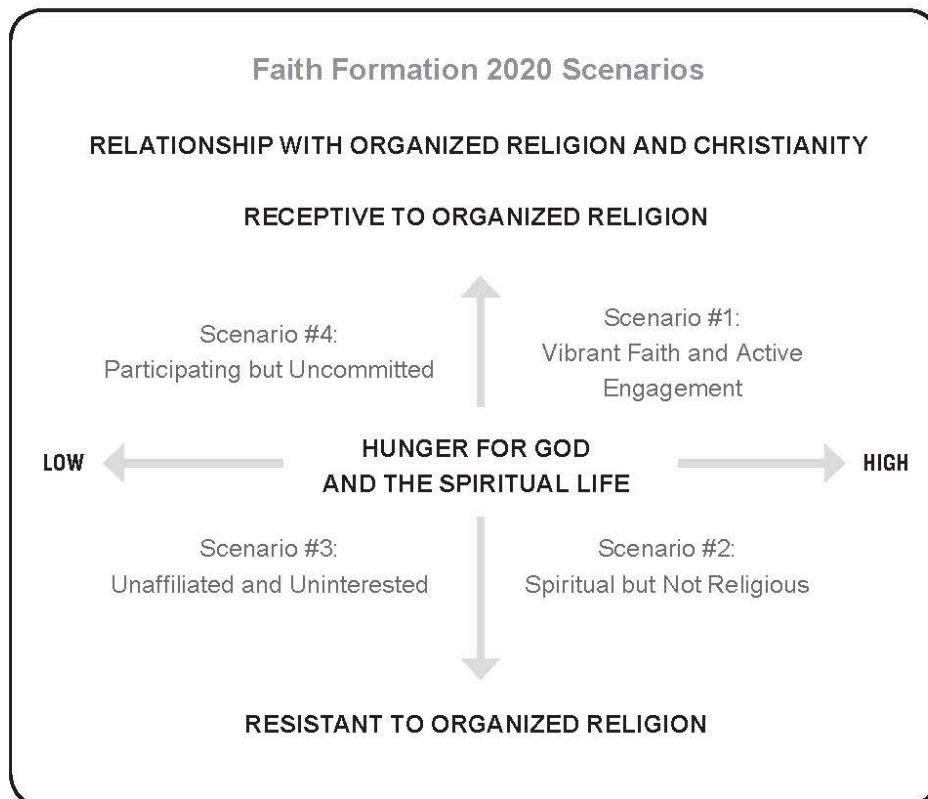
children later; and declining family religious socialization. Will these trends continue and, if they do, what will be the impact on Christian churches and faith formation? How will churches respond to this uncertainty over the next decade?

Hunger for and Openness to God and the Spiritual Life

This uncertainty refers to the importance of God and the spiritual life in the lives of people today. Will people’s hunger and openness increase or decrease over the next decade? Several of the eight significant forces describe the current trajectory of this uncertainty: declining numbers of Christians; increasing number of people becoming more “spiritual” and less “religious;” declining participation in Christian churches; increasing diversity and pluralism in U.S. society resulting in a tapestry of religious and spiritual alternatives and choices; increasing influence of individualism on Christian identity and community life resulting in “spiritual tinkering” and more individualized spirituality; declining family religious socialization, and utilizing the digital media and technological tools to access a diversity of spiritual traditions and resources, and to participate in online communities of support and spiritual growth. Will these trends continue and, if they do, what will be the impact on Christian churches and faith formation? How will churches respond to this uncertainty over the next decade?

3. Four Scenarios for Evangelization & Faith Formation

When the two critical uncertainties are connected in a 2x2 matrix, a set of four stories—or scenarios—are created to describe how the future of faith formation in 2020 could evolve. This matrix represents a map of today and a moving image of future reality. That is, each of the four quadrants of this map represents a dynamic story that is based on a different future outcome of the two critical uncertainties. *Which of the scenarios will rise in ascendancy over the next decade? Where are people in our churches and culture moving? What will be the response of Christian churches to the four scenarios?*



The scenarios express a range of possible futures facing congregational faith formation over the decade from 2010 to 2020. Each scenario story explains why the “main story” of faith formation in 2020 will be framed by the response of Christian churches to people’s relationship—their attitudes and responses—to organized religion (receptive or resistant) and to people’s hunger for and openness to God and the spiritual life (high or low). The scenarios that follow are not meant to be exhaustive or prescriptive—rather they are designed to be both plausible and challenging, to engage your imagination while also raising new questions about what the future of faith formation might look and feel like. *Imagine what faith formation could look and feel like in your congregation if your church is responding to the challenges and opportunities in each scenario. Imagine the life of your congregation in 2020 if faith formation addresses the spiritual and religious needs of all ages and generations in each scenario over the next 10 years.*

Scenario #1. Vibrant Faith and Active Engagement

The first scenario describes a world in which people of all ages and generations 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. Congregations are challenged to provide lifelong faith formation for all ages and generations, at home and at church, that develops vibrant faith, is continuous throughout life, and engages all people in the life and mission of the church community.

In most congregations the overwhelming majority of resources, energy, and leadership are directed toward faith formation with people in Scenario #1, oftentimes with a decreasing number of people for a shorter period of the lifespan (e.g., grade school through high school years). The future of faith formation in Scenario #1 is being significantly impacted by a number of driving forces including: 1) the growing number of people who are leaving established Christian churches—people who claim no religious affiliation (about 15% of the population) and those who consider themselves “spiritual but not religious” (almost 20% of 18-39 year-olds); 2) declining participation in Christian worship, sacraments and rituals (baptism and marriage), and church life, in general, among those who consider themselves Christian; and 3) a serious decline in family religious socialization at home as few parents make passing on a faith tradition and faith practices central to family life.

Strategies for Faith Formation in Scenario #1

Here are few examples of strategies for envisioning the possibilities for the future:

- Develop continuous faith formation for all ages and generations, especially for adults (twenties-nineties), that engages people—mind, body, heart, and spirit—in a diversity of ways to grow in faith for a lifetime.
- Strengthen family socialization by equipping parents and families to become centers of faith formation and practice.
- Become a “sticky” church—keeping all ages involved in faith formation through a diversity of programs, activities, and resources at home and church that address their life situations and religious and spiritual needs.
- Embrace the tremendous potential of digital media and web technologies to provide faith formation and engage people in lifelong faith growth ^{24x7x365}.
- Empower people of vibrant faith with the knowledge, faith sharing skills, and confidence to share their faith with those who are not involved in a church community or spiritually committed.

Scenario #2. Spiritual, but Not Religious

The second scenario describes a world in which 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. Congregations are challenged to engage people where they live (physical and virtual communities), build relationships, engage in spiritual conversations, and offer programs and activities that nurture their spiritual growth.

Scenario #3. Unaffiliated and Uninterested

The third scenario describes 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 a steadily increasing percentage of the American population, especially among the eighteen- to twenty-nine-year-olds. Congregations are challenged to find ways to “plant” themselves in the midst of the cultures and worlds of the Unaffiliated and Uninterested, build relationships, and be witnesses to the Christian faith in the world today.

If the statistics are accurate, the growing numbers of people reflected in Scenarios #2 and #3, especially people in their 20s and 30s, present the greatest challenge to congregations and to their faith formation efforts, now and into the future. The challenge presented by these two scenarios is expanding the congregation’s vision of faith formation to embrace the life worlds—and spiritual needs—of people in Scenario #2 and #3 who see little need for church, and the need for God and the spiritual life. Congregations need to develop strategies and approaches for moving faith formation from the church campus into the world.

Strategies for Faith Formation in Scenario #2

Here are few examples of strategies for envisioning the possibilities for the future:

- Invest time and resources to develop specialized faith formation around the life situations and spiritual needs of the “Spiritual, but Not Religious” who are in their twenties and thirties.
- Provide faith formation programming for spiritual seekers that is conducted in “Third Place” settings outside of the church facilities (e.g., Lifetree Café).
- Develop faith formation around marriage and baptism to respond to the potential for (re)engagement in church life of the “Spiritual, but Not Religious?”
- Provide a guided process and program for spiritually hungry people to investigate the Christian faith and join in small communities with other seekers for spiritual growth and support (e.g., the Alpha course).

Strategies for Faith Formation in Scenario #3

Here are few examples of strategies for envisioning the possibilities for the future:

- Establish a “Third Place” gathering site as a platform for reaching the “Unaffiliated and Uninterested” through a variety of spiritual and/or life-centered programs, conversations, and activities?
- Develop a “web-presence” that is inviting and attractive to the “Unaffiliated and Uninterested” so that they can investigate and experience the Christian faith online.
- Sponsor programs, such as service projects and mission trips, that are designed so that people from the wider community can participate, interact with church members, and come into contact with the Christian faith in action.

Scenario #4. Participating, but Uncommitted

The fourth scenario describes a world in which people attend church activities, but are not actively engaged in their church community or spiritually committed. They may participate in significant seasonal celebrations, such as Christmas and Easter, and celebrate sacraments and milestone events, such as

marriage and baptism. Some may even attend worship regularly, and send their children to religious education classes. Their spiritual commitment is low and their connection to the church is more social and utilitarian than spiritual. Congregations are challenged to provide faith formation that recognizes that belonging (engagement) leads to believing (spiritual commitment) and a more vibrant faith, and develop approaches for increasing people's engagement with the church community and the Christian tradition.

Scenario #4 reflects a growing number of people who, while receptive to an established church, do not have a faith commitment that would make their relationship with God and participation in a faith community a priority in their lives. Their occasional engagement in church life does not lead them toward spiritual commitment. Congregations often address the spiritual and religious needs of people in Scenario #4 through the lens of Scenario #1, which doesn't usually work effectively. Congregations need to begin in the life worlds of Scenario 4 and craft faith formation around their spiritual and religious needs, and their relationship with the faith community.

Strategies for Faith Formation in Scenario #4

Here are few examples of strategies for envisioning the possibilities for the future:

- Begin faith formation with the birth and baptism of children in order to strengthen family socialization by equipping parents and families to become centers of faith formation and practice.
- Develop pathways for spiritual commitment and more active engagement by offering a formation process that helps people develop and deepen their relationship with Jesus Christ, explore the foundational teachings of the Christian faith, and live the fundamental Christian practices.
- Utilize digital media and web technologies to extend faith formation—resources, social networking, faith practices—into the daily lives of people who only participate occasionally?
- Focus on the occasions of participation, such as sacraments and milestones, to provide faith formation that involves the whole family, and invites them into more active engagement in the church community.

4. Researching Your Community

Target groups that you want to learn more about based on your analysis of the four scenarios and who are and are not serving/reaching.

1. Conduct focus groups with target audiences.

Organize focus groups of six to twelve people for your target audiences. Select a diversity of people in each focus group, reflecting the four scenarios, the ethnic/cultural and socioeconomic character of your church, and the various lifestyles (single, married, families, divorced, and so on). Have two people lead each focus group – one to record (computer) and one to ask the questions. The recorder can also follow-up questions as appropriate.

Compile the results of the focus groups for each target group by identifying common themes that surface across all of focus groups. These point to important or significant religious and spiritual needs that you can address in your design work. Also pay attention to information that may be unique to one focus group. Sometimes you will uncover important insights that are only identified in one group.

Use the following questions as a guide for developing your own focus group interviews. Be sure every focus group asks the same questions.

- How would you describe your age group in key words or phrases?
- What are some of the key life tasks that your age group is experiencing?
- What are some of the important life issues that your age group is experiencing today?
- What are the most meaningful experiences you have in life? What makes these experiences meaningful to you?
- How important is your relationship with God? Why?
- Where do you experience God most?
- What are the significant spiritual issues that your age group is experiencing today?
- What is most important to you about being a Christian (or a member of a particular denomination or faith tradition) today?
- How do you live your Christian faith? Name some of the ways you put your faith into practice.
- 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 your age group?

2. Conduct research out in the community.

Engage your team in becoming anthropologists by observing the people in your community. Develop an observation checklist and ask team members to spend a week simply observing people at work, at school, at play, at stores, and so on. Segment your audience by age groups for observation and analysis: families with children, teens, young adults, midlife adults, older adults, et al. Consider questions such as:

- What are some of the most popular activities for (your group) in the community?
- Where does (your group) gather outside of work and school—coffee shop, gym, mall, park, community center, YMCA/YWCA, and so on.? What are they doing there?
- Where do people work? Do most people work in your community or do they commute to another area? What types of jobs do people have?
- What are the most popular or well attended churches in your community?
- Where are (your group) on Sunday morning, if they are not at worship?

3. Find Patterns in the Research Findings

Identify patterns or recurring themes of life tasks and spiritual/religious needs for each target audience. Begin by discussing the results of the research on individuals, age groups, families, and generations that applies to that scenario and then name themes that emerge from your research and discussion.

4. Develop a Profile of Most Important Needs

Based on your analysis of the research, identify *the most important* life issues and spiritual/religious needs of your target groups that your church needs to address in the coming years. Answer the question: *What would people in this scenario like to see the church offer them through faith formation?*

Parish Inventory

Scenario #1. Vibrant Faith and Active Engagement

The first scenario describes a world in which people of all ages and generations 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.

Who we are addressing	Ways we are addressing through evangelization & faith formation

Scenario #2. Spiritual, but Not Religious

The second scenario describes a world in which people are spiritually hungry and searching for God and the spiritual life, but mostly likely 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 acts of service—locally or globally, or in online spiritual resources and communities.

Who we are addressing	Ways we are addressing through evangelization & faith formation

Scenario #3. Unaffiliated and Uninterested

The third scenario describes 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 a steadily increasing percentage of the American population.

Who we are addressing	Ways we are addressing through evangelization & faith formation

Scenario #4. Participating but Uncommitted

The fourth scenario describes a world in which people attend church activities, but are not actively engaged in their church community or spiritually committed. They may participate in significant seasonal celebrations, such as Christmas and Easter, and celebrate sacraments and milestone events, such as marriage and baptism. Some may even attend worship regularly, and send their children to religious education classes. Their spiritual commitment is low and their connection to the church is more social and utilitarian than spiritual.

Who we are addressing	Ways we are addressing through evangelization & faith formation

A Profile of Spiritual & Religious Needs

Based on the results of your research, discussion, and focus group interviews, identify *the most important* life issues and spiritual/religious needs of each target group. For each scenario answer the question: *What would people in this scenario like to see the church offer them through faith formation?*

Target Group: _____

What are their priority spiritual and religious needs?	What they would like to see the church offer them through faith formation?

Target Group: _____

What are their priority spiritual and religious needs?	What they would like to see the church offer them through faith formation?

Target Group: _____

What are their priority spiritual and religious needs?	What they would like to see the church offer them through faith formation?

Target Group: _____

What are their priority spiritual and religious needs?	What they would like to see the church offer them through faith formation?

5. Designing an Innovation

Step 1. Select an area for innovation in parish culture and vitality or a target group with a particular and their spiritual/religious needs.

- What did you learning from your interpretation of the religious and spiritual needs of people today using the four scenarios of Faith Formation 2020?

Step 2. Consult strategies and innovations that are already addressing your need.

- Consult the 16 Faith Formation 2020 Strategies (in the book or online at: www.faithformation2020.net)
- Conduct you own research: What is already being done in this area? Are there churches and synagogues that you can learn from? Are their nonprofit or for profit organizations that you can learn from?

Step 3. Generate ideas for your parish community.

- Generate ideas for innovative programs, activities, and/or strategies: Defer judgment. Encourage wild ideas. Build on the ideas of others. Stay focused on topic. One conversation at a time. Go for quantity.

Step 4. Evaluate the ideas.

- Evaluate your ideas and select one or more programs, activities, and/or strategies for the target audience.

Step 5. Design an implementation plan.

- Describe, in detail, each of your new initiatives (strategy, program, activity, or resource). Develop a plan for each initiative by developing the actions that you will need to take to move from idea to implementation.
 - What are the dates and times?
 - What is the location: physical/facility and/or online/website?
 - What are the implementation steps and target dates (timeline) for completing each step.
 - What resources will you need to implement the initiative.
 - How much will the initiative cost?
 - How many leaders will you need to implement the initiative, how you will find them, and how you will prepare them?

Step 6. Implement the initiative through small scale prototyping.

- Consider a version 1.0 pilot effort (prototyping) of the program, activity, strategy or resource with a small group of your target audience before scaling-up the initiative to reach a wider audience. Through prototyping, you can test the initiative and the implementation plan, get feedback from your target audience, improve the initiative, and then develop plans to reach a wide audience.
 - How you can conduct a small scale pilot effort of your innovation?

Step 7. Implement the initiative with a wider audience and continue evaluation and improvements.

- After making adjustments based on the pilot, develop version 2.0 and implement the plan with wider audience. Continue to improve the initiative. Communicate the stories and examples of the benefits and blessings that are coming to individuals, groups, families and to your whole church community. Continue to reach new audiences.

Generating Ideas

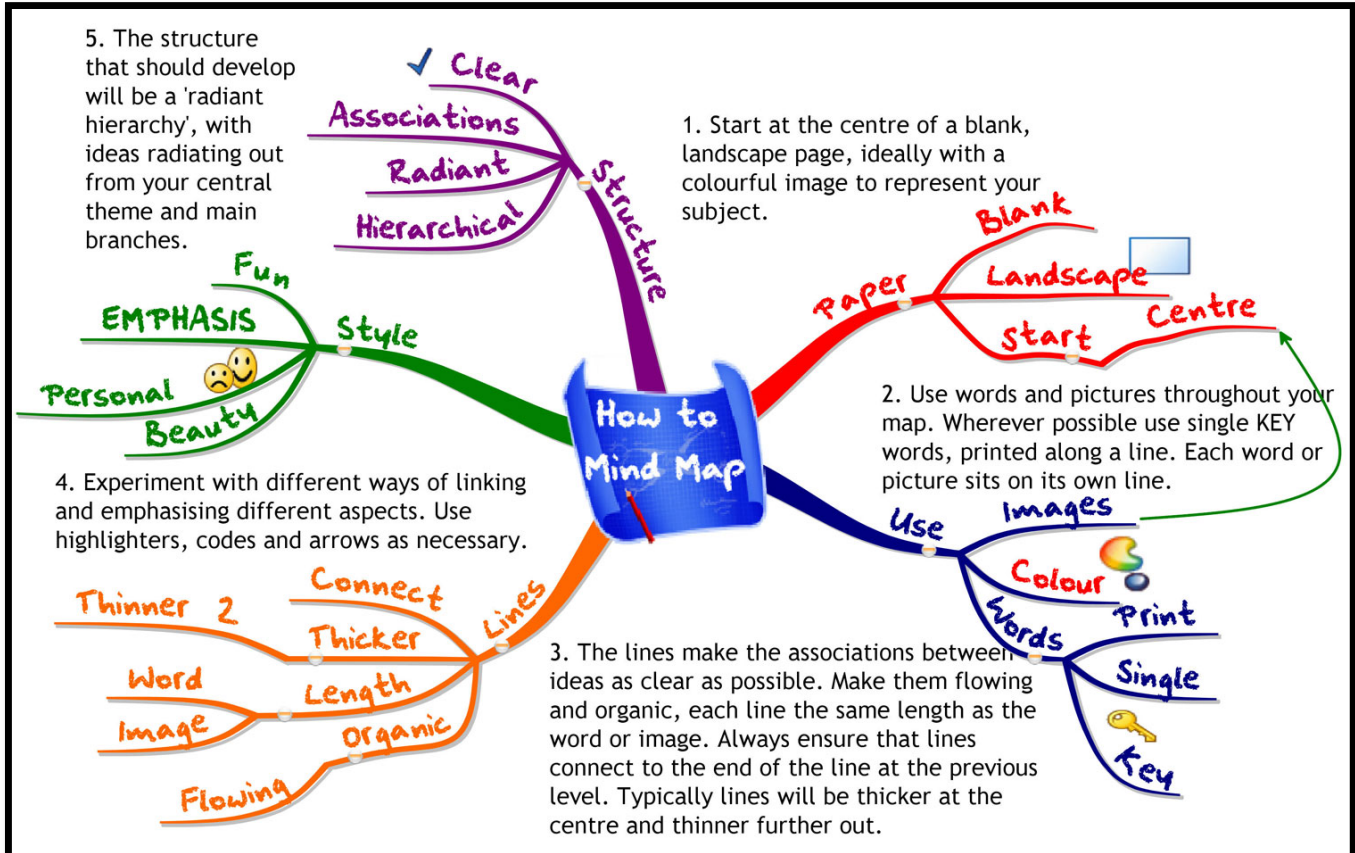
Activity: "How Might We?"

Brainstorm responses to the question: "How Might We?" Distribute post-it notes and pens/markers to everyone on the team. Ask them to start their opportunity statements with "How Might We..." and abbreviate on post-its to "HMW." Go for quantity, not quality at this point. Post all of the ideas on sheets of easel paper. Together as a group select three to five HMW opportunity statements through discussion or the use of voting. You might want to cluster HMW statements before discussion and voting. After selecting the three to five HMW statements, write each of the selected statements on a separate sheet of easel paper and brainstorm ideas for turning the opportunity into a practical project. Cluster similar ideas and select the best ideas for each HMW statement.

Activity: "What If" You Used Your Imagination

Begin by saying: "I need fresh and novel ideas to solve my challenge. I will suspend all judgment and see what free and easy ideas I can think up. It doesn't matter how weird or offbeat they are." Allow your team the freedom to conceptualize without judging ideas in terms of the real world. Ask team members to list as many "what if" statements as they can on post-it notes (e.g., "What if we developed a community café to reach people who are spiritual, but not involved in the church community?"). Ask them to complete the "What if..." statement personally, writing one statement per post-it. After several minutes, ask people to place their post-it notes on a sheet of easel paper. Then cluster similar ideas together. When ideas are grouped based on common themes, an organization begins to arise from the information. More ideas are generated as people begin to see the structure and fill in the gaps.

Mindmapping



Design Worksheet for a New Initiative

Target Participants: _____

Priority Spiritual/Religious Needs: _____

Selected Activities, Programs, Resources, Web/Digital Strategies, etc.:

Faith Formation Models Used

- on your own
- at home
- small group
- large group
- congregation
- community and world

Dates and Times _____

Location (physical/facility and/or online/website) _____

Implementation Steps and Timeline

What	When	Who
1.		
2.		
3.		
4.		
5.		
6.		
7.		
8.		
9.		
10.		

Resources Needed to Implement the Initiative

Leaders Needed to Implement the Initiative

Costs to Implement the Initiative

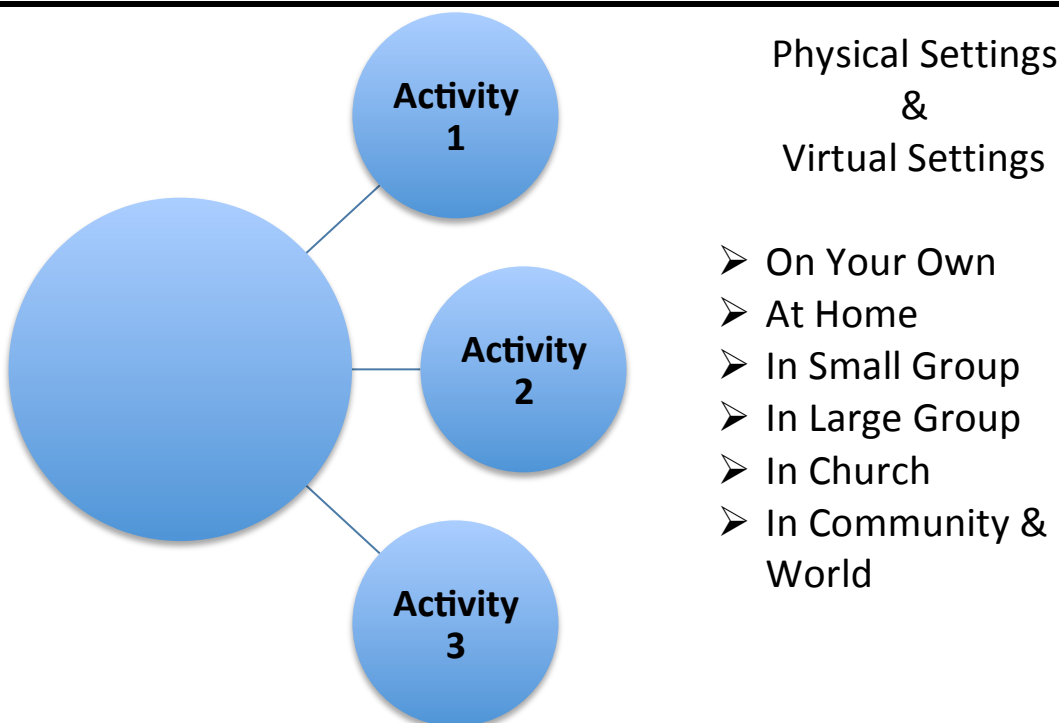
Illustrations of Innovations

Illustration #1. The Bible for All Ages

Approach: Utilize a variety of faith formation models to address the diverse life tasks and situations, religious and spiritual needs, and interests of people. Blend face-to-face, gathered faith formation in physical settings with virtual, online faith formation.

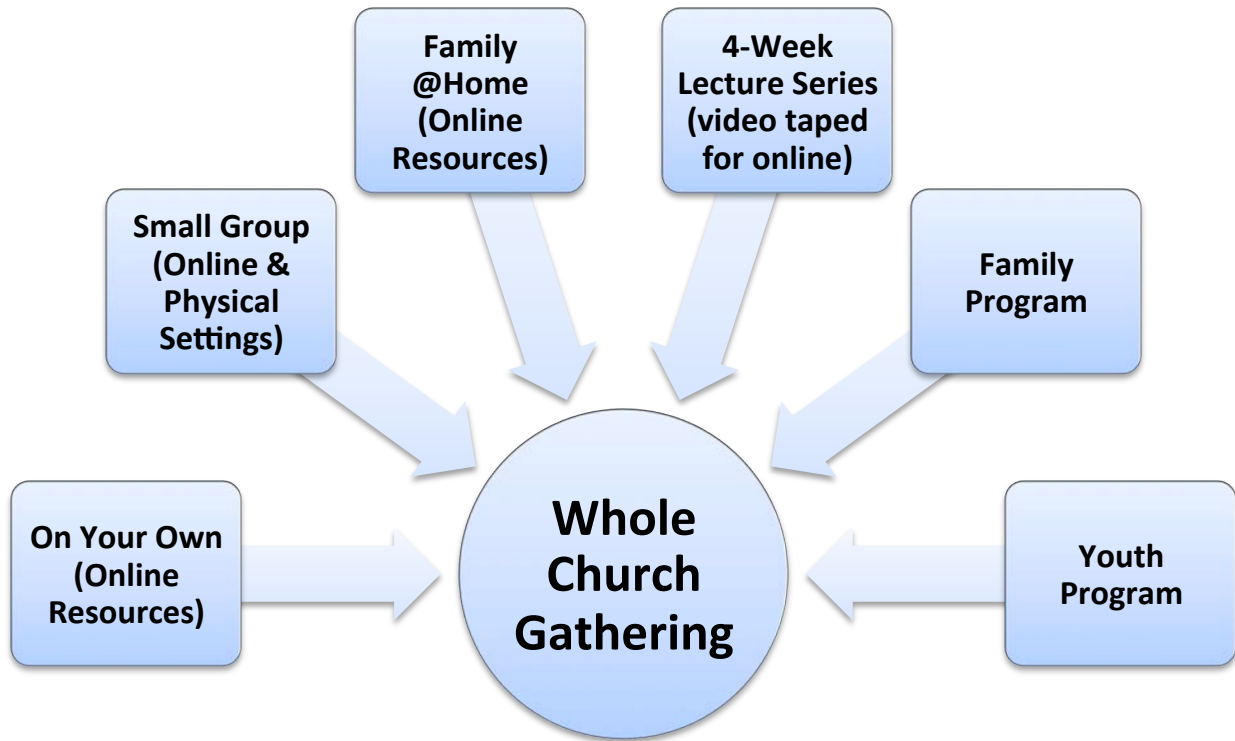
- **Faith Formation on Your Own:** through reading, online courses, audio and video programs, movies, television programs
- **Faith Formation at Home:** through Bible reading, storytelling and caring conversation, prayer and devotions, rituals and traditions, service
- **Faith Formation in Small Groups:** 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/mission activities, 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

Websites, social media, and digital technologies (an iPod Touch, smart cell phones, iPad) 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 faith formation in a church.



Preparing for the New Lectionary Year

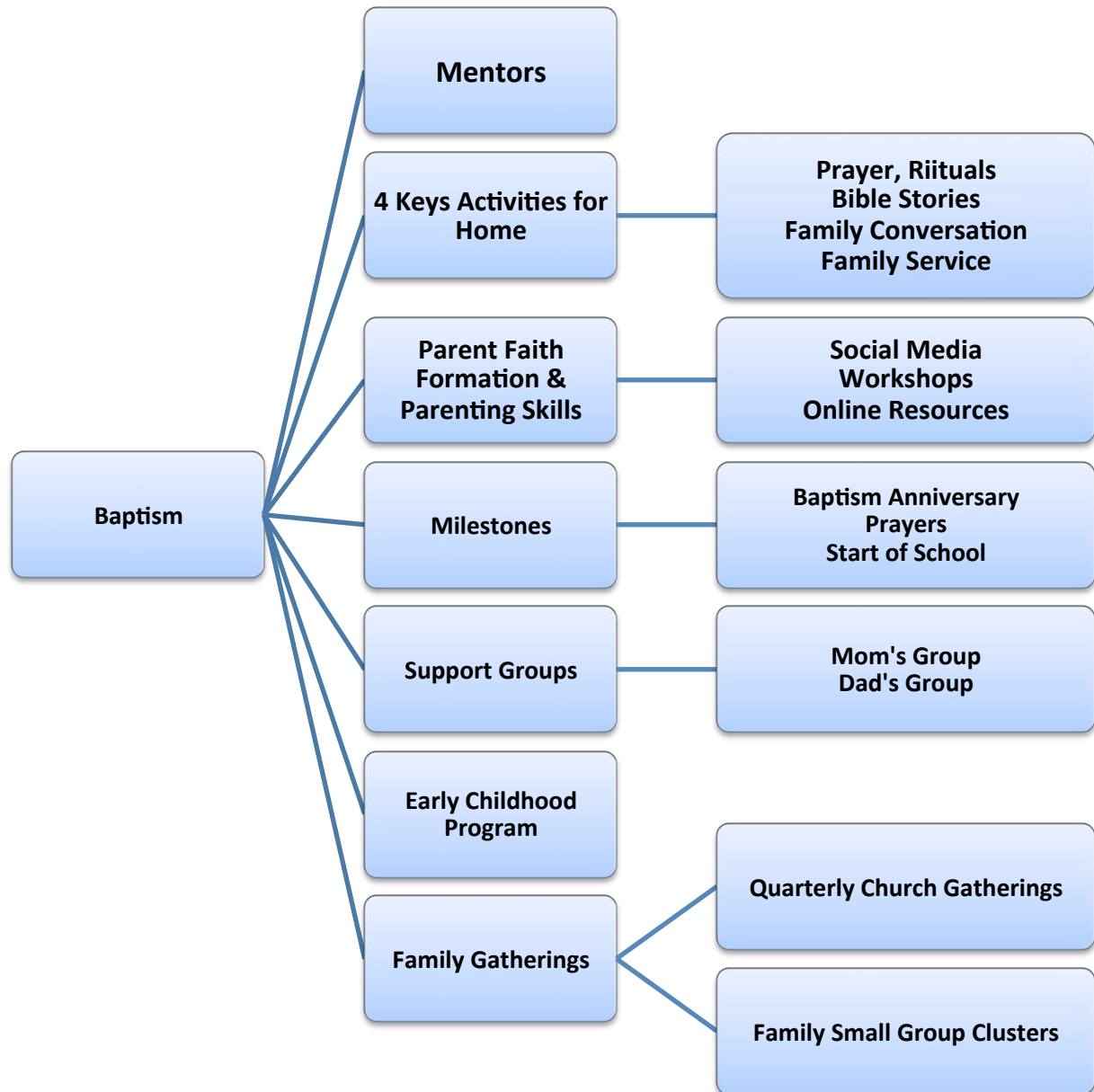
Bible study taking place across the whole congregation—on you own, family @home, small group, lecture series, family/intergenerational program—*culminating* in a whole-church, intergenerational gathering (meal, sharing, prayer, Bible learning experiences) for all ages who participated in the Bible study.



Extending Sunday Worship into Everyday Life



Illustration #2. Family Faith Practices



Four Keys for Practicing Faith (Vibrant Faith Ministries, www.vibrantfaith.org)

- **Caring Conversation.** Christian values and faith are passed on to the next generation through supportive conversation.
- **Family Devotions and Prayer.** The Christian faith shapes the whole of our lives and involves a lifetime of study, reflection, and prayer. Family devotions provide a way to learn more about the Bible and Christian tradition as a family, and apply the teachings to daily life as a follower of Jesus Christ.
- **Family Rituals and Traditions.** Family rituals can take many forms from daily rituals such as mealtime, bedtime, leaving and returning; celebrations such as birthdays, anniversaries, and special achievements; church year rituals at home such as Advent and Lent; milestones such as births and deaths, first day of school and graduations, and so on..
- **Family Service.** Engaging in service with one's family is a powerful opportunity for growing in faith.

Illustration #3. Evangelization & Outreach: Empowering the Community (*Unbinding the Gospel*, GraceNet: www.gracenet.info)

The process and integrated set of resources from *Unbinding the Gospel Project* empower the faith community—people of vibrant faith and active engagement—to share their faith with those are not engaged in the church community and/or not growing in faith. This process and the accompanying resources help the whole church change its habits to reflect practices of members and leaders of highly effective churches. They begin to pray daily, to talk about their faith with each other, and to take steps toward significant faith conversations with friends without a faith/church relationship. The process moves through the following steps:

- **Step One. Church Leader’s Study:** *Unbinding the Gospel*. Designed for pastors, key congregational leaders and evangelism teams *Unbinding the Gospel* helps committed leaders deepen and start sharing their own faith, understand their cultural context, and begin to plan for authentic congregational faith-sharing. It works best as a seven- to ten-week small group study. Each chapter concludes with questions, scripture suggestions and group exercises.
- **Step Two: All-Church Saturation Study:** *Unbinding Your Heart: Forty Days of Prayer & Faith Sharing*. This is a six-week, church-wide, small group E-vent! that can be conducted during Lent, summer or fall study for all established classes and small groups, and new ones formed just for the E-vent. The purpose of an all-congregation is to help people strengthen their own faith and to learn to talk about it with each other first, and then others outside the community. Each week, for forty days, people will (1) pray each day’s scripture and prayer exercise and work with a prayer partner; (2) study a chapter of the book with their small group, and (3) worship with sermons, music, and prayers centered on the week’s chapter. *Unbinding Your Heart* enriches the church’s community life. It helps individuals risk face-to-face encounters with God. The entire congregation begins to talk about their faith. The E-vent creates momentum in the church.
- **Step Three: An Experiment in Prayer and Community:** *Unbinding Your Soul*. Many people who aren’t connected with a church would love to try a no-obligation experience of substantial spiritual discussion, prayer and community. *Unbinding Your Soul* prepares church members to invite their friends into a four-week small group experience with short study chapters, an individual prayer journal, prayer partner activities, and group exercises. Groups can choose an additional four-week segment: “Faith and Courage.”

Resources

- Reese, Martha Grace. *Unbinding the Gospel: Real Life Evangelism*. Saint Louis: Chalice, 2006.
_____. *Unbinding Your Heart: Forty Days of Prayer and Faith Sharing*. Saint Louis: Chalice, 2008.
_____. *Unbinding Your Church*. Saint Louis: Chalice, 2008.
_____. *Unbinding Your Soul: Your Experiment in Prayer and Community*. Saint Louis: Chalice, 2009.

Illustration #4. Reaching Seekers: Pathways to Vibrant Faith and Active Engagement

Mini-Retreats: Our Lady of Soledad Parish (www.soledad-coachella.org)

Our Lady of Soledad Parish provides a step-by-step process to help parishioners deepen their faith, so they don't just enter the front door only to drift quietly out the back door later. The discipleship program mirrors the process developed by Rick Warren (Saddleback Church). It consists of five mini-retreats. Each mini-retreat includes prayer, ice breakers, talks, faith sharing and food. Held on a Sunday when most parishioners are off work, the first session begins at 3 p.m., late enough to allow for both Sunday Mass and family time. Retreats end at 8 p.m., early enough for participants to be rested for the next day. The parish provides child care. Each mini-retreat is self-contained; no one must return to complete it. This practice eliminates absenteeism and distinguishes the retreat experience from a class. Lay teams lead the mini-retreats, which are offered in English and Spanish and repeated frequently throughout the year. Each mini-retreat focuses on a different aspect of spiritual growth:

- *Mini-Retreat 101: "Catholics Alive!"* begins with the question, "What does it mean to be a follower of Christ?" Retreatants discuss the difference between a relationship-centered faith and a rules-centered faith; consider the importance of church as a family, instead of a privatized, Lone-Ranger Christianity; and note similarities and differences between Catholic and non-Catholic Christians. The group discusses the importance of serious commitment to the Catholic faith, as well as the commitments asked of parish members. Participants are asked to sign a simple membership covenant if they wish to join the parish as registered members.
- *Mini-Retreat 201: "Alive and Growing Spiritually!"* focuses on maturation in the Catholic faith. Retreatants discuss prayer, Bible study and the importance of belonging to a small faith community. There is also a presentation of Catholic moral teachings.
- *Mini-Retreat 301: "Alive and Gifted!"* helps retreatants discern how to serve God in ministry. The activities follow the acronym Shape, as developed by Warren, where "S" is for spiritual gifts; "H" represents the "heart" or passion and desire to serve; "A" stands for natural abilities; "P" is personality; and "E" represents life experiences. This mini-retreat helps participants discover how God has uniquely shaped them for ministry. Parishioners take up a ministry based on their gifts, not just on parish needs.
- *Mini-Retreat 401: "Alive in the World!"* helps participants live as witnesses for Christ, as contagious Catholic Christians. The group discusses evangelization, as distinguished from proselytizing. Retreatants learn how to defend the Catholic faith. They also discuss Catholic social justice teachings and specifically how this parish is active in community organizing.
- *Mini-Retreat 501: "Alive to Praise God!"* focuses on Catholic worship and the sacraments. It begins with a Taizé-style prayer, followed by a guided tour of the church during which sacred spaces, vessels and vestments are explained. Next, retreatants rotate through four workshops on the sacraments, the liturgical year and church traditions. The retreat concludes with a shortened Seder-like meal that leads into an explanatory Mass.

S.T.E.P.S: Impact Catholic Ministry (<http://impactcatholic.com/steps.html>)

S.T.E.P.S. is the "Formation for Life Process" of Impact Catholic Ministry. These steps are designed to lead people towards greater maturity in their Christian life and equip them for rewarding involvement in the life of this Church community. The S.T.E.P.S. course is designed to help people grow in understanding and experience of faith and the Christian life. As people discover their own faith through these steps, they can also find their place in this community where they can grow and enjoy life.

- *STEP 100: All about Christ.* This is a first look at who Jesus is and how He can impact our lives. The course covers the basics of the message of Christ. If people are interested in investigating the

Christian faith for the first time or looking to rediscover the foundation of faith, this course is for them.

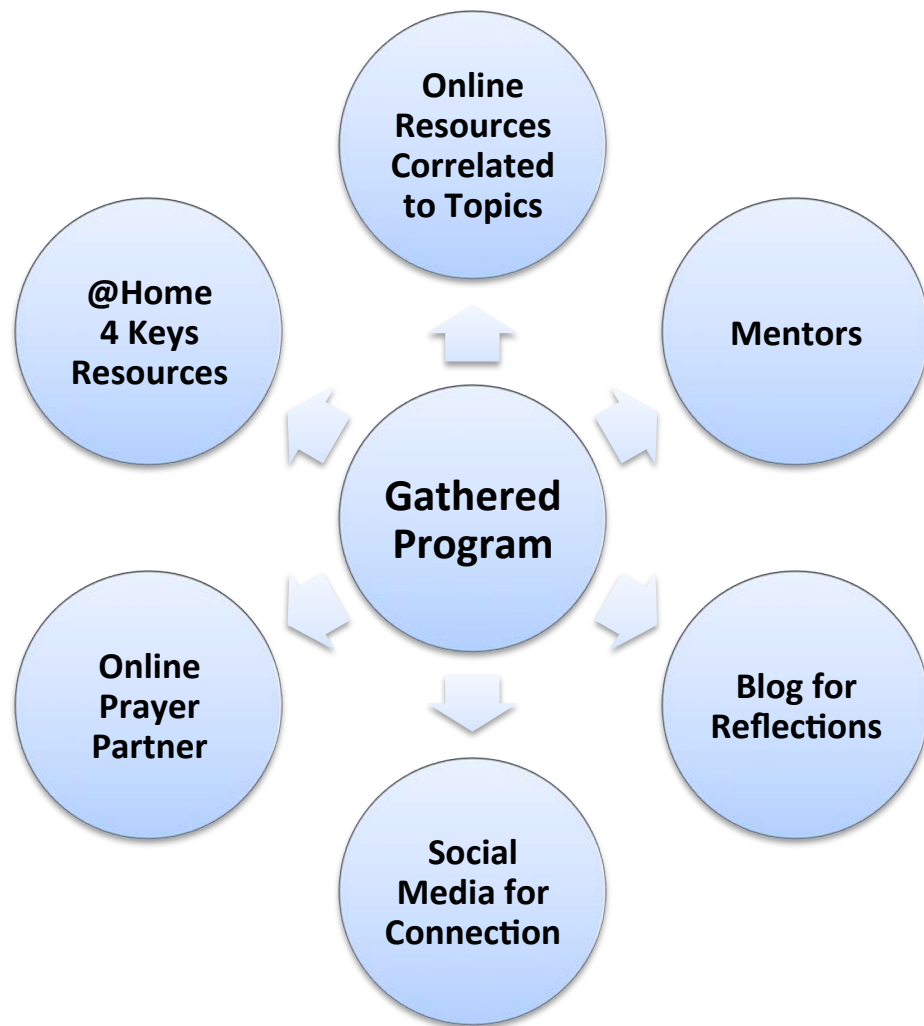
- *STEP 200: All about Church.* The Christian life is never lived alone; people are designed to support one another. Church is that gathering of people who walk together in faith. This course focuses on the Impact church family. Here people find out about the statements, strategies and structure of Impact Catholic Ministry.
- *STEP 300: All about my Character.* Personal growth occurs when people make a deliberate and informed decision to put certain practices into action. This is a discipleship course that examines some of the key practices of the Christian life. People learn practical, everyday ways to grow in maturity in your faith.
- *STEP 400: All about my Capacity.* People are gifted in unique ways. This course takes people through a process of self discovery as they identify their unique gifts and abilities, dreams and desires, temperament and personality. Finding their gifts allows people to better understand their place in the community of faith.
- *STEP 500: All about the Cause.* The message of Jesus has a transforming power. Individual lives, communities and nations have been radically changed by that message. As followers of Jesus each person can be part of that cause. This course looks at how Jesus is working in our world and how his followers can be part of what he is doing.
- *STEP 600: All about our Commission.* Jesus' last instruction to His followers before he returned to his Father was that they should share what they have received from Him with others. His followers today share the same task as those first followers. This course covers how people can share what they have experienced in a loving and respectful way.
- *STEP 700: All about the Cross.* This final step is really the beginning of a whole new life. At the cross, Christians find an invitation to commit themselves to God in a deeper way. Here people will learn how to live intimately with God. They embark on a daring adventure into the life God has always dreamed they would live.

***Awakening Faith and Seeking Christ* (Paulist Evangelization Ministries, www.pncea.org)**

Awakening Faith: Reconnecting with Your Catholic Faith, is a conversation-based, small group process that helps inactive Catholics return to the Church. The group meets once a week for six weeks of conversation and socializing. The conversations are based on short, easy to read essays about spirituality, Jesus, the Holy Spirit, God's mercy, the Mass, and the Church. The meetings foster reflection, prayer, and honest sharing in a setting of hospitality and acceptance. A small community is formed and over the weeks that community becomes a bridge to the larger church community. Additional, optional essays allow the group to continue to meet if desirable for another four weeks to discuss faith, love, marriage and divorce, and money. The process is simple and inviting. A parish can offer *Awakening Faith* any time of the year and repeat it year after year.

Seeking Christ aims to solve the problem parishes face when people inquire about the Catholic Church, but the parish has no way to begin receiving them. *Seeking Christ* includes eight sessions that can be used in a variety of ways to welcome and engage people who are inquiring about becoming Catholics. After an initial interview, the program offers eight possible sessions dealing with human seeking, our words and the Word of God, faith, Jesus, the Holy Spirit, the church as the community of Jesus, freedom, and conversion. Depending on inquirers' needs, a parish chooses which sessions would be most helpful. Each session involves a short DVD reflection, a scripture passage for discussion, and a take-home session which allows the inquirer to begin seeing Catholic approaches to various life issues. The inquirer receives a booklet for reflection and journaling.

Seeker Design: Physical and Virtual Settings & Multiple Models



Parish Website Checklist

Planning Checklist

- ✓ Who is the audience?
- ✓ Planning—visit other sites.
- ✓ Reflect on what you are: what are your core values and how do you want to say that?
- ✓ Define a reasonable scope and get buy-in from stake-holders in the congregation.
- ✓ Do an easy survey of your audience—what are they looking for, what do they expect?
- ✓ Decide on the types of content to include (including graphics).
- ✓ Map out your basic navigation (7 buckets is about all a person can digest).
- ✓ Pick the technology or platform.
- ✓ Create the design.
- ✓ Build your content.
- ✓ Release the site.

Potential Features

- ✓ a learning center with courses and webinars on topics such as faith themes, Bible studies, life issues, and Christian practices, self-paced and facilitated by church staff and church members at scheduled times
- ✓ audio and video podcasts of gathered learning programs at the church
- ✓ links to selected online learning programs and activities from Christian churches, seminaries, universities, and publishers; links to courses on iTunes University and other online course providers
- ✓ links to selected audio and video podcasts on iTunes, YouTube, and other providers
- ✓ links to free e-book libraries, such as Google Books, and online Bibles, such as Bible Gateway
- ✓ a faith formation resource center with daily, weekly, and seasonal resources for all ages and families, including faith conversation activities, devotions and prayer, Bible reading activities and Bible studies, service projects, and rituals and traditions
- ✓ a milestones and life transitions center with sections for each milestone that include rituals, blessings, commentaries, personal stories, a “gathering space” for sharing stories and ideas
- ✓ a worship center sharing audio and video clips of some of the sermons and other worship experiences, and extending it through the daily posting of images, songs, meditations, inspirational stories, prayers of the people, and online worship exercises.
- ✓ an online parenting center with “how to” parenting articles and videos, faith enrichment resources, a “gathering space” for parents to interact, a blog staffed by parent mentors, parent-generated ideas and activities, and links to highly rated parent and family websites.
- ✓ themed “gathering spaces” for synchronous and asynchronous interaction, including live text-based chat and live audio/video conferences, threaded discussions, collected blog links, self-paced tutorials on a range of topics, and so on.
- ✓ a library pod with access to e-journals, e-books, archived streaming video of speakers and events, a clearinghouse-type collection of links to resources, and other Internet-mediated resources.
- ✓ a mission/service opportunity clearinghouse for local, national, and international internships, volunteer opportunities, and jobs
- ✓ small group gatherings online for faith sharing, Bible study, and book discussions
- ✓ a calendar of events with locations, times, and descriptions, with Web-streamed audio and video recordings of select offerings