REIMAGING FAITH FORMATION FOR THE 21ST CENTURY

Topic 1
A Faith Forming Ecosystem

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LIFELONG FAITH BOOKS
Not Just an Era of Change but a Change of Eras
ACCELERATING CHANGE

The world is now changing at a rate at which the basic systems, structures, and cultures built over the past century cannot keep up with the demands being placed on them. Incremental adjustments to how you manage and strategize, no matter how clever, are not up to the job. You need something very new to stay ahead in a age of tumultuous change and growing uncertainties.

(John Kotter, Accelerate: Building Strategic Agility for a Faster-Moving World)

CHANGING ECOSYSTEM OF FAITH
FOUR PERSPECTIVES ON OUR CHANGING WORLD

1. Social
2. Generational
3. Religious/Spiritual
4. Educational

4 BIG ADAPTIVE CHALLENGES

1. Increasing diversity throughout society in the length of the lifespan, in generational identities, in family structures and marriage patterns, and in ethnic makeup
2. Rise of new digital technologies that are reshaping society, and the emergence of a connected, networked society
3. Dramatic changes and increasing diversity in the religious beliefs, practices, and affiliation of Americans
4. Decline in religious transmission from generation to generation
LIFE SPAN DIVERSITY

FIVE GENERATION DIVERSITY

- iGeneration (2000-)
- Millennials (1980-99)
- Generation X (1961-1979)
- Baby Boomers (1946-60)
- Builders (before 1946)

- Relationship to Institutions
- Relationship to Authority
- Family Relationships
- Work-Life Balance
- Communication Style
- Technology Usage
- Learning Style
- Spiritual Expression
- Worship Style
FAMILY DIVERSITY

1. Married Couples with no children
2. Married Couple with Children (biological family)
3. Married Couple with Children (blended family)
4. Single Parent with Children
5. Unmarried Couple with Children
6. Unmarried Couple without Children
7. Same Sex Couple with Children (married / unmarried)
8. Same Sex Couple without Children (married / unmarried)
9. Grandparents & Parents with Children
10. Grandparents as Primary Caregivers
11. Parents with Single Young Adults Living at Home

SPIRITUAL-RELIGIOUS DIVERSITY

- The Unaffiliated
- The Spiritual
- The Occasional
- The Active
SPIRITUAL-RELIGIOUS DIVERSITY

1. Church too judgmental
2. Church bureaucracy
3. Lecture style of preaching
4. Church is not where I encounter God
5. Social & political stances of the church
6. Church is not where I find community
7. Couldn’t find a church that was welcoming
8. I wanted to be more involved in living out God’s calling in my life

SPIRITUAL-RELIGIOUS DIVERSITY

- **Dissenters** are people who largely stay away from institutional religion (“protesting dissenters” or “drifted dissenters”)
- **Casuals** are people whose religious or spiritual practices are primarily functional (makes me feel better).
- **Explorers** are like spiritual tourists who enjoy the journey but do not plan to settle anywhere (theological hybrids).
- **Seekers** are searching for a spiritual home (reclaiming an earlier religious identities or moving on to something new).
- **Immigrants** have moved to a new spiritual “land” and are trying to adjust to this new identity and community (tension between commitment, constancy, and group loyalty – and SBNR ethos of independence, freedom, non-dogmatism, and an open and questing attitude).
Value & religious transmission is primarily a family affair. Families can transmit a religious faith tradition or not.

Keys:
1. Family Religious Inheritance
2. Grandparents
3. Parental Role Modeling
4. Parent-Child Relationship
WHY THESE TRENDS WILL CONTINUE

- Younger generations more unaffiliated and less involved in faith communities
- Older generations more affiliated and more involved and supportive
- Generational transition: as younger generations replace the older generations there will be fewer engaged and more unaffiliated

WHY THESE TRENDS WILL CONTINUE

- Declining levels of family religious transmission and faith practice at home are a result of non-affiliation.
  - 1st generation & 2nd generation
- If the pattern continues, expect higher levels of non-affiliation and lower levels of church involvement in younger families.
WHY THESE TRENDS WILL CONTINUE

- Increase in individualism – more focus on the self, less on others and society. Religious affiliation is low when the culture is high in individualism and low in social support.
- Increase in religious pluralism—questioning or minimizing of all faiths.
- Increase in diversity

Religion is not going away anytime soon, regardless of how people may identify themselves. But business as usual among existing religious institutions will not stem the losses we are seeing.

(Richard Flory, USC)
(http://religiondispatches.org/u-s-christianity-is-dead-long-live-u-s-christianity)
IMAGINING A NEW FUTURE
THE ECOSYSTEM

ECOSYSTEM

A system, or group of interconnected elements, formed by the interaction of a community of organisms with their environment.

Science defines an ecosystem as being a community where organisms interact with one another and with their physical environment.

Every organism has a role to fulfill and there must be a harmonious balance between all aspects of the ecosystem in order for the organisms to flourish and evolve.
THE “OLD” FAITH FORMING ECOSYSTEM

BUILDING A NEW FAITH FORMING ECOSYSTEM
EIGHT FAITH FORMING PROCESS FOR LIFELONG FAITH FORMATION

INTERGENERATIONAL FAITH FORMATION

Intergenerational faith formation and whole community faith experiences are at the center of faith formation – engaging all ages and generations in the life and events of church life and the Christian faith and participation in intergenerational faith experiences.

How to become intentionally intergenerational in church life & faith formation as the foundation for lifelong faith formation and discipleship?
Throughout Scripture there is a pervasive sense that all generations were typically present when faith communities gathered for worship, for celebration, for feasting, for praise, for encouragement, for reading of Scripture, in times of danger, and for support and service. . . . To experience authentic Christian community and reap the unique blessings of intergenerationality, the generations must be together regularly and often—infants to octogenarians.

(Allen and Ross, Intergenerational Christian Formation)
FAMILY FAITH FORMATION

- Faith formation recognizes that parents and the family are the most powerful influence for virtually every child and youth outcome—personal, academic, social, and spiritual-religious; and that parents are the most important influence on the social and religious lives of children, youth, and emerging adults.
- Given the central role of families in shaping the lives of children and youth, the value of engaging, supporting, and educating families should be self-evident to all of us.

FAMILY FAITH FORMATION

- Seeing the home as the essential & foundational environment for faith nurture, faith practice, and the healthy development of young people.
- Building faith formation around the lives of the today’s families and parents, rather than having the congregation prescribe the programs and activities that families will participate in.
FAMILY FAITH FORMATION

1. Discovering God in Everyday Life
2. Forming Faith at Home through the Life Cycle
3. Forming Faith through Milestones
4. Celebrating Seasonal Events through the Year
5. Encountering God in the Bible through the Year
6. Connecting Families Intergenerationally
7. Developing a Strong Family Life
8. Empowering Parents and Grandparents

LIFE CYCLE FAITH FORMATION

Age group and generational faith formation addresses the unique life tasks, needs, interests, and spiritual journeys of people at each stage of life.
EIGHT FAITH FORMING PROCESS FOR LIFELONG FAITH FORMATION

GROWTH IN FAITH

- Church Year Seasons
- Learning the Tradition
- Praying Spiritual Formation
- Reading the Bible
- Rituals & Milestones
- Serving Working for Justice Caring for Creation
- Caring Relationships
- Worshipping

LEARNING NETWORKS

museums
libraries
after school
home
schools
online

learner
MISSIONAL FAITH FORMATION

Missional faith formation expands and extends the church’s presence through outreach, connection, relationship building, and engagement with people where they live—moving faith formation out into the community. For example:

- Moving worship and faith formation into the community
- Opening programs to everyone
- Life skills: parenting, careers, training, mentoring
- Small group programs on a variety of topics
- Community-wide service
- Community events: arts, music, theater

MISSIONAL FAITH FORMATION

Missional faith formation provides pathways for people to consider or reconsider the Christian faith, to encounter Jesus and the Good News, and to live as disciples in a supportive faith community.
IMAGINING A NEW FUTURE

THE NETWORK
A shift from education to learning anywhere, anytime.
A shift from consumption of information to participatory learning.
A shift from institutions to networks.

LEARNING REDESIGNED FOR THE 21ST CENTURY

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Interest-Driven</th>
<th>Highly Connected</th>
<th>Verifiable &amp; Credible</th>
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<td>We start with youth passions and connect them to learning opportunities based on their interests.</td>
<td>Our platform lets us reach kids anywhere, connecting them to their communities, mentors, and individual paths to success.</td>
<td>As evidence of knowledge, skills, and achievement, youth earn digital badges which garner credibility with peers, schools, and employers.</td>
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A NETWORK APPROACH TO LEARNING
Offering a *variety* of content, methods, formats, and delivery systems (online & physical settings) to address the diverse life tasks and situations, needs and interests, and spiritual and faith journeys of people.

Offering content and experiences that is *responsive* to the diverse religious and spiritual needs of people today—from the spiritually committed and engaged to the spiritual but not religious and the unaffiliated.

Offering *multiple environments* to address people’s busy lives and providing more ways to participate: self-directed, mentored, at home, in small groups, in large groups, church-wide, in the community, and in the world.
FAITH FORMATION NETWORK: CONTENT

1. Caring Relationships
2. Celebrating the Seasons
3. Celebrating Rituals & Milestones
4. Learning the Christian Tradition
5. Praying & Spiritual Formation
6. Reading the Bible
7. Serving, Working for Justice, & Caring for Creation
8. Worshipping God
9. Life Stage Issues
10. Missional
SAMPLE THEMES – ADULTS

1. Dealing with retirement
2. Making life plans, finances, health
3. Becoming a grandparent
4. Making a difference in the community and world
5. Incorporating family changes and transitions
6. New ways of living and relating as a married couple
7. Caring for aging parents
8. Taking time to read the Bible and learn more about my faith
9. Growing spiritually; spirituality for the 2nd half of life
10. Connecting with people my age; talking about things that matter
11. Dealing with loss
The Seasons of Adult Faith Formation

A Network of Adult Faith Formation Experiences, Programs, Activities, & Resources

FAITH FORMATION PLAYLISTS

Content Area
- Activity 1
  - Resource
  - Resource
- Activity 2
  - Resource
  - Resource
- Activity 3
  - Resource
  - Resource
Variety of Environments: Self-directed, mentored, at home, in small groups, in large groups, church-wide, in the community, and in the world.

Variety of Ways to Learn

ADULT FAITH FORMATION PLAYLIST

Online Courses
Apps & E-newsletters
Online Prayer & Spirituality
Small Group Bible Study
Retreats
Day at the Monastery
Spiritual Book of the Month
Spiritual Practices Series
ADULT FAITH FORMATION PLAYLISTS

Playlists are thematic learning plans that integrate a variety of ways to learn, multiple learning environments, and online and physical spaces—from which people can create their own faith formation plan.

Example: Spiritual Enrichment for Adults
Theme: “Spiritual Practices”

1. Spiritual Practices Course (5 sessions at church in one month)
2. Spirituality Over 50 Book Group (variety of times & places)
3. Online Daily Devotion Resources
4. Online Prayer Practices Resources
5. Online Course or Retreat with a Spiritual Master
6. Online Retreat