

Faith Formation with Young Adults

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How can churches address the distinctive spiritual and religious needs of emerging adults? What does faith formation with emerging adults look like? To answer these questions Part 1 of this article presents research findings on what young adults are seeking in a congregation and what congregations are doing to address their religious and spiritual needs. Part 2 presents a variety of congregational examples of approaches, ideas and practices in faith formation with emerging adults. The insights from research and practice provide approaches that a congregation can utilize in developing or enhancing faith formation with emerging adults.

Part 1. Insights from Research

In *Finding Faith: The Spiritual Quest of the Post-Boomer Generation* Richard Flory and Donald Miller report on a study of churches that are engaging emerging adults (post-boomers) and the experience of young adults in these churches. They observe that these emerging adults have embedded their lives in spiritual communities in which their desire and need for both expressive/experiential activities, whether through art, music, or service-oriented activities, and for a close-knit, physical community and communion with others are met. They are seeking to develop a balance for individualism and rational asceticism through religious experience and spiritual meaning in an embodied faith. The dominant characteristic across the young adults they interviewed was a desire for a theologically grounded belief that makes sense cognitively, combined with nonrational expressive tendencies—they want a faith that makes cognitive sense to them and that is also an expressive, embodied spiritual experience. Young adult Christians are searching for a more holistic faith than what a purely cognitive and rational approach can offer. They are seeking both a deep spiritual experience and a community experience, each of which provides them with

meaning in their lives, and each of which is meaningless without the other.

Flory and Miller characterize post-Boomer faith as **Expressive Communalism**—reflecting an emphasis on embodiment and community: using one's body in worship; in living out, or embodying, Christian teachings, in service; and in a desire for life in a particular faith community where they can be both personally fulfilled and serve others. They desire a theologically grounded belief that makes cognitive sense to them and that is also an expressive, embodied spiritual experience. Using their research as a guide, emerging adults seek congregations and faith formation that:

- offer community and spirituality in the context of a clearly defined faith tradition
- offer worship and faith formation that is visual and experiential
- respond to their needs for empowerment, leadership opportunities, responsibility, and accountability, as well as authenticity and accessibility
- strengthen their distinctive Christian identity so that they know who they are and what they believe, and are able to honestly encounter religious differences, understand people of other faiths, and explore areas of mutuality
- provide opportunities for serving the surrounding community, "bringing the church to the community"
- study the Bible and Christian tradition, then apply it to life in an environment that promotes relationship building and encourages questioning
- engage them in creative uses of the history, traditions, and rituals of different Christian traditions for a more physically and visually oriented practice; and encouraging the development of ancient spiritual disciplines, such as silence and contemplation

In the study *Congregations That Get It: Understanding Religious Identities in the Next Generation*, Tobin Belzer, Richard Flory, Nadia Roumani, and Brie Loskota report on their study of fifteen Jewish, Protestant, Catholic, and Muslim congregations who are engaging young adults in congregational life. While they differ organizationally, they share numerous characteristics in terms of approach. Over the course of one year, the research team visited congregations in Los Angeles, Chicago, Detroit, New York, and Washington, D.C., urban areas where large populations of each religious faith have strong representation. Through exploratory conversations with young adults, religious leaders, and professionals working in religious institutions in each city, the team chose congregations within each religious tradition that represent a broad theological spectrum, from conservative to progressive. Each congregation also was chosen for the intergenerational participation of its members. Based on qualitative interviews and participant observation, the team constructed profiles of Christian (Protestant and Catholic), Jewish, and Muslim congregations. The team spent several weeks collecting data at each of fifteen congregations, ultimately conducting approximately one hundred interviews with congregational leaders, lay leaders, and young adults.

They found six common themes, across religious traditions, which captured what young adults were seeking in a congregation and what congregations were doing to address their religious and spiritual needs.

1. ***Young adults want to feel that their presence is valued.*** Those who are interested in congregational life are aware that they are exceptional—they know that the majority of young adults are not interested in religious affiliation. As such, those who participate want to be acknowledged for their unusual commitment and interest. To show that young adults' presence is valued, congregations:
 - facilitate regular intergenerational communication between congregational members, staff, and leadership
 - regularly and frequently show appreciation for young lay leaders
 - underwrite young adult activities as a way to acknowledge the importance of young adult participation.

- hire a specific staff person to coordinate young adult programming.
 - provide physical space within the place of worship for young adult programs.
2. ***Young adults want a sense of ownership in their congregations.*** They value opportunities to assume leadership roles within their peer group and welcome chances to move into leadership in the larger congregation. To engender a sense of ownership, congregations:
 - enable young adults to create and plan their own events
 - create leadership positions for young adults both within their peer group and within the larger congregation
 - organize committees that are lay-led by young adults
 3. ***Young adults' interests in religion are multifaceted.*** For some, their deep sense of belonging comes from being a part of a community. They want to connect with others who are also articulating a sense of self. Some young adults desire emotional support and guidance. Some want their religious group to be a place where they can develop their professional and support networks. Many single young adults participate in congregations in the hope of meeting a life partner. Many young adults want to learn about increasing their practice of tradition and rituals. Some seek to deepen their relationship with God. Some approach religion through the intellectual study of modern socio-historical texts or the religious canon. Others value the opportunity to effect social change with a group of people who share their values. Still other young adults seek a space for creative religious expression through music, art, writing, or dance. To acknowledge that young adults interests in religion are multifaceted, congregations:
 - offer multiple points of entry: social, educational, spiritual, cultural, emotional, and theological
 - create multiple arenas for young adults to reflect upon and articulate their own religious identities
 - organize affinity groups so that the young adults can find like-minded peers

- offer opportunities where young adults can sometimes engage as participants, and other times take on the responsibilities of leading
4. ***Young adults thrive when they are “met where they are.”*** Young adults do not want to be judged for their level of religious practice or knowledge, nor feel ashamed by their lack of knowledge or practice. They want to approach religious practice focused on meaning and intention. While respecting the religious standards of the congregation and their religion at large, many took pride in making their own choices based on personal factors such as level of knowledge, peer group, and religious upbringing. To meet young adults where they are, congregations:
- offer learning opportunities directed specifically to young adults
 - explore and explain the congregation’s (denomination’s) theological framework through a learning process that is open to questioning
 - reduce fee structure so that participation is financially viable
5. ***Young adults welcome opportunities to feel emotionally affected.*** Young adults want to feel moved by music, a connection to their history, a sense of cultural heritage, and nostalgia. They want to be emotionally engaged and feel like a participant, not an audience member, at worship services. To produce an affective, or emotional, experience:
- religious leaders cultivate an atmosphere during worship services that enables young adults to be participants instead of audience members
 - leadership that is accessible and charismatic
 - congregation funds a charismatic and young staff person who can cultivate a community of young adults
6. ***Young adults respond to a theoretical and practical balance between the particular and the universal.*** Every individual interviewed acknowledged that there are many ways to believe in God and to live a religious life. Young adults appreciate

an acknowledgement of the existence of individual differences such as class, race, gender, and sexual orientation. They do not want to feel cloistered from the outside world. Instead, they want to be able to share their spiritual interests with peers of different faiths. Through the articulation of similarities and differences, they deepen a sense of self as a member of their own faith. To create balance between the particular and the universal, congregations:

- focus on the thoughtful transmission of the theology and tradition of the particular congregation, not on theological debates (especially those that disparage other religious traditions or denominations).
- create an atmosphere that is self-consciously open and analytical: acknowledging the existence of individual differences such as class, race, gender, and sexual orientation
- facilitate interfaith and interdenominational exchange

The research team also found that young adults “exercised typical American individualism as they decided about associating with religious communities, sometimes participating in more than one simultaneously” (Belzer, et al., 106). The research team identified the following factors influencing young adult’s participation in a faith community:

- choosing a specific community, rather than committing to a larger denomination
- making choices based on a number of factors, such as interpersonal relationships, worship style, geographic location, opportunities for involvement, and accessibility of leadership
- deciding how often to attend and the extent of their participation
- choosing how much of the official teachings to accept and how much ritual observance to practice
- balancing their individual authority with their identity as members of a community and religious tradition
- seeking a community where there is both flexibility and structure

- being experientially engaged as opposed to a “show up and watch” style of religious participation
- building interpersonal relationships with people who express and explore their religious identities in similar ways; relationship building was a fundamental aspect of young adults’ congregational experience (Belzer, et al., 106-107)

In *Lost and Found: The Younger Unchurched and the Churches that Reach Them* Ed Stetzer, Richie Stanley, and Jason Hayes, report on the findings from three LifeWay Research projects, including a large scale survey of young adults and a survey of 149 churches that were reaching an extraordinary number of young adults. Based on the responses of young adults in the research studies, the research team identified four markers of young adult ministry:

1. **Community** is vital to the emerging generations. For them, life is meant to be experienced together, and they sense a need to be involved in genuine relationships with others. They are looking for friends they can call for help when their tire is flat and people who will call and celebrate when they get a promotion. They want to walk through life with their friends. They have a need for people, and they show a deep desire for relational equity. In other words, they long to be deeply invested in others and have others deeply invested in them. They desire to be a major part of each other’s lives—the day-to-day, big and small “stuff of life.” They also think that others should be a part of the most important aspect of their lives—their spiritual journey.
2. **Depth** is important. Young adults want to be people of significance. Deep significance. They care about who they are and what they’re becoming—“ankle deep” doesn’t work for them. They told us that they’d rather be “in over their heads” in life as opposed to kicking around in the shallow end. Young adults also have interest in addressing the hard-to-talk about topics. They appreciate tough questions and despise pat answers. Their responses indicate that they like wrestling with difficult things and chewing on challenging ideas. They express a

high degree of interest in processing information, and they often find the questions more important than the answers.

3. **Responsibility** is strongly valued because young adults know their choices make a difference. Decisions are everywhere. Recycle. Buy or trade fair. Sponsor a child. Respect your elders. Tithe. Love your neighbors. Respond to the crisis in Darfur. These are the type of opportunities that define this generation. They affirmed the importance of these issues, and they are committed to doing the “right” thing even as they grow in their understanding of what right means. They’ve concluded that all of these decisions matter, and what matters most is how they respond.
4. **Connection** is the fourth area of importance. This could be called mentoring or intergenerational ministry. They want to learn from those who have already experienced the things they are about to face. They’re looking for a connection with people who will walk alongside them and advise them. They want a connection that gives them the opportunity to have someone pour their lives into them and teach them along their journey. And interestingly enough, they’re willing to do that for someone else too. (Stetzer, et al., 67-68)

These four markers of ministry, point to implications for developing faith formation and ministry with emerging adults. The young adults in the study, both church and unchurched, expressed the following needs and interests:

- to interact with members of a group multiple times per week
- to participate in small group activities that promote relationships and belonging
- to connect with a mentor; to receive information and advice from individuals with experience
- to participate in Bible study that minimizes pat answers in the exploration of Scripture
- to participate in small group meetings to discuss life application of Scripture
- to determine their own beliefs through hands-on, practical learning experiences

- to utilize their talents and abilities through opportunities to meet needs
- to participate in hands-on outreach activities on a frequent basis that meet the needs of others
- to benefit others through global service projects

Based on their research with 149 churches that were reaching an extraordinary number of young adults, the research team found nine common characteristics in churches that are reaching young adults.

1. **Creating Deeper Community.** Churches that are effective at attracting and developing young adults place a high value on moving people into a healthy small group system. Young adults are trying to connect and will make a lasting connection wherever they can find belonging.
2. **Making a Difference through Service.** Churches that are transforming young adults value leading people to serve through volunteerism. More than being pampered, young adults want to be part of something bigger than themselves and are looking to be part of an organization where they can make a difference through acts of service.
3. **Experiencing Worship.** Churches that are engaging young adults are providing worship environments that reflect their culture while also revering and revealing God. More than looking for a good performance, young adults desire to connect with a vertical experience of worship.
4. **Conversing the Content.** Churches that are led by authentic communicators are drawing young adults in the message. Though their styles vary from topic to exegetical, authentic communicators are true to their own personal style of communication and are usually more conversational than preachy.
5. **Leveraging Technology.** Churches that are reaching young adults are willing to communicate in a language of technology familiar to young adults. Young adults sense that these churches are welcoming churches

that value and understand them, engaging them where they are.

6. **Building Cross-Generational Relationships.** Churches that are linking young adults with older, mature adults are challenging young adults to move on to maturity through friendship, wisdom, and support. Young adults are drawn to churches that believe in them enough to challenge them.
7. **Moving Toward Authenticity.** Churches that are engaging young adults are reaching them not only by their excellence but by their honesty. Young adults are looking for and connecting to churches where they see leaders that are authentic, transparent, and on a learning journey.
8. **Leading by Transparency.** Churches that are influencing young adults highly value an incarnational approach to ministry and leadership. This incarnational approach doesn't require revealing one's personal sin list so much as it does require that those in leadership must be willing to express a personal sense of humanity and vulnerability.
9. **Leading by Team.** Increasingly churches reaching young adults seem to be taking a team approach to ministry. They see ministry not as a solo venture but as a team sport—and the broader participation it creates increases the impact of the ministry. (Stetzer, et al., 143-44)

Young adults are longing for community and fellowship with peers, looking for ways to reach people in need, and circling the church but not always finding a home in it. Connection is the key. Community with other young adults is extremely important in their lives. Young adults seek authentic answers in the Bible and Christian tradition, best learned through participation in small group meetings. Making a difference is essential by having the opportunity to meet the needs of others on a regular basis. Social action is cited as the major reason uninvolved young adults would consider being part of a church.

Works Cited

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Part 2. Strategies for Young Adult Faith Formation

The following strategies flow from the research and eight best practices, and can serve as guide for developing, expanding, and/or enriching faith formation with young adults. They are illustrative and descriptive of the possibilities for faith formation with young adults, and are offered to stimulate your congregation's vision and practice.

For many congregations the thought of incorporating the best practices and strategies for young adult ministry into a faith formation program may be overwhelming. In this regard it is important to recognize that many congregations partner with neighboring churches to plan and implement programs that no one church could undertake alone. In fact, one of the first steps in developing effective faith formation for young adults may be to find partners to collaborate with: to begin planning together, promoting each other's programs, and implementing joint programs to serve all of the young adults in the area.

1. Integrate young adults fully into the ministries and leadership roles of the congregation.

One strategy that every congregation can undertake is to invite young adults into ministry and leadership positions in the congregation, and provide the appropriate formation and training necessary for these roles. It is essential that the invitation is *personal* and matches the interests and talents of young adults with ministry/leadership opportunities. Begin by developing an inventory of possibilities, then a strategy for invitation and

involvement. Consider all of the church's ministries—liturgy, education, justice and service/outreach, and so on—as well as the variety of groups, such as support groups, small faith sharing groups, and enrichment groups (marriage, family). In addition to congregational leadership roles, young adults should be encouraged to take on leadership roles in young adult groups and programs.

Make sure that before any involvement with ministry or leadership, there is an opportunity for formation and training. This can provide a study-action model to prepare young adults for their particular ministry or leadership role through study (e.g., workshops, courses, or small group learning) accompanied by actual involvement in their ministry or leadership role. This type of learning involves a continuous cycle of study-action-study-action, as the young adults' involvement in action generates new needs for learning.

2. Offer opportunities specifically designed for young adults to study the Bible and Christian tradition, then apply it to life in an environment that promotes relationship building and encourages questioning.

To reach the diversity of young adults and their learning needs, congregations can offer a variety of learning models, including independent learning, small group learning, and large group learning. (For three additional learning models, see the descriptions of milestone faith formation, spiritual formation, and service/study-action.)

- **Independent Learning.** Independent learning provides maximum flexibility for the learner: when to learn, how to learn, where to learn, and what to learn. With the increasing number and variety of audio and video podcasts and online learning courses and resources, independent learning offers a 24/7 approach to religious education for busy young adults. Congregations can serve as guide to helping adults find the best learning format and content to address their learning needs. Examples of independent learning include:

1. Reading (such as a book-of-the-month club)
2. Magazines (print or online)
3. Podcasts/audio learning (delivered via a congregation's web site or other reputable site)

- audio presentations from conferences, workshops, or a speaker series
- Sunday sermons
- audiobooks on tape/CD or at iTunes
- studying the Bible on CD (e.g., *The Bible Experience* from Zondervan)
- podcasts on iTunes and religious web sites
- iTunes University: audio presentations of university courses
- 4. Video podcasts and video-based learning
 - feature films and documentaries
 - iTunes University: video presentations of university courses
- 5. Online courses
 - online courses (e.g., C21 Online at Boston College: www.bc.edu/sites/c21online; STEP Online Theology at University of Notre Dame: <http://step.nd.edu>)
 - e-courses (e.g., spirituality courses at www.spiritualityandpractice.com)
- 6. Online learning centers
 - religious resource websites with articles, practices, activities, etc. (a great example of a religious web site focused on young adults is www.BustedHalo.com).

■ **Small Group Learning.** Probably the most popular young adult learning process, small group learning formats provide an excellent way to address the diversity of young adult learning needs by organizing a variety of small groups with each one targeted to a particular learning need or topic. Small group learning formats also provide lots of flexibility in schedule and location. Groups can meet at times and places that best fit their lives, such as weekly breakfast at a local restaurant or for coffee at a local Starbucks. Small groups create an accepting environment in which new relationships can be formed.

It is not always necessary for the congregation to sponsor small group programs. Congregational leaders can provide resources, support, and training for leaders, thereby enabling adults to organize their own small groups. Small group learning can take many different forms, including:

1. Discipleship or faith sharing groups or study groups (utilizing print, audio, video, and/or online resources)
 - Bible study groups

- theological formation study groups
- theme or issue-oriented study groups
- Sunday lectionary-based faith sharing groups
- book study club
- 2. Practice-focused groups
 - prayer
 - service/faith in action
 - parenting
- 3. Special interest groups
 - support groups (e.g., single women, newly married couples, cancer survivors)
- 4. Ministry groups
 - groups engaged in leadership and ministry within the congregation or to the community of which study is a part of their work

Small “missional communities,” formed in neighborhoods and apartment complexes, are at the heart of Axis, which is the name of Willowcreek Community Church’s young adult ministry. These groups seek to build community by bringing God’s love, compassion, justice, and service to the world around them. Here, young adults connect with one another and delve deeper into the concept of community at weekly table experiences, where they share a meal with their neighbors, study Scripture, and pray together. Axis groups are also involved in regular service to those in need. Small groups connect monthly at the Axis Experience, worshipping God within community through their own unique expression, especially through the arts. The Axis community sits together at Saturday evening worship and usually hangs out afterwards for a movie, dinner, etc.

The “God Talk” Book Club (Basilica of Saint Mary, Minneapolis) offers an opportunity for learning and discussion about theology and life in a context that is always mindful of who God is. This group allows young adults to engage in dialogue about the topics of the day while asking the question: “Does this reflect our theology of God?” Young adults explore a variety of themes related to their understanding of God and their relationship with God, and the implications of that relationship in their larger life experience. While participants are encouraged to read the books, all are invited to come share some wine and conversation while discussing their thoughts about God and life today.

■ **Large Group Learning.** Large group learning formats provide a way to serve a

large number of adults around learning needs and topics that appeal to a wide audience. Large group learning programs can be offered jointly with other churches. Here is a sampling of large group learning formats:

1. Multi-session programs (e.g., offering multi-week courses on theological themes, books of the Bible, youth adult life issues)
2. One-session program (e.g., offering a monthly session on theological or spiritual formation)
3. Speaker series (e.g., offering multi-evening or multi-week program focused around a particular theological themes, Christian practices, young adult life issues, or current events)
4. Round table discussions after Sunday worship (e.g., exploring the Sunday Scripture readings in age groups or intergenerational groups with refreshments)
5. Workshops (e.g., offering one day programs targeted to specific life issues, such as relationships, work, career, transitions)
6. Film festivals (e.g., exploring key themes in movies, such as relationships, social issues, and meaning in life, with a Christian perspective)
7. Conferences (e.g., participating in regional church-sponsored conferences)

Theology on Tap is one of the most popular young adult faith formation programs in the Catholic Church today. Begun in Chicago and now offered through the country, Theology on Tap is a four-week summer program for young adults—women and men in their 20s and 30s, married or single. It features a speaker and open discussion, and is usually held in an outside venue such as a restaurant or club. The purpose of Theology on Tap is threefold:

- to find and invite young adults to gather with their peers for a great experience of Catholicism (evangelization)
- to share the rich traditions of our faith with this generation (catechesis)
- to create a forum for young adults to address and discuss their issues, questions, and concerns (faith formation, spiritual growth, and community building)

For more information about Theology on Tap, go to: www.yamchicago.org or RENEW International: www.renewintl.org.

Sunday Night Live at the Basilica of Saint Mary in Minneapolis strives to nourish Catholics in their 20s and 30s by inviting them to seek a meaningful connection with a spiritual community of peers. Monthly gatherings are held after the 6:30 p.m. Sunday Mass and explore in a discussion format various issues regarding faith and everyday life, such as “Materialism and God,” “Making the Invisible Visible: Sacramental Exploration,” “Separated at Birth: A Deeper Look into Islam,” and “This Ain’t No Garden of Eden: Environmental Issues.”

3. Develop faith formation around young adult milestones and life transitions.

Marriage, baptism, moments of sickness (personal, family, friends), the death of a loved one, and life decisions are all important milestones or life transitions that provide an excellent opportunity for young adult faith formation. Very often these are “moments of return” when young adults who have not been involved in church life for a while return to the church for a ritual experience, family celebration, religious perspective on life’s transitions, encouragement, and/or comfort and support. This is a great opportunity to nurture the faith of young adults *and* welcome them back into the life of the faith community.

Congregations would do well to carefully plan:

1. the preparation for marking a milestone, 2. the experience of the milestone, and 3. follow-up after the milestone. A milestones plan includes congregational activities and individual/home activities. For example, developing a milestones plan for marriage could include the following elements:

1. Education: marriage course or workshop (theology, life skills, faith practices)
2. Ritual: preparation for the marriage ritual
3. Connection to the community: prayers at Sunday worship for the married couple (before and after the ceremony); a “Book of Blessings” from the congregation to the married couple with prayers and words of support and encouragement
4. Continued support: monthly married couples small group meeting; online resources for married couples at the parish web site, a free magazine subscription for the first year of marriage, monthly e-newsletter for married couples
5. Reunion: a reunion breakfast or dinner for newly married couples every six months for the first several years of marriage

6. Anniversary: celebrating marriage anniversaries each month at Sunday worship with a special remembrance and blessing; sending a note of congratulations and a prayer on the anniversary of marriage
7. Resources: Bible readings and reflections for married couples, prayers for a new couple, suggestions for starting a faith-filled home life, ways to be involved in the faith community, ways to be involved in service and justice ministries as a couple

For an example of baptism milestones faith formation plan see “Best Practices in Family Faith Formation” in this issue.

4. Provide a variety of retreat and spiritual formation experiences.

Retreats and/or spiritual formation programs are specialized programs that nurture the spiritual life of young adults. While spiritual formation can utilize individualized, small group, or large group learning models, there are several formats that are particular to spiritual formation, for example:

1. Online spiritual formation
(www.sacredspace.ie, www.taize.fr, www.upperroom.org)
2. Mentoring with a spiritual director
3. Prayer group
4. Prayer breakfast
5. Church-based retreats: evenings, one-day, weekend
6. Advent and Lent retreat experiences
7. Retreat programs at local retreat houses.

Retreats are certainly one of the most popular and important formats for faith formation of young adults. Many congregations have weekend retreats for young adults once or twice a year as an integral element of their ministry with young adults. Retreat topics can address a wide range of young adult concerns and issues. Here are three descriptions of retreat programs:

Life in the Balance

(Marble Collegiate Church, New York City)

Do you work too much? Do you eat enough vegetables? How much time do you spend watching TV on the couch compared to praying and expanding your spiritual life? Our annual retreat will be a time to explore how we prioritize our lives and investigate the choices we make. We’re going to dedicate time to helping balance every

part of our being—mind, body, and soul—through directed activities and discussions.

Prayer in Daily Life Retreat

Many find it difficult to go away for a few days. Taking place amid one’s daily activities, this retreat offers participants the chance to reflect, pray, and converse with a spiritual director. The directed prayer experience begins on a Sunday afternoon or evening with a gathering of all the participants. Then, during the week, everyone commits to pray for one half-hour daily (guidance provided!) and to meet with a director for one half-hour daily to talk about this experience of prayer. All the participants gather again on Friday evening to conclude the retreat.

Come to the Quiet Retreat

(Charis Ministries, Chicago)

The Charis silent, individually-directed weekend retreat is for young adults, married or single, seeking to deepen their relationship with God. Young adults meet each other on Friday evening before spending much of Saturday into Sunday in silent reflection. Young adults spend time one-on-one with a spiritual director to listen to where God’s Spirit is moving in their prayer and in their life. As a group, they explore new ways to pray in the Ignatian tradition. Solitary and contemplative prayer time includes journaling, reading, scripture, walking the grounds, art, music, listening to your own thoughts and resting in your private room.

Spiritual formation is also available online. Websites like the Irish Jesuit’s www.sacredspace.ie provides a quick ten-minute guided meditation based on the Ignatian *Examen* that young adults can do online. BustedHalo.com gives young adults one new article a day and speaks about merging everyday experience with an experience of spirituality.

5. Engage young adults in short-term and long-term social justice and service projects, locally, nationally and globally.

Social justice and service are essential, and very often life transforming, features of young adult faith and spirituality. Justice is an essential element of the Christian tradition that even the least religiously active young adult approves of. Success stories about young adults merging their faith with social action are found in all Christian churches.

Congregations can provide opportunities for young adults to serve others, whether with other young adults or with the whole congregation, as well as engaging young adults locally, nationally, and internationally. Many organizations and churches sponsor immersion or extended action projects for young adults, either nationally or internationally. In every young adult service project, it is important to combine service and action with an understanding of social justice so that young adults see the structural dimensions of social issues.

- **Works of service: responding to people in need.** Begin by surveying your community to find local service opportunities, and by identifying places where young adults are already involved. Work with local agencies involved with feeding people, housing people, collecting food and clothing, visiting prisoners, tutoring children, etc. Identify national and international opportunities for service, such as building homes with Habitat for Humanity.
- **Works of justice: addressing the root causes of social problems.** Justice focuses on the rights of individuals, families, and all creation. It engages young adults in analyzing social situations or social structures, working for long-term social change, and addressing the underlying social causes of individual problems. Working for justice includes writing letters to key people about important social issues and legislation, working with groups to change legislation or budget priorities, and supporting organizations that work for justice. Identify organizations that you can partner with to address justice issues, such as Bread for the World (hunger), the Children's Defense Fund (children's issues), and the ONE Campaign (poverty).

6. Develop an online presence.

The Internet is often the first place that young adults look for anything today. Those ministries that have a presence on the Internet not only have the distinct advantage of being more present to young adults who are anonymously searching for a spiritual message or home, but also have the advantage of providing solid informational sound bytes to feed this generation's need for quick information. To establish an online presence, congregations would be wise to engage young adults in developing and maintaining a web site.

■ **Internet ministry.** Simply put, if you do not have a parish website, you do not exist in the minds of young adults. What would it be like if a congregation invested time and energy in developing and maintaining its own web site as a center for young adults? A church web site and e-mail can:

- Post worship times and a listing of events
- List the faith formation programs and opportunities both in the congregation and in other churches
- Provide online small groups, courses, and reading groups (e.g., a book-of-the-month club)
- Link young adults to faith formation offerings on other web sites, such as online courses
- Deliver timely faith formation resources for young adults on a wide variety of topics and interests that can be targeted to the diversity of the young adult population
- Provide social networking among other young adults who are taking courses or participating in small group learning
- Deliver a daily Bible study to every young adult via the web or e-mail
- Provide audio and video podcasts of sermons and guest speakers, and link to other sources such as iTunes (and iTunes University)
- Answer questions by providing a place on the web site for people to ask anonymous questions and have theological experts answer them (see the BustedHalo.com "Question Box" for an example.).

Every church can start a simple blog, which can be developed in the course of 15 minutes, that certainly can suffice as a simple parish web page (Blogger or Wordpress are two favorite software packages). On the front page of your site put the address and worship times of your church and at least the pastor's name, along with a picture of the church in some form.

A church web site will not replace face-to-face faith formation, but it can certainly enhance and expand what congregations are doing and provide new approaches for delivering faith formation to involved and not-yet-involved young adults.