

Designing 21st Century Faith Formation

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Faith Formation 2020 Scenarios

Relationship with Organized Religion and Christianity

Receptive to Organized Religion

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 #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 are 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.

LOW

Hunger for God and the Spiritual Life

HIGH

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 18-29-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.

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 non-denominational 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 18-39-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 nourish their spiritual growth.

Resistant to Organized Religion

Faith Formation 2020 Scenarios & Strategies

Strategies for Faith Formation in Scenario #1

- 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.

Strategies for Faith Formation in Scenario #2

- 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

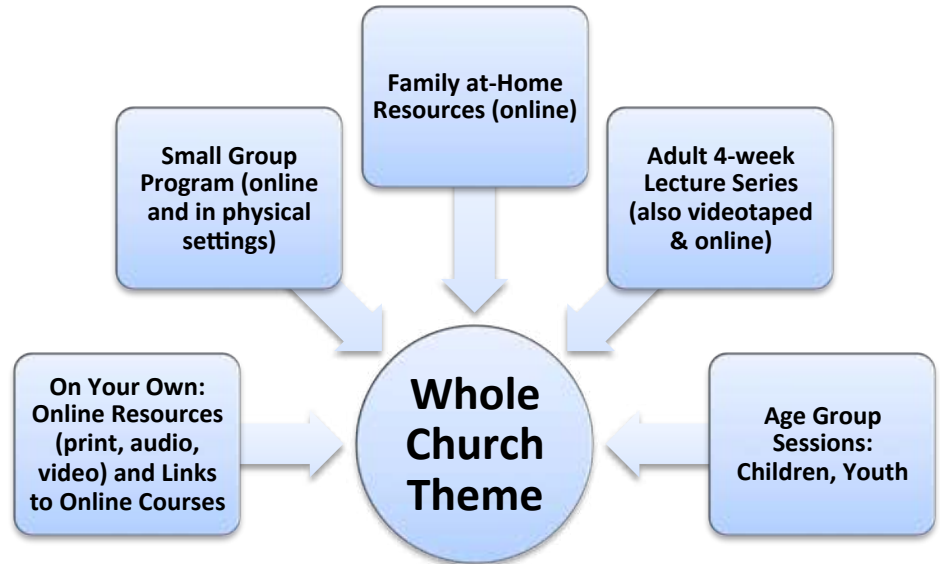
- Establish a “Third Place” gathering site as a platform for reaching the “Unaffiliated and Uninterested” through a variety of spiritual and/or life-centered programs, conversations, and activities?
- Develop a “web-presence” that is inviting and attractive to the “Unaffiliated and Uninterested” so that 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.

Strategies for Faith Formation in Scenario #4

- 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.

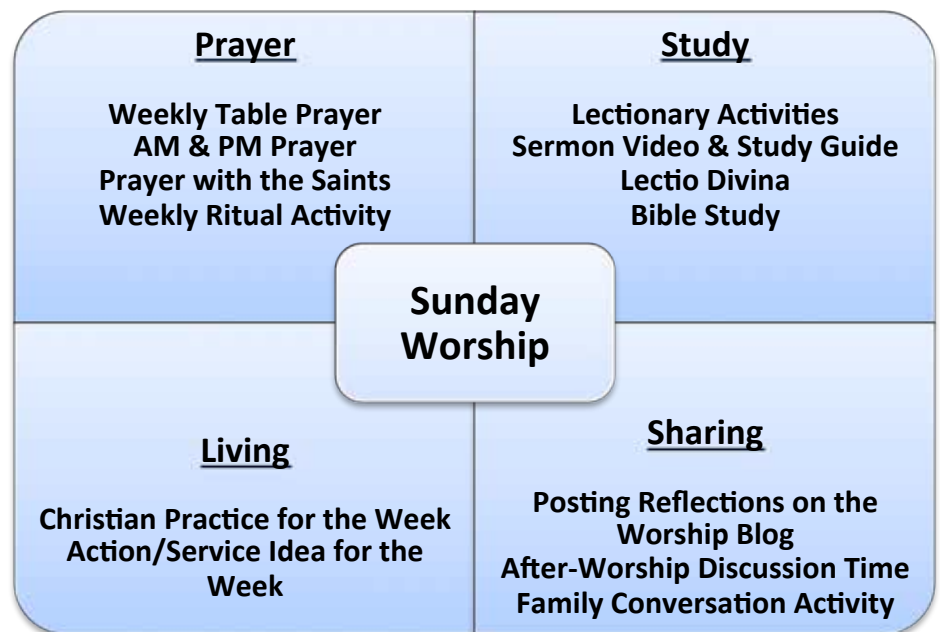
Example 1: Offer Faith Formation on One Theme in a Variety of Formats

Imagine offering a variety of options for faith formation on one theme. For example, a congregation can prepare all of its people for the start of a new Lectionary cycle in October and November using a variety of formats, face-to-face and virtual, that might culminate in a whole church gathering to share learning, pray, sing, eat, and celebrate the end of one Lectionary cycle and the beginning of a new one. A congregation can build a node on their Lifelong Faith Formation Network for the new Lectionary cycle—and once this node is built it is always available and can easily be updated in the future.



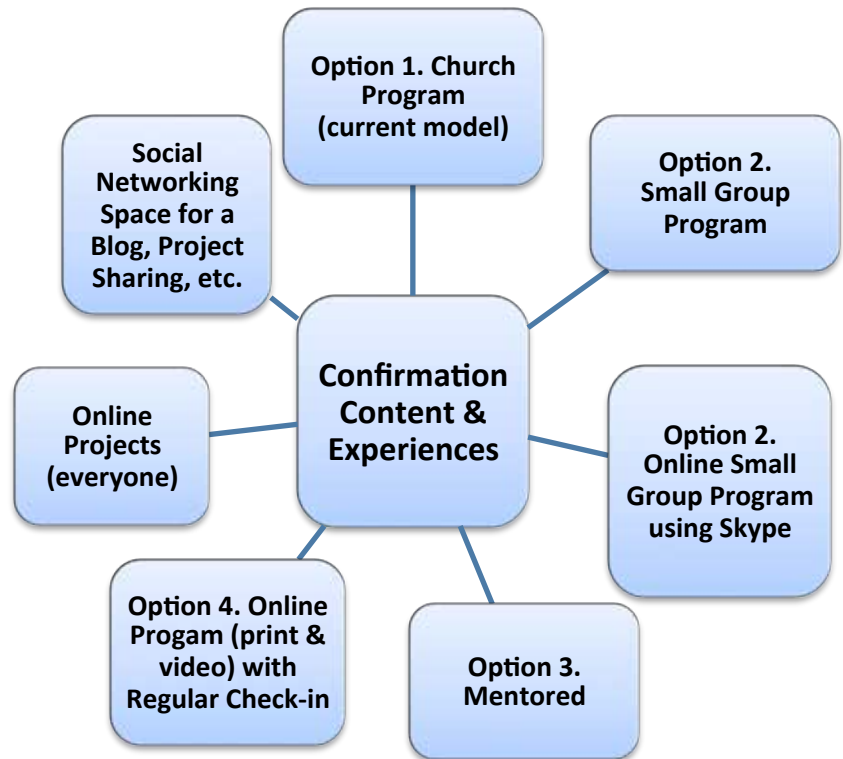
Example 2: Extend Sunday Worship into Everyday Life

Imagine a congregation extending Sunday worship throughout the week using a variety of formats, face-to-face and virtual. A congregation can build a node on their Lifelong Faith Formation Network for Sunday Worship. Once this node is built it can be updated every week with new content for that particular Sunday's Scripture readings and Church Year season. The prior Sunday's content goes into the online library and can be used again at another time.



Example 3: Transform a “One-Size-Fits-All Faith” Program

Imagine transforming a “one-size-fits-all” program by offering a variety of options in the Lifelong Faith Formation Network to engage people with the program’s content and experiences. Using this approach a congregation can differentiate faith formation by addressing the religious and spiritual needs of people through certain formats. This approach also addresses issues such as time constraints, scheduling, and location by offering a variety of options for faith formation. If confirmation is “required,” then it is likely that a congregation will find all four profiles (4 scenarios) in a typical group of adolescents. Using a network approach a congregation can differentiate faith formation by addressing the religious and spiritual needs of young people through different content and formats.



All Youth

- Sunday Worship
- Service projects
- Confirmation blog & online confirmation projects
- Celebration of confirmation

Scenario 1 (In-depth Experience)

- In-depth faith formation in theology, Bible, spirituality, and Christian practices offered in different formats, customized to the needs of the young people: small group program, online courses and resources, and mentors
- Spiritual formation experience (retreat) on spiritual practices and disciplines
- Whole group confirmation-specific content

Scenario 4 (Foundations Experience)

- Foundational program in Christian life essentials offered as a whole group experience, integrating confirmation-specific content
- Experience of Christian practices and spiritual disciplines

- Active participation in the activities of church life and ministries; apprenticeships with ministries and leaders to experience church life as “insiders”
- Mentors to guide growth and participation in church life
- Whole group confirmation-specific content

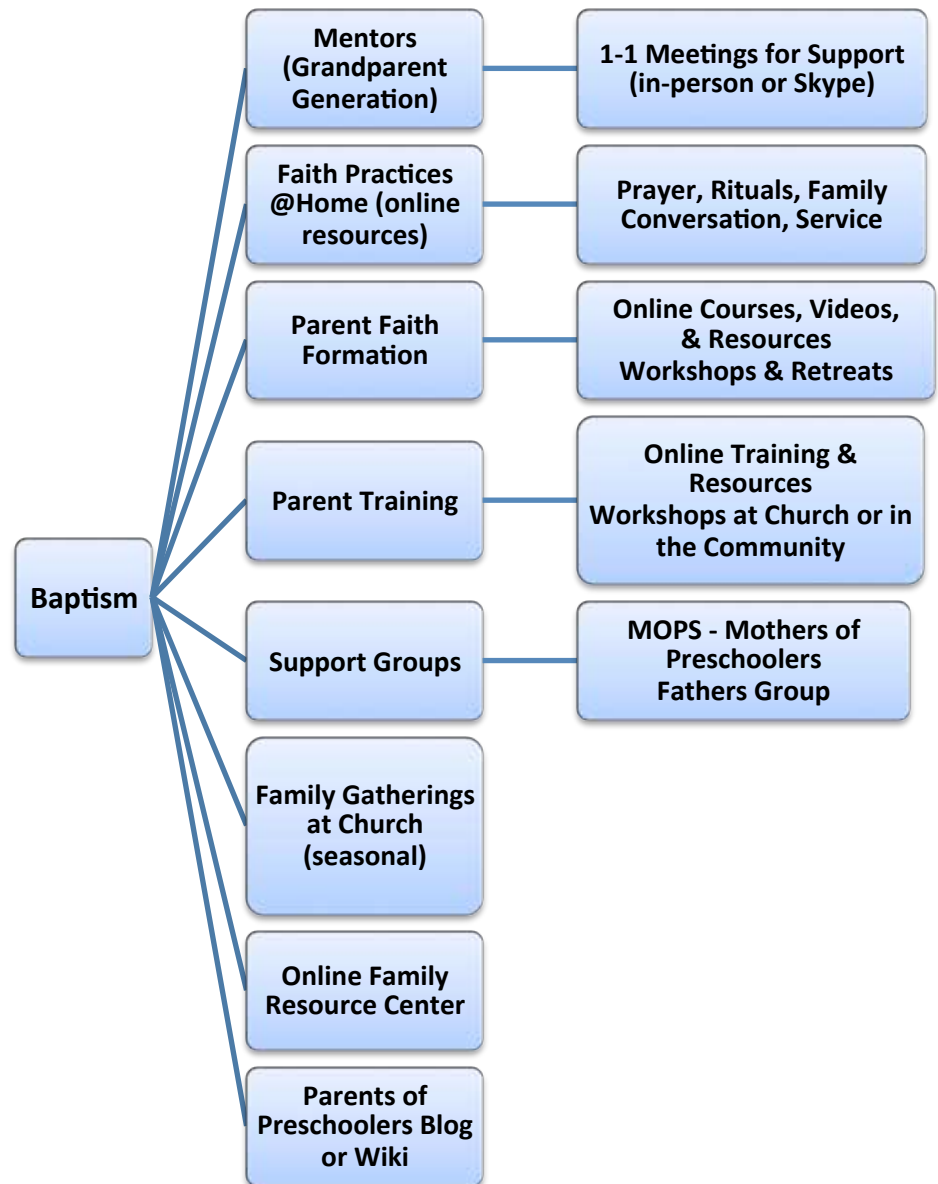
Scenarios 2 and 3 (Exploration Experience)

- Exploration experience to investigate the claims of the Christian faith in an informal, no pressure, non-judgmental, and friendly environment, offered in small group settings with a meal and including topics such as: Who is God? Who is Jesus? Why did Jesus die? Who is the Holy Spirit? How can we have faith? Why and how do I pray? Why and how should I read the Bible? How does God guide us? How can I resist evil? What about the Church? How can I make the most of the rest of my life?
- Introductory experiences of Christian life through participating in Christian practices, service, worship, and so on.

Example 4: Target a Milestone or Family Life Stage with Comprehensive Faith Formation in a Variety of Formats

Imagine developing a Network just for parents of young children, beginning with the baptism of their child, blending faith formation in virtual and physical settings and using the seven faith formation formats to provide a diversity of content and activities.

1. **Mentors:** provide 1-1 mentoring by connecting parents to adults in the grandparent generation who can meet with them regularly: in person, by phone or video conference
2. **Faith Practices @Home:** provide parents with faith practices resources geared to the age of their growing child and family
3. **Parent Faith Formation:** offer a variety of formation opportunities for parents to grow in faith: workshops, presentations, retreats; and online courses, videos, and print resources
4. **Parent Training:** offer a variety of programs at church or through community organizations; and online training and resources using websites such as ParentFurther.com and Tumblon.com.
5. **Support Groups:** organize groups in the church, host community groups, or connect parents to existing support groups.
6. **Family Gatherings:** 3 or 4 times per year
7. **Parent Blog or Wiki:** give parents the opportunity to connect, share ideas, and ask for assistance online



Example 5: Extend Monthly Family or Intergenerational Faith Formation through Continuing Learning and Practice throughout the Month

Imagine a congregation with a monthly intergenerational or family program extending the theme of the monthly gathering throughout the month using a variety of formats, face-to-face and virtual. A congregation can build a node on their Lifelong Faith Formation Network for their intergenerational or family program. It also provides a way to engage people who are not participating to experience the content of the monthly program on their own. Each month the intergenerational or family program adds another node with new content and experiences to extend the new theme throughout the month.



Example 6: Develop Comprehensive Adult Faith Formation

Imagine developing an online resource center for adult faith formation around the life issues, transitions, and spiritual and religious needs of adults. With the great diversity among the ages of adulthood (20s-90s+), adult faith formation needs to provide a wide variety of content, experiences, and faith formation formats. Instead of trying to first organize programming in physical spaces, why not begin with an online resource center and then create church-based programs that utilize the online resource center. Think of the possibilities for an adult faith formation resource center. Even the smallest churches can offer a great diversity of adult faith formation opportunities. Here are a few ideas.

- **Online Courses:** Develop a “course catalog” of online courses and webinars (with descriptions and website links) from seminaries, universities, and publishers, religious organizations, iTunes University, and other online course providers. These courses can be offered for “on your own”

study or small group study (online or face-to-face), as well as the primary content for a course at the church with a facilitator.

- **Audio and Video Programs:** Develop a library of audio and video programs (with descriptions and links) from iTunes, YouTube, Vimeo, and other providers, organized into categories such as Bible, theology, life issues, and so on. In addition to individual use, audio and video programs can be organized into the primary content for small group study (online or face-to-face) or a course at the church with a facilitator.
- **Books:** Develop a library of books and e-books and invite people to form in-person and online book groups. Check out the social networks for book lovers which let people create a virtual bookshelf to catalog their collection, post reviews or recommendations, see what others are reading, make a reading wish list, or join an

online book discussion. Popular sites include Shelfari (www.shelfari.com), LibraryThing (www.librarything.com), and Goodreads (www.goodreads.com).

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- **Prayer & Spiritual Practices:** Develop a spiritual life center with content from online sources: daily prayer online (e.g., 3-minute Retreat from Loyola Press), spiritual life reflections, spiritual life videos (e.g., Mindy Caliguire’s YouTube videos), prayer forms (e.g., Ignatian prayer), daily liturgy of the hours, praying with the saints, daily Bible reading, lectio divina, links to retreat centers, online spirituality courses (Spirituality& Practice), and so much more.
- **Justice & Service:** Develop a clearinghouse of mission and service opportunities: local, national, and international. Develop links to websites with content on social issues and with Bible and church teachings.
- **Small Group Studies:** Offer opportunities and resources for small groups to organize for faith sharing, Bible study, and book discussions. You can develop small groups around audio and

video content and link people to online Bible studies, topical small group programs.

- **Life Transitions:** Create an adult milestones and life transitions center for rituals, blessings, commentaries, personal stories, a blog for sharing stories and ideas, and links to websites with information about adult transitions.
- **Life Tasks and Issues:** Connect people to websites and online programs and resources that address adult life tasks and issues, such as marriage (TwoofUs.org), finances (Financial Peace University, www.daveramsey.com), and retirement (AARP.org).
- **Extended Learning Programs:** Link to resources for adult learning experiences such as *Road Scholar* by Elderhostel (RoadScholar.org).
- **Faith in Art Tours:** Offer online “tours” of religious art at museums around the world, as well as a trip to art museums to experience faith in art. (See Museum of Online Museums, Vatican Museum, Smithsonian Museum, The British Library: Gallery and Virtual Books, and Museum of Biblical Art.

