

# Research-Based Practices for Shaping Faith Formation

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www.faithformation2020.net

The screenshot shows the homepage of the Faith Formation 2020 initiative. At the top, there is a navigation bar with a logo on the left and a menu with links: Home, Book, Envisioning FF 2020, Designing FF 2020, Leading FF 2020, Bringing FF 2020 to Life, and Presenting FF 2020. The main content area features a list of four key questions: 'How can faith formation flourish in Christian churches over the next ten years?', 'How can congregations address the diverse spiritual and religious needs of people today?', 'What are the promising innovations that can guide faith formation in the decade?', and 'How can churches design initiatives to respond proactively to the challenges and opportunities in the second decade of the 21st century?'. Below the list is a paragraph about the challenges churches face and the need for new models. To the right of this text is a photograph of a woman smiling with two young children. Below the main text is a section titled 'The Faith Formation 2020 Initiative' with a sub-header and a paragraph explaining the initiative's purpose. At the bottom left is a large 'FAITH 2020 FORMATION' logo. At the bottom right, there are two numbered points: '1. Envisioning Faith Formation 2020 explores the driving forces influencing faith formation...' and '2. Designing Faith Formation 2020 presents the principles and practices for developing a Lifelong Faith Formation Network...'.

**Faith Formation 2020**

Home Book Envisioning FF 2020 Designing FF 2020 Leading FF 2020 Bringing FF 2020 to Life Presenting FF 2020

- How can faith formation flourish in Christian churches over the next ten years?
- How can congregations address the diverse spiritual and religious needs of people today?
- What are the promising innovations that can guide faith formation in the decade?
- How can churches design initiatives to respond proactively to the challenges and opportunities in the second decade of the 21st century?

Churches across the United States are facing significant challenges in their efforts to provide vibrant faith formation for all ages and generations. The new environment in which Christian faith formation operates requires new thinking, and new models, practices, resources, and technologies to address the spiritual needs of all generations. The Faith Formation 2020 Initiative guides congregations and their leaders in engaging new directions for faith formation and developing 21st century innovations.



### The Faith Formation 2020 Initiative

The Faith Formation 2020 Initiative provides the vision, tools, and resources for designing new models, practices, strategies, and activities to address the spiritual and religious needs of all ages and generations in your congregation today and into the future. The Initiative includes a book, workshop, and this website. The website is designed to be used in conjunction with the book to provide additional tools, resources, examples, and reproducible worksheets for congregations to design faith formation innovations. The website is organized around the four major sections of the Faith Formation 2020 book.

1. **Envisioning Faith Formation 2020** explores the driving forces influencing faith formation and the diversity of spiritual and religious needs of people and communities today. It presents four scenarios for envisioning the future of faith formation by viewing people through four profiles: 1) people of vibrant faith and active engagement in the parish community, 2) people who participate occasionally but are not actively engaged or spiritually committed, 3) people who are spiritual but not religious, and 4) people who are uninterested in the spiritual life and unaffiliated with religion.
2. **Designing Faith Formation 2020** presents the principles and practices for developing a Lifelong Faith Formation Network that addresses the diverse spiritual and religious needs of people of all ages, abilities, and backgrounds.

www.lifelongfaith.com

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Lifelong Faith Associates

Lifelong Faith Associates is committed to helping congregations develop lifelong faith formation for all ages and generations, increasing the capacity of leaders and communities to nurture faith growth.

Join our mailing list and get announcements and our occasional newsletter.

**Announcing a New and Innovative Program for Leaders in Christian Congregations**  
***The Vision and Practice of 21st Century Faith Formation***

Sponsored by Vibrant Faith Ministries in partnership with Lifelong Faith Associates

*Imagine the potential for churches that develop 21st century models of faith formation to respond to the spiritual and religious needs of all ages and generations. Imagine churches that provide faith formation for everyone, anytime, anywhere, 24/7/365.*

The Vision and Practice of 21st Century Faith Formation is a three-day interactive educational program for pastors, faith formation leaders, and staff in all Christian congregations.

www.faithformationlearningexchange.net

FAITH FORMATION LEARNING EXCHANGE

Home

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Your source for research, practices, resources & approaches in faith formation across the whole life span.

**Welcome to the Faith Formation Learning Exchange**

Are you searching for the most relevant and valuable resources for 21st century faith formation? If you are like most leaders today, you don't have enough time to search for the latest research, practices, technologies, and approaches to respond to your congregation's religious and spiritual needs.

Don't worry...Vibrant Faith Ministries has done the work for you! We've created an online Learning Exchange where you can find the most current information, research, and resources in faith formation for all ages and generations. The Faith Formation Learning Exchange provides tools to assist congregations and their leaders to respond creatively and adaptively with relevant approaches to faith formation. The website will be updated monthly, so you'll always have access to the most current information.

We know that congregational leaders, professors and ministry education, ministry students, authors, publishers, and program-developers will find the Learning Exchange valuable for both work and personal enrichment.

We've designed the Learning Exchange to be easy to use. Just select one of the nine Faith Formation Center and

## Overview

1. First Third of Life Research
  - + Seven Faith Factors (NSYR)
  - + A Faith-Forming Community (Spirit & Culture of YM)
  - + Sticky Faith (Fuller Youth Institute)
2. Young Adulthood (20s-30s)
3. Baby Boomers (mid 50s-60s)

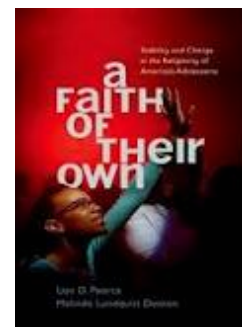
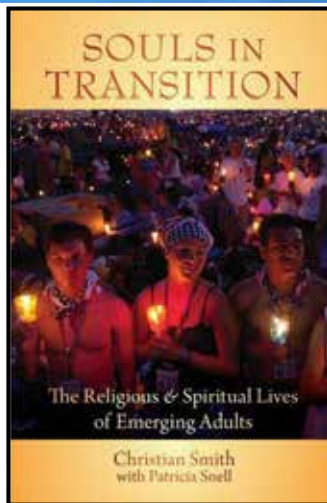
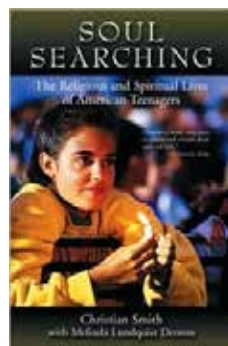
## Two Questions

- + If you knew this...
- + What would you do...
  - Do differently...
  - Start doing...
  - Stop doing...

## First Third of Life



## Seven Faith Factors (NSYR Research)



## Seven Faith Factors (NSYR Research)

- + The combination of the following factors makes an enormous difference in religious outcomes during emerging adulthood:
  1. parental religion
  2. prayer
  3. importance of faith
  4. Scripture reading
  5. having support nonparent adults in the church
  6. having personal religious experiences
  7. lack of religious doubts
- + These most influential factors make differences of sizeable magnitude in substantive outcomes.

## Seven Faith Factors (NSYR Research)

In these seven factors alone, we have identified some powerful teenage factors associated with and, we think, causing differences in emerging adult religious commitment and practice.

- + 85% chance of being Highly Religious as an emerging adult if you were in the top 25% on the scales of:
  1. parental religion
  2. prayer
  3. importance of faith
  4. Scripture reading

## Seven Faith Factors (NSYR Research)

- + 75% chance of being a Highly Religious emerging adult if you were in the the top 25% on scales of:
  5. having support nonparent adults in the church,
  6. having personal religious experiences
  7. lack of religious doubts

## Critical Role of Family

*" . . . teenagers with seriously religious parents are more likely that 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 the leave home and enter emerging adulthood"*

## Critical Role of Family

*"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."*

## Critical Role of Family

*"At the heart of this social causal mechanism stands the elementary process of teaching—both formal and informal, verbal and nonverbal, oral and behavioral, intentional and unconscious, through both instruction and role modeling. We believe that one of the main ways by which empirically observed strong parental religion produced strong emerging adult religion in offspring is through the teaching involved in socialization."*

*(Souls in Transition: The Religious & Spiritual Lives of Emerging Adults by Christian Smith with Patricia Snell)*

## Critical Role of Family

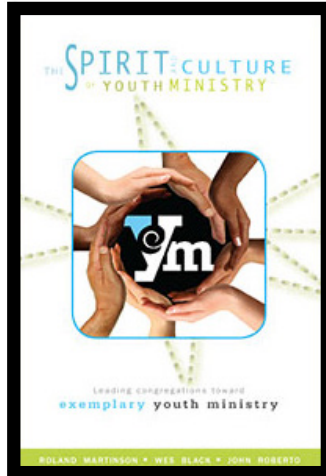
- + Approximately 70% of youth who at some time or other before mid-emerging adulthood commit to live their lives for God, the vast majority appear to do so early in life, apparently before the age of 14.
- + Most make their first commitments to God as children or during the preteen or very early teen years.
- + Many religious trajectories followed in the course of life's development seemed to be formed early on in life.

## Critical Role of Family

*What people have been in the past is generally the best indicator of why they are what they are in the present and what they will likely be in the future. That is a fact that needs to condition the understanding of emerging adult religion.*

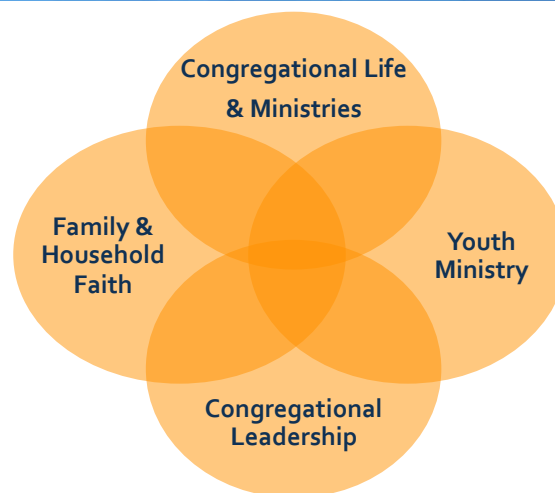


## A Faith-Forming Congregation



## A Faith-Forming Congregation

It is the culture of the whole church that is most influential in nurturing youth of vital Christian faith.



## 44 Faith Assets of Congregational Culture



## Faith Assets: Congregational Faith

1. Congregation's Biblical Emphasis
2. Congregation Teaches Core Christian Concepts
3. Congregation's Moral Guidance
4. Worship Services' Positive Characteristics
5. Congregation Promotes Service
6. Congregation's Mission Effectiveness

## Faith Assets: Congregational Qualities

1. Warm, Challenge Congregational Climate
2. Welcoming Atmosphere
3. Satisfied with the Congregation
4. Importance of this Church to Me
5. Congregation's Moral Guidance
6. Congregation's Social Interaction
7. Congregation's Openness to Change
8. Members Experience Love and Support

## Faith Assets: Youth Ministry

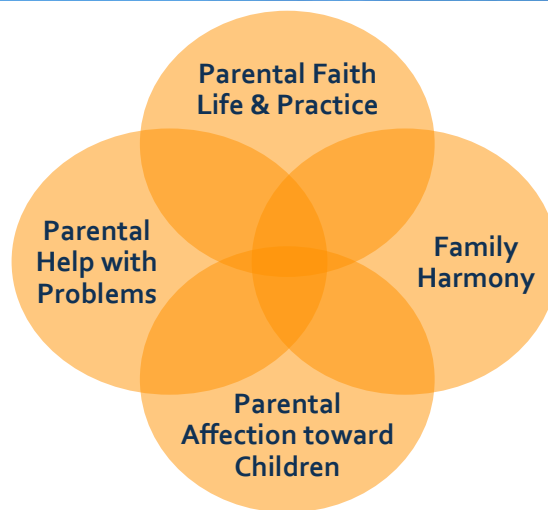
**What impact did involvement in youth ministry have on young people?**

1. Deepen my relationship with Jesus
2. Understand my Christian faith better
3. Apply my faith to daily life
4. Make serious life choices (future, relationships, values)
5. Share my faith

**These congregations are serious about making disciples of Jesus Christ.**



## Faith Assets: Family & Household



## Faith Assets: Family & Household Faith

### Faith of the Parents...

1. My faith helps me know right from wrong
2. I have a sense of sharing in a great purpose
3. I have had feelings of being in the presence of God
4. I have a sense of being saved in Christ
5. I am spiritually moved by the beauty of God's creation
6. God helps me decide what is right or wrong behavior
7. I have found a way of life that gives me direction.

## Faith Assets: Family & Household

### Faith of the Parents...

8. Religious faith is important in my life.
9. My life is committed to Jesus Christ.
10. My life is filled with meaning and purpose.
11. I have a real sense that God is guiding me.

**Each of the 11 items rate 7.30 or better  
on a 9.0 scale.**

## Faith Assets: Family & Household

### Teens: How have your parents influenced your faith life?

1. Values are focused on serving others and God.
2. Positive influence on my religious faith
3. Talk with me about my relationship with Jesus Christ
4. Attending Sunday worship
5. Talked with my parent about religious faith
6. Reading the Bible

## Faith Assets: Family & Household

- + One in four teens said their family sat down together and talked about God, the Bible, and other religious things on a weekly or daily basis.
- + 40% of teens said they did this once or twice a month.

## Faith Assets: Congregational Leadership

**Pastors matter immensely in effective youth ministry and in very specific ways.**

1. Support for Christian education and youth ministry (and involvement)
2. Leadership effectiveness
3. Communication skills
4. Interpersonal characteristics
5. Support for youth staff

## Faith Assets: Congregational Leadership

6. Creates a healthy culture
7. Spiritual Influence (devout faith, exemplary life)
8. Personal characteristics
9. Good counselor
10. Mission is to make disciples
11. Preaches to make disciples

## Faith Assets: Congregational Leadership

### Leadership of the Youth Minister

- + Positive Characteristics & Competence**  
(devout faith and exemplary life, good counselor, effective model for others, helps youth on their spiritual journey)
- + Leadership & Effectiveness**  
(trusted and respected, recruits and trains leaders, supports leaders, good organizer, works with parents)

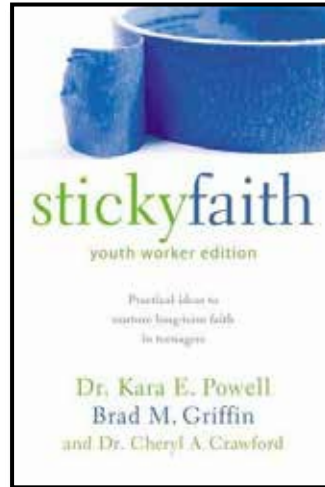
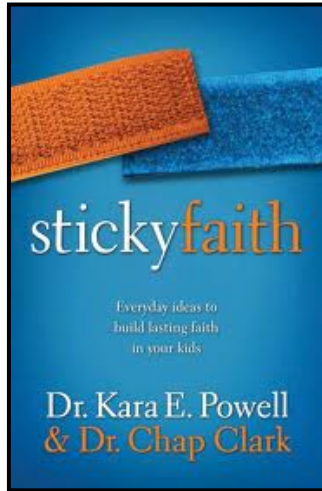
## Faith Assets: Congregational Leadership

### Adult Leaders in Youth Ministry

- + People of Faith**
  - God consciousness
  - Moral responsibility
  - Centrality of faith
  - Theological competence
  - Social responsibility
- + Relational Characteristics**
  - Positive relationship with youth
  - Positive relationship with parents



## Sticky Faith: From High School to College



## Sticky Faith: 3 Key Findings

- 1. While most U.S. churches focus on building strong youth groups, teenagers also need to build relationships with adults of all ages.**
  - + Participation in all-church worship during high school was more consistently linked with developing a mature faith in both high school and college than any other participation variable.
  - + Churches and families wanting to instill deep faith in youth should help them build a web of relationships with committed and caring adults.

## Sticky Faith: 3 Key Findings

### **2. Churches and families overestimate youth group graduates' readiness for the struggles ahead with dire consequences for the faith.**

- + Only one in seven high school seniors report feeling prepared to face the challenges of college life with few ready for the intensity of the college experience: loneliness, the search for new friends, being completely on their own for the first time, and the sudden availability of partying.
- + One pervasive struggle for college students is finding a new church, as evident by the 40 percent of freshman who report difficulty doing so. Young people retrospectively report that the first two weeks of their college freshman year set the trajectory for their remaining years in school.

## Sticky Faith: 3 Key Findings

### **3. While teaching young people the "dos" & "don'ts" of Christian living is important, an overemphasis on behaviors can sabotage faith long-term.**

- + When asked what it means to be Christian, one-third of subjects as college juniors (all of whom were youth group graduates) failed to mention "Jesus" or "Christ" but rather emphasized behaviors.
- + Students tend to view the gospel as a "do" and "don't" list of behaviors instead of a faith that also transforms interior lives and beliefs. One of the dangers of reducing Christianity to this sort of external behavior is that when students fail to live up to the activities they think define Christianity, their feelings of guilt can make them quickly abandon their faith altogether.

## Intergenerational Relationships

*While small groups, mentoring, justice works, and a host of other youth ministry activities are important, the reality is that the challenges of kids, ministry programs, and spiritual development are far too complicated to be met with a single solution. The closest our research has come to that definitive silver bullet is this sticky finding: high school and college students who experience more intergenerational worship tend to have higher faith maturity. We found this to be true in our studies of both high school seniors AND college freshmen.*

## Intergenerational Insights

- + Intergenerational Insight #1:** Involvement in all-church worship during high school is more consistently linked with mature faith in both high school and college than any other form of church participation.
- + Intergenerational Insight #2:** The more students serve and build relationships with younger children, the more likely it is that their faith will stick.

## Intergenerational Insights

- + **Intergenerational Insight #3:** High school seniors don't feel supported by adults in their congregations.
- + **Intergenerational Insight #4:** By far, the number-one way that churches made the teens in our survey feel welcomed and valued was when adults in the congregation showed interest in them.

Becoming a 5:1 Church  
worship, teaching, mentoring, rituals, etc.

## Young Adults



## Young Adults

### **Expressive Communalism**

*(Finding Faith by Richard Flory & Donald Miller)*

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.

## Young Adults

The dominant characteristic 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.

## Young Adults

### ***Congregations That Get It: 6 Themes***

(Belzer, et al)

1. Young adults want to feel that their presence is valued.
2. Young adults want a sense of ownership in their congregations.
3. Young adults' interests in religion are multifaceted.
4. Young adults thrive when they are "met where they are."
5. Young adults welcome opportunities to feel emotionally affected.
6. Young adults respond to a theoretical and practice balance between the particular and universal.

## Young Adults

### **9 Characteristics of Churches Reaching Young Adults**

(*Lost & Found*, Stetzer, Stanley, & Hayes)

1. Creating deeper community
2. Making a difference through service
3. Experiencing worship
4. Conversing the content with religious depth
5. Leveraging technology
6. Building cross-generational relationships
7. Moving toward authenticity
8. Leading by transparency
9. Leading by team

## Baby Boomers



## Baby Boomers

- + On Jan. 1, 2011, the oldest Baby Boomers will turn 65. Every day for the next 19 years, about 10,000 more will cross that threshold.
- + By 2030, when all Baby Boomers will have turned 65, fully 18% of the nation's population will be at least that age (13% today)
- + We are witnessing the emergence of a new stage of life between adult midlife—typically focused on career and child-rearing—and old age, traditionally marked by increasing frailty and decline. This new stage of life spans several decades and is characterized by generally good health, relative financial stability, and an active, engaged lifestyle.

## Baby Boomers

*This is the period in which individuals begin to think about, plan for, and actually disengage from their primary career occupations and the raising of children; develop new identities and new ways to be productively engaged; establish new patterns of relating to spouses, children, siblings, parents, friends; leave some existing relationships and begin new ones. As in adolescence, people in the midcourse years are thinking about and enacting role shifts that are both products of their past and precursors of their future life course.*

(Phyllis Moen in "Midcourse: Navigating Retirement and a New Life Stage")

## Baby Boomers

1. Boomers will think and act much like they always have, except with more maturity.
2. Boomers characterize themselves as: active, alert, contributor, healthy, experienced, independent, and worker. Not "senior citizens" or "old" or "retired"
3. Boomers continue to search for new adventure.
4. Boomers are changing their lifestyles, but staying involved in the work force.

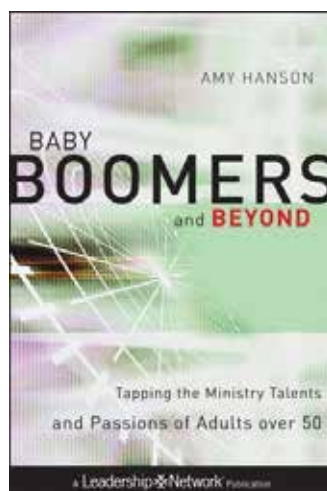


## Baby Boomers

5. Boomers continue to search for spiritual meaning.
6. Boomers continue to break the rules: inventing a new stage of life and reinventing what life is like after 60.

(Gary McIntosh)

## Baby Boomers



## Baby Boomers

- + **Service:** Boomers want to do something interesting and challenging. They are ready to jump into a worthwhile cause where they feel that can make a significant difference. Boomers want service opportunities that have a mission. They want to do things that give their lives purpose, meaning, and fulfillment. They want to know their contributions truly matter.

## Baby Boomers

- + **Spiritual Growth:** Later Adulthood is a season of significant life transitions and people are more responsive to religion.
- + A second reason is Boomers quest to find meaning and purpose in life as they enter the second half of life and evaluate the things that really provide lasting fulfillment.
- + A third reason adults are open to faith and spiritual growth is their desire for meaningful relationships.

## Baby Boomers

- + **Intergenerational Relationships:** Boomers hunger for intergenerational relationships – one of the best ways to break age-related stereotypes, to share faith across generations, and to help the church become more unified.

## Implications

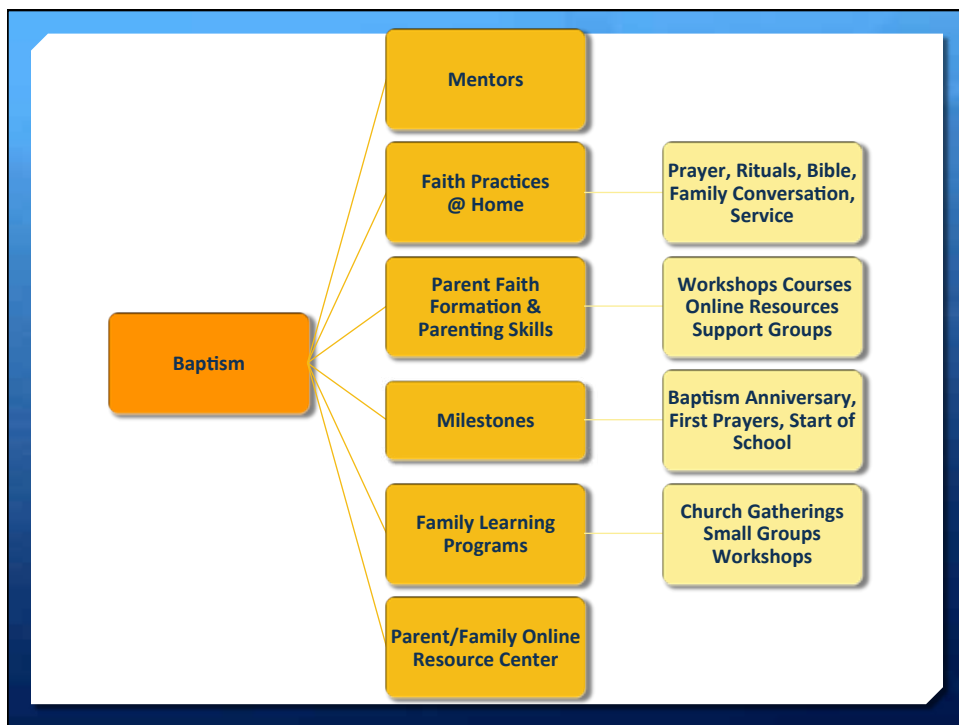
## Directions

1. Family socialization & parental faith and practice
2. Congregational culture
3. Intergenerational connections, relationships, & ministries for all ages, especially children and youth
4. A new style of church and ministry with young adults
5. New forms of ministry and faith formation with Baby boomers

## Urgently Needed: New Models of Faith Formation for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century

- + We are experiencing a *convergence* of new web and digital technologies that are transforming life and learning *and* the tremendous growth of religious content and experiences in digital form.
- + It is now possible for a congregation to provide faith formation for everyone, anytime, anywhere, 24x7x365. It is now possible to customize and personalize faith formation around the life tasks and issues, interests, and religious and spiritual needs of people of all ages.
- + It is now possible to offer a wide diversity of programs, activities, and resources that incorporate a variety of ways to learn—on your own, with a mentor, at home, in small groups, in large groups, in the congregation, and in the community and world—delivered in physical gathered settings and virtual online settings.





## Family Religious Socialization

- + Strengthen **family religious socialization**, especially in the first decade of life—by nurturing a vibrant faith in parents and equipping them with the skills and tools for developing faith at home.
- + Develop the **home as a center of faith formation** by promoting foundational family faith practices: caring conversations, rituals and traditions, prayer, Bible reading, and service.

## Family Religious Socialization

- + **Educate and equip parents** to embed foundational faith practices into the daily experience of family life.
- + Develop **family programs**: milestone faith formation, family learning, family service
- + **Engage families** more fully in the life and ministries of the church community.

## Congregational Culture

- + Pay attention to the culture of the whole church
- + Recognize the power of the congregation's theological commitments.
- + Nurture the power of faith, multi-generational Christian relationships.
- + Focus on discipleship.
- + Engage parents and families in faith practice at home and church.

## Embracing Congregation Culture

- + Apply common youth ministry practices and approaches contextually.
- + Cultivate faith-filled, competent, and committed leadership.