

Adult Faith Formation Workshop

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Program

1. Adult Learning Today
2. Adult Faith Formation Today
3. Designing 21st Century Adult Faith Formation

Resources

Handouts/Resources/PowerPoint Presentations: <https://www.lifelongfaith.com/adult-faith-formation.html>

Roberto, John. *Reimagining Faith Formation for the 21st Century*. Naugatuck: LifelongFaith Associates, 2015. (available at www.LifelongFaith.com)

Roberto, John, editor. *The Seasons of Adult Faith Formation*. Naugatuck: LifelongFaith Associates, 2015. (available at www.LifelongFaith.com)

Lifelong Faith Journal: Fall 2015 & Winter 2016 Special Issues on Adult Faith Formation. Available for free at: <http://www.lifelongfaith.com/journal.html>.

Seasons of Adult Faith Formation website: www.SeasonsofAdultFaith.com.

1. Adult Learning Today

Lifelong Learners (Pew Research)

Most Americans feel they are lifelong learners, whether that means gathering knowledge for “do it yourself” projects, reading up on a personal interest or improving their job skills. For the most part, these learning activities occur in traditional places – at home, work, conferences or community institutions such as government agencies or libraries. The internet is also an important tool for many adults in the process of lifelong learning.

A new Pew Research Center survey shows the extent to which America is a nation of ongoing learners:

- 73% of adults consider themselves lifelong learners.
- 74% of adults are what we call **personal learners** – that is, they have participated in at least one of a number of possible activities in the past 12 months to advance their knowledge about something that personally interests them. These activities include reading, taking courses or attending meetings or events tied to learning more about their personal interests.
- 63% of those who are working (or 36% of all adults) are what we call **professional learners** – that is, they have taken a course or gotten additional training in the past 12 months to improve their job skills or expertise connected to career advancement.

These learning activities take place in a variety of locations. The internet is often linked to a variety of learning pursuits. However, it is still the case that more learners pursue knowledge in physical settings than choose to seek it online.

- By an 81% to 52% margin, personal learners are more likely to cite a locale such as a high school, place of worship or library as the site at which personal learning takes place than they are to cite the internet.
- By a similar margin (75% to 55%), professional learners are more likely to say their professional training took place at a work-related venue than on the internet.

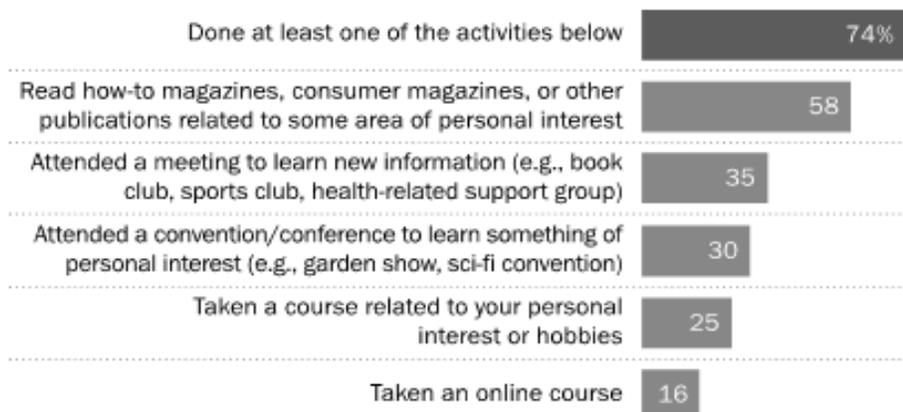
People cite several reasons for their interest in additional learning. Those who pursued learning for personal or professional reasons in the past 12 months say there are a number of reasons they took the plunge. Personal learners say they sought to strengthen their knowledge and skills for a mixture of individual and altruistic reasons:

- 80% of personal learners say they pursued knowledge in an area of personal interest because they wanted to learn something that would help them make their life more interesting and full.
- 64% say they wanted to learn something that would allow them to help others more effectively.
- 60% say they had some extra time on their hands to pursue their interests.
- 36% say they wanted to turn a hobby into something that generates income.
- 33% say they wanted to learn things that would help them keep up with the schoolwork of their children, grandchildren or other kids in their lives.

Majorities of Americans seek out learning activities in their personal and work lives

PERSONAL LEARNERS: 74% of adults

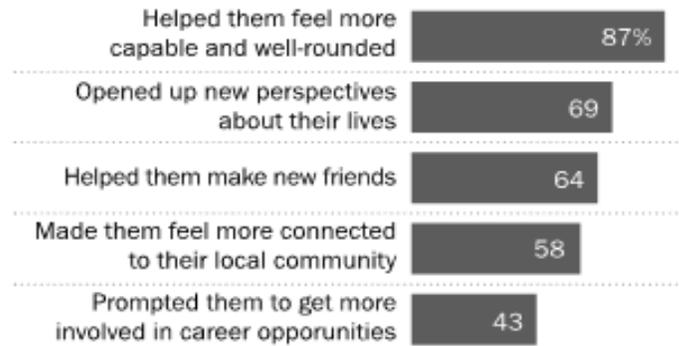
Percent of adults who say that in the past 12 months they have ...



Recent educational experiences have paid off in key ways for some learners

PERSONAL LEARNERS

Among adults who pursued personal learning activities, percent who say their learning ...



Motivation: Why Adults Participate in Learning

Drawing on decades of scientific research on human motivation, Daniel Pink in his book *Drive: The Surprising Truth about What Motivates Us* exposes the mismatch between what research shows and how we motivate people. While carrots and sticks (policies and requirements) worked somewhat successfully in the twentieth-century, assembly-line model, that's precisely the wrong way to motivate people today. He describes three types of motivation: Motivation 1.0 presumed that humans were biological creatures, struggling for survival. Motivation 2.0 presumed that humans responded to reward and punishments in their environment.

Motivation 3.0 presumes that humans have a third drive—to learn, to create, and to better the world. Motivation 3.0 has three essential elements.

- *Autonomy*: the desire to direct our own lives with autonomy over task (what they do), time (when they do it), team (who they do it with), and technique (how they do it).
- *Mastery*: the urge to get better and better at something that matters—to be engaged deliberate practice to produce mastery.
- *Purpose*: the yearning to do what we do in the service of something larger than ourselves, to seek purpose—a cause greater and more enduring than ourselves.

Daniel Pink writes, “The secret to high performance and satisfaction—at work, at school, and at home—is the deeply human need to direct our own lives, to learn and create new things, and to do better by ourselves and our world” (145).

The key motivation in adult learning is that adults are motivated to learn and grow as they experience needs and interests that adult learning activities will satisfy. Adults are motivated. . . .

- when *facing life transitions*. They seek learning and support to cope with changes in their lives that give rise to new developmental tasks, e.g., raising children, aging parents, financial matters, job changes, divorce, etc.

- when there is a *gap* between their present level of understanding, skill, performance and/or growth and the desired level or goal that they set for themselves or that their organization or community expects of them
- by appealing to personal and spiritual growth and/or personal benefits.
- when they identify they have a need to learn
- when the benefits of a learning experience outweigh their resistance
- when programs are enjoyable and enriching
- when they have the opportunity to do something they could not do before
- by settings that have a natural, interactive, communal feel
- when programs are sensitive to their time constraints by keeping commitments short in terms of duration and offering choices of times for participation

Studies of motivation show that adults bring diverse attitudes and expectations to their learning experiences. We can identify at least four different orientations for learning:

- a *goal-orientation* in which learning is seen as leading to a change in work or personal status
- an *activity-orientation* in which participants' social interactions are especially valued,
- a *learning-orientation* in which a love of learning underlies the learner's engagement and participation,
- a *spiritual-orientation* in which learners seek new meaning and perceive education as the starting point for thinking in new ways. (Schuster and Grant)

2. Adults Today

The Life Tasks of the Seasons of Adulthood

(From *The Seasons of Adult Faith Formation*, edited by John Roberto, LifelongFaith Associates, 2015.)

Key Characteristics of Young Adults

- ✓ Exploring their identity: trying out various possibilities, especially in love and work, developing an individual sense of autonomy, and stabilizing a self-concept and body image
- ✓ "Tinkering"—putting together a life from the skills, ideas, and resources that are readily at hand
- ✓ Developing and maintaining intimate relationships with trust, love, and caring
- ✓ Transitioning from their family of origin toward establishing independence in living arrangement, finances, career, and other aspects of their lives
- ✓ Differentiating self without repudiating or replacing their family of origin—sorting out emotionally what they take from their family of origin, what they leave behind, and what they will create for themselves
- ✓ Developing a career and occupational identity and working to establish a work-life balance.
- ✓ Adjusting to the expectations and responsibilities of the "adult" world
- ✓ Committing to a marital partner, defining and learning the roles of married life
- ✓ Starting families and having children; establishing a new family with its own rules, roles, responsibilities, values, and traditions, and developing parenting roles and skills
- ✓ Engaging in a religious-theological reevaluation and, sometimes, reinvention

Key Characteristics of Midlife Adults

- ✓ Exploring how the self is adjusted in the context of committed family, work, and civic relationships and to the roles of parents, colleagues, leaders, team members, and more.
- ✓ Anchoring themselves in a particular way of life filled with commitments and relationships
- ✓ Maintaining intimate relationships with other midlife adults while developing the capacity for new kinds of relationships with those younger and older than themselves.

- ✓ Caring and guiding the next generation and often caring for the older generation
- ✓ Building extensive personal networks for themselves and their families—traditional networks around their families, coworkers, churches, and other organizations, supplemented by digital social networks that allow more frequent conversations
- ✓ Evaluating their lives at its midpoint and often growing beyond the pressures of the present moment toward an appreciation of the deeper meanings symbolized in religious tradition.
- ✓ Reflecting on “What are we spending and being spent for? What commands and receives our best time and energy? What causes, dreams, goals, or institutions are pouring out our life for? To what or whom are we committed in life and in death? What are our most sacred hopes, our most compelling goals, and purposes in life?”
- ✓ Engaging in family life and parenting children, adolescents, and, often, young adults: working to allow for the increasing independence of adolescents while maintaining enough structure to foster continued family development; adjusting patterns of family communication, traditions, and celebrations for adolescent and young adult children; adapting to an empty-nest household and redefining the marriage relationship and roles now that children are no longer at home full-time
- ✓ Seeking a religion that emphasizes personal identity, religious experience, and a quest for religious identity in community; seeking an authentic religious experience that acknowledges the ambiguities, trials, and successes of life

Key Characteristics of Mature Adults

- ✓ Addressing the challenge of generativity (or its failure, stagnation)—establishing and guiding the next generation, striving to create or nurture things that will outlast them through caring for others, and creating and accomplishing things that make the world a better place
- ✓ Addressing the challenge of integrity—reflecting on the life they have lived and coming away with either a sense of fulfillment from a life well lived or a sense of regret and despair
- ✓ Experiencing physical changes and decline, coming to terms with the cognitive changes related to a changed perspective on time and a personal, existential awareness of death; seeking to stay physically and mentally fit
- ✓ Thinking about, planning for, and disengaging from their primary career occupations, launching second or third careers, and developing new identities and new ways to be productively engaged
- ✓ Retiring from full-time work and planning for sufficient income that will last into their later adult years
- ✓ Blending (part-time) work, volunteering and civic engagement, pursuit of new interests, travel, and their role as grandparent into a new lifestyle for the mature adult years
- ✓ Having adequate health care into later life and providing for their own or a spouse/partner’s long-term care needs
- ✓ Establishing new patterns of relating to spouses, children, siblings, parents, and friends; and leaving some existing relationships and beginning new ones
- ✓ Experiencing changes in the marital relationship now that parenting responsibilities are minimal, developing adult-to-adult relationships between grown children and their parents, becoming grandparents, realigning relationships to include in-laws and grandchildren, and caring for the older generation and dealing with disabilities and death.
- ✓ Moving to the very core of their faith tradition, while appreciating other religious traditions; seeking a self-reflective quest for individual wholeness, a search for depth and meaning, as well as guidance for living one’s life; recognizing that spirituality must be cultivated through sustained practice
- ✓ Seeking to be in service to others that is mission driven and can make a difference; doing things that give their lives purpose, meaning, and fulfillment
- ✓ Seeking spiritual growth in a time of significant life transitions and in a time when they are searching for meaning and purpose in life as they enter the second half of life and evaluating the things that really provide lasting fulfillment; connecting with others to talk about spiritual and life issues
- ✓ Seeking intergenerational relationships to share their lives, stories, and faith across generations, and to be united with the whole faith community

Key Characteristics of Older Adults

- ✓ Remaining vital and actively engaged in the lives of their community, church, social network, and family well into their 80s and 90s
- ✓ Experiencing changes in their body and a decline in mental and physical ability, such as a loss of hearing or vision or dexterity
- ✓ Continuing to learn and process new information, and many live well into their 90s with memory and logic intact
- ✓ Addressing the challenge of integrity—reflecting on the life they have lived and coming away with either a sense of fulfillment from a life well lived or a sense of regret and despair. They are cultivating wisdom in which one’s perspective on the world and human relationships reflect an inner sense of liberation from the rules, roles, and rituals of the past
- ✓ Taking on new roles as senior citizens and adjusting to the role of mentor and sage in their extended family
- ✓ Experiencing losses of friends and loved ones: death of a spouse, family members, and close friends
- ✓ Facing the growing and continuous challenge of maintaining their independence and desiring to stay in their own homes (“aging in place”) or coming to accept being cared for by their family and moving from their own home into other living arrangements (with their children or in senior living or assisted living situations)
- ✓ Becoming reconciled to their impending death and accepting their personal mortality; dealing with questions coming from the nearness of death: What is life about? How do we want to die?
- ✓ Growing into a deeper, more personal faith that is clearly their own and desire ways to continually enrich their faith life
- ✓ Being engaged in the life of faith communities with a more traditional worship experience
- ✓ Valuing the Bible and the Christian tradition and desiring to continue their learning as Christians

Spiritual-Religious Identities of Adults

Vibrant Faith and Engaged in the Congregation

A religious faith is central to the lives of the engaged. These are who are actively engaged in a Christian church, are spiritually committed, and growing in their faith. These are parents who are transmitting this faith to their children and are actively engaged as a family in a church community. These are children, adolescents, adults, and parents/grandparents who are spiritually committed and growing in their faith. They have found their spiritual home within an established Christian tradition and a local faith community that provides ways for them to grow in faith, worship God, and live their faith in the world. They are practicing their faith at home and in daily life.

Moderate Faith Practice and Occasionally Engaged in the Congregation

These are adults and families, children, adolescents, and parents/grandparents who participate occasionally in church life—in seasonal celebrations, sacraments and milestones, major events, and age-group programs. For parents transmitting a religious faith primarily means bringing their children to educational programs at church. 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. While receptive to an established church, they do not have a faith commitment that would make their relationship with God and participation in a faith community a priority in their lives. Their occasional engagement in church life does not lead them toward spiritual commitment.

Spiritual, but Not Religious

These are adults who are spiritually engaged (relationship with God, meaningful spiritual life), but involved in organized religion and an established Christian tradition. Some may join a nondenominational Christian church focused on their spiritual needs, while others may find an outlet for their spiritual hunger in small communities of

like-minded spiritual seekers, in local or global acts of service, or in online spiritual resources and communities. The Spiritual but Not Religious reflect a growing minority of the American population, especially among young adults.

Unaffiliated

For the unaffiliated religion is not personally important in their lives (and their family's life). They are not affiliated with organized religion and established Christian churches. The Unaffiliated reject all forms of organized religion and reflect a steadily increasing percentage of the American population, especially among young adults. Many adults (Millennials and Gen X) left organized religion because they stopped believing in the religion's teachings (top reason) or their family was never that religious when they were growing up or their experience of negative religious teaching about or treatment of gay and lesbian people (PRRI research, 2016). Many parents are "first generation Nones" and are now raising their children in religiously uninvolved and unaffiliated homes creating a "second generation of Nones."

3. Adult Faith Formation Today

1. Adult faith formation addresses the ***diverse life tasks and situations***, needs and interests, and spiritual and faith journeys of adults in the four seasons of adulthood—young adults (20s-30s), midlife adults (40s-50s), mature adults (mid 50s-mid 70s), and older adults (75+).
 - Young Adult Life Stage (20s -30s) & Millennial Generation (born 1980-99)
 - Midlife Adult Life Stage (40s-50s)& Generation X (born 1961-1979)
 - Mature Adult Life Stage (late 50s – mid 70s) & the Baby Boom Generation (1946-60)
 - Older Adult Life Stage (75+) & the Builder Generation (before 1946)
2. Adult faith formation addresses the diverse ***religious-spiritual identities*** among adults today. There is a spectrum of religious-spiritual identities (and corresponding needs): those who are religiously/spiritually committed and engaged in the faith community; those who are who are less religiously committed and participate occasionally in the faith community; those who have left established churches and religion, but are still spiritual and spiritually committed; and those who unaffiliated, uninvolved, and claim no religious identity.
3. Adult faith formation is ***person-centered***, not content- or program-centered. The content, experiences, programs, methods, and delivery systems need to be designed around the lives of the adults. While this may sound self-evident, it is not. Too much of adult faith formation is developed from a provider-centered, program-driven model where denominations, publishers, and churches determine and deliver the content and programming.

The days of the "one size fits all" mentality are over. We can no longer focus on how to get every adult to participate in a small faith sharing group or to come to the Lenten series or to study the Bible. Adult faith formation is no longer about finding *the* program to attract all adults. It is about addressing the diversity of adult learning needs with a variety of faith formation content, experiences, activities, programs, and resources.
4. Adult faith formation programming is ***targeted*** and ***tailored*** to the lives of adults—at each stage of life and in each generation. Adult faith formation provides a ***variety*** of content, methods, formats, and delivery systems to address the diverse life tasks and situations, needs and interests, and spiritual and faith journeys of adults in four stages of adulthood—young adults (20s-30s), midlife adults (40s-50s), mature adults (mid 50s-mid 70s), and older adults (75+).

- Adult faith formation provides a variety of experiences, programs, activities, resources, and social connections that are available anytime and anywhere, in physical places and online spaces
 - Adult faith formation incorporates seven learning environments—self-directed, mentored, at home, in small groups, in large groups, church-wide, in the community, and in the world—in online spaces and physical places, to provide a variety of ways for people to learn and grow in faith that respects their preferred styles of learning, their life situations, and their time constraints.
 - Adult faith formation provides a variety of ways for people to learn and grow in faith that respects their preferred styles of learning, their life situations, and their time constraints.
5. Adult faith formation recognizes that learning and growth is a ***process of active inquiry*** with initiative residing in the adult learner and that adults are motivated to learn as they experience needs and interests that adult learning activities will satisfy.
 6. Adult faith formation provides the opportunity for ***personalized and customized*** learning and faith growth, giving adults an active role in shaping their own learning and moving along their own personal trajectories of faith growth. Personalizing faith formation is tailoring learning around each adult’s strengths, needs and interests— including enabling choice in what, how, when and where people learn (grow in faith and discipleship).
 7. Adult faith formation is ***digitally-enabled***—blending gathered community settings with online learning environments and utilizing the abundance of digital media and tools for learning and faith formation; and ***digitally-connected***—linking intergenerational faith community experiences, adult peer experiences and programs , and daily/home life using online and digital media. The digital world has give us technologies and resources that allow us to build faith formation around individuals and groups with a particular spiritual or religious need, interest, passion, concern, or life issue. We no longer have to worry about reaching a “mass audience.”

Digital Faith Formation Strategies

- ***Gathered using Online Content:*** A gathered event or program that uses online content as part of the design of the event or program
 - ***Gathered with Online Content:*** A gathered event or program that provides online content and activities to extend and expand the learning from the gathered program
 - ***Online and Gathered Content:*** Online learning focused on presenting the content of the program combined with face-to-face, gathered sessions using active learning methods to discuss, practice and apply the content.
 - ***Mostly Online Content:*** A mostly online program with opportunities for regular interaction in face-to-face, gathered settings
 - ***Fully Online Content:*** An online program with all learning done online and limited face-to-face experiences
8. Adult faith formation intentionally nurtures ***communities of learning and practice*** around the shared interests, needs, life stages, and activities.
 9. Adult faith formation is designed as a ***network*** of relationships, content, experiences, and resources—in physical places and online spaces—that can offer adults “playlists” of engaging and interactive content and experiences tailored to their needs and interests—all offered on a digital platform that makes it easy for adults to find and follow pathways for growth in faith.
 10. Adult faith formation is increasingly ***curated***. In order to expand faith formation offerings, leaders will need to become skilled at ***curating*** content, experiences, programs, activities, and resources from a variety of

sources—especially online and digital media—and matching content with adult needs. We are moving *from* an emphasis on developing religious content, designing and managing programming, and teaching/facilitating learning *to* designing faith forming environments, designing digital platforms for faith forming content, and curating religious content and experiences.

Addressing Adult Learning Preferences

In curating and creating adult faith formation take into consideration the distinct ways each generation of adults likes to learn. One example of the difference among the generations is the length of a learning program or activity. Training in the corporate world is emphasizing microlearning and episodic learning—smaller units of learning that can be combined into extended learning programs. For example a microlearning unit could be 5, 10, or 15 minutes in length. This style appeals more to the younger generations than older generations. (Just think of how the typical YouTube video is 3-5 minutes in length today, but ten years ago was typically 10-15 minutes or longer.) In general, we can say that each generation has the following preferences (which does not mean they won't learn in other ways).

Builders

- lecture and expert presentations
- activities that take into account their age-related abilities to hear, see, and move
- connect their experience to the topic
- structure and predictability (no surprises); low-risk learning environment
- independent skill practice time
- still like printed resources and books for study

Boomers

- group interactions and discussions
- storytelling
- chances to try new skills independently
- stable, risk-free environment but want to interact with others
- experiential, practical, and fun activities that allow for team exercises
- use technology as means for learning
- blend of people who prefer printed books and those who learn online

Gen Xers

- learn by doing
- experiential with lots of direct experience activities
- shorter, episodic learning experiences
- visual learning (images, videos)
- practical and relevant (What will I do with this learning?)
- discretion to complete tasks their own way
- prefer independent self-directed learning, including individual projects
- use technology where possible, including online learning, video, etc.
- will turn to digital resources over the printed resources

Millennials

- microlearning and episodic learning experiences
- lots of activity-based group work
- fast-moving, interactive activities
- visual learning (images, videos)

- technology enabled learning using their own devices for learning
- collaborative learning environments with peer interaction
- entertainment and learning at the same time

3. Developing 21st Century Adult Faith Formation

Thinking Digitally

What is the Digital Transformation Making Possible?

1. Learning and faith formation are now mobile— anytime, anyplace, 24x7. People have the digital devices to stay connected and to access learning and faith formation on the go.
2. There is abundance of high quality digital content for faith formation—audio, video, print, websites, apps, online learning platforms, and more.
3. New digital media and learning methods mean that we can provide multiple ways to learn and grow— activities and experiences that reflect different learning styles and multiple intelligences.
4. Digital media and online activities, especially videos, mean that we can develop content in smaller units (micro-learning) that better suit today’s learners who have shorter attention spans.
5. A faith formation website can serve as an online learning center, a portal to activities and resources, and a connecting point for people.
6. Online classrooms, like Edmodo, Schoology, and Google Classroom, provide safe spaces for people to engage in faith forming experiences and interaction.

Digitally Enabled Strategies in Faith Formation

We need to design faith formation with digital strategies embedded in them. We need to design faith formation that is mobile; that takes advantage of the abundance of content so we can personalize faith formation; that provides an activity or program in multiple formats so that people can learn in the way they learn best; that utilizes a website as a hub for faith formation and online classrooms for programming; and that provides micro-faith forming activities/experiences that connect together into a seamless faith formation program.

Here are several possibilities for using digitally enabled strategies in faith formation.

1. *Extend Programming:* We can extend gathered events and programs into people’s daily lives by providing online content that helps people to go deeper. For example, we can extend Sunday worship into the home and daily life with daily Bible readings, prayer activities, learning activities, faith conversations, and more.
2. *Flip Programming:* We can “flip the classroom or program” by creating a digital platform to provide the content that people would learn in the gathered setting in an online learning space using print, audio, video, and more. And then transform the gathered program using interactive activities, discussion, project-based learning, and practice and demonstration.
3. *Online Programming:* We can develop a complete online faith formation experience with faith forming content and experiences. For example we can build an online “forty-day Lenten curriculum” that connects the Lent events at church with online content for experiencing and practicing Lent in daily and home life. We can include prayer activities, daily Bible readings, daily devotions, Lent study resources, videos, service activities, and more. We can use video conferencing with services like Zoom.us to create webinar programming, e.g., we can create a monthly one-hour parent formation webinar program delivered to parents at home using a

video conferencing program like Zoom. We can build the program around the knowledge, skills, and practices for effective parenting and for parent as faith formers. Invite a guest presenter and invite parents to participate online. Sponsor two or three parent dinners during the year (with babysitting) for parents to gather in-person to meet each other, discuss the webinars, etc.

We can also set up online faith formation centers with resources for people to access 24x7. For example, we can providing an online prayer and spirituality center where people can access daily prayer reflections and devotions, offer prayer intentions, pray for others, learn about spiritual practices, download prayer activities for the home, and more.

4. *Multiple-format Programming:* We can develop multiple formats for gathered programs by video and/or audio recording programs and then developing small group and independent programming using the video or audio content. Produce a webpage with the video or audio content and the programming for small groups and independent learning. Use social media (like a Facebook group) or an online classroom to facilitate online interaction and discussion. This provides a great way to offer other ways for people who cannot participate in the fixed time program to access the content and engage in learning at a time that works best for them.
5. *Prepare and Follow-Up Programming:* We can utilize online formats to prepare people for an event or program, such as the celebration of a sacrament or milestone, or participation in a mission trip. This is an especially helpful process when it is difficult to gather people for the preparation and/or follow-up. Use the online platform to *prepare* people for the event with the appropriate content (experiences, activities, video/audio, and resources). *Engage* people in the event or program. Use the online platform to *sustain and apply* the learning and growth with appropriate content (experiences, activities, video/audio, and resources). Use social media (like a Facebook group) or an online classroom (like Edmodo or Google Classroom) to facilitate online interaction and discussion.

Thinking Personal: Personalizing Faith Formation

Focus on Faith Maturing

We are proposing to form disciples and promote faith growth through ten essential characteristics of Christian faith and discipleship that incorporate knowing and believing, relating and belonging, practicing and living. These ten characteristics—drawn from the Christian faith tradition and from research on what makes a difference in people’s lives—can form the basis of helping people discern their faith journey and needs, and help the congregation accompany people through relationships, programs, activities, and resources.

1. Developing and sustaining a personal relationship and commitment to Jesus Christ
2. Living as a disciple of Jesus Christ and making the Christian faith a way of life
3. Reading and studying the Bible—its message, meaning, and application to life today
4. Learning the Christian story and foundational teachings of the Christian faith and integrating its meaning into ones life
5. Praying—together and by ourselves, and seeking spiritual growth through spiritual disciplines
6. Living with moral integrity guided by Christian ethics and values
7. Living the Christian mission in the world—serving those in need, caring for God’s creation, and acting and advocating for justice and peace.
8. Worshipping God with the community at Sunday worship, ritual celebrations, and the seasons of the church year
9. Being actively engaged in the life, ministries, and activities of the faith community
10. Practicing faith in Jesus Christ by using one’s gifts and talents within the Christian community and in the world

We are proposing personalizing faith formation as a way to address the increasingly diverse spiritual-religious identities of people today. Personalizing learning, one of the latest educational innovations, seeks to address the diverse learning needs of people in educational settings. We can bring this innovation into faith formation. We personalize faith formation in order to address the greater diversity in religious practice and engagement among our people. Personalizing faith formation provides a way to address the diverse faith growth needs of adults by tailoring the faith forming environment—the what, when, how and where people learn and grow—to address the spiritual and religious interests and needs of people. It means providing variety and choice in faith formation programming, activities, and resources around the lives of people.

We know from research and experience that adults represent at least four religious-spiritual identities:

- *People with a vibrant faith and relationship with God who are engaged in the faith community.*
- *People who participate occasionally in the faith community and whose faith is not central to their lives.*
- *People who uninvolved in a church but spiritual.*
- *People who unaffiliated and have left involvement in organized religion.*

We need to tailor faith formation to address these four identities at each stage of life. The days of a one-size-fits-all program are gone. No one program, class, or resource can address the diverse faith growth needs of people today. We can create personalized approaches that use the faith maturing characteristics to guide people in discerning their faith growth needs, and providing content, experiences, and activities that help them to grow from where they are

We can take each characteristic and develop a *Pathways Guide* to help people discover where they are in their faith journey using a continuum from “getting started” to “growing” to “going deeper” with short illustrations for each one. Then we can develop a personalized faith growth plan—or what educators are now calling *Playlists*—of content (print, audio, video, online) and direct experiences to address their needs.

There are two ways to design a personalized plan for faith formation. The first utilizes a *Pathways Guide* to help people discern their faith growth needs and then provides *Playlists* of content, experiences, and activities to address those needs. The second approach personalizes a congregation’s faith formation offerings by tailoring them to distinct faith growth needs through a variety of *Playlists* and inviting people to select the activities that best address their spiritual and religious journey.

Approach One: Personalize the Faith Pathways for People

A *Pathways Guide* is a process for helping people discern where they are in their faith journey and to chart a path for faith growth—to get from where they are to a closer relationship with Jesus and a deeper practice of the Christian faith.. People should be able to clearly understand where they are in their faith journey and their next steps in faith growth. They don’t have to do everything, they just need to do the one next thing.

A *Pathway* focuses on faith maturing. The goal of a Pathway is to develop disciples and promote faith growth. A Pathway is created around the church’s vision of discipleship and maturing faith—identifying characteristics of faith maturing that can be used for people to discern their faith journey and chart a path for growth.

Approach One uses the ten faith maturing characteristics (or similar characteristics from your Christian tradition) to create a *Pathways Guide* to help people discern their faith growth needs, and then design *Playlists* of content and experiences that address each characteristic. The *Pathways Guide* incorporates a rating scale for discerning faith growth needs, for example: Getting Started, Growing, Going Deeper.

Playlists of content and experiences are developed for each characteristic with activities targeted to each rating on the discernment continuum (getting started, growing, going deeper). There are *Playlists* for each “level” on the continuum. *Playlists* incorporate a variety of programming including gathered programs at church, small groups, online learning and resources, mentoring, and more. The *Playlists* are published on a digital platform to make it easy for people to access them.

Design Process

1. Identify a target audience(s).
2. Identify how and where you will use the *Pathways Guide*.
3. Develop the characteristics of faith growth you want to use in your *Pathways Guide*. Use the ten characteristics of maturing faith or use characteristics of faith growth specific to the content of the event or program (such as preparing for confirmation).
4. Develop a “discernment continuum” that gives people a way to reflect on their current growth. Use a faith growth continuum: Getting Started, Growing or Making Progress, Going Deeper; or a rating scale: How true is each statement for you: 1= not true from me , 3=somewhat true for me, 5=very true for me.

Approach Two: Personalize the Faith Formation Offerings

A second approach to personalizing faith formation, when you cannot use a *Pathways Guide* with people, is to offer a variety of content, experiences, and activities developed around the ten characteristics or the program’s content, and tailored to the different faith growth needs of people (getting started, growing, going deeper). In Approach Two the *Playlists* provide the way to personalize faith formation. For example, to help people read and study the Bible, we can offer three different types of Bible content and experiences for those who are getting started, growing, and going deeper. These activities can be online, gathered, small group, family-centered, and more. All of the content and experiences are published on a digital platform for people to access.

Developing Faith Formation Playlists

A faith formation playlist is a curated group of digital (online, video, audio, print) and gathered (church, home, small groups, etc.) faith forming experiences and resources that are tailored to the specific faith growth needs of people around a particular characteristic of faith maturing or theme/topic. Playlists are developed for each “stage” on the discernment continuum, such as Getting Started, Growing, Going Deeper. Each playlist provides a variety of ways for people to learn and grow in faith. Here’s a checklist for designing *Playlists*.

Design Process

1. Develop *Playlists* for a target audience.
2. Select content and experiences to address each faith maturing characteristic with activities for each “level” of discernment, e.g., Getting Started, Growing, Going Deeper. Use the four types of content and experiences in your *Playlists* as appropriate. Some of the resources and programming will apply to multiple “levels” of faith growth needs. Review the “Curating Resources” section to develop a process for finding, reviewing, and using resources, especially digital resources, in designing your *Playlists*.
3. Using a variety of settings or environments for faith growth: independent, mentored, at home, small group, large group, intergenerational /whole church, and world.
4. Address the ways people learn through a variety of activities: verbal-linguistic (word/book smart), logical-mathematical (number/logic smart), visual-spatial (art/picture smart), bodily-kinesthetic (body/movement smart), musical-rhythmic (music/sound smart), naturalist (nature/environment smart), interpersonal (people/group smart), intrapersonal (self/introspection smart).
5. Use a variety of methods: reading; writing/keeping a journal; storytelling and creating stories; watching feature films, TV shows, videos; creating a media project or video; viewing or creating art; viewing or taking photographs; watching drama or acting; listening to or creating a podcast; listening to or creating music; conducting a demonstration or exhibit; experiencing games, simulations, video games; analyzing or

creating a case study; developing an apprenticeship or internship; experiencing prayer and rituals; creating prayer experiences; taking a field trip; participating in a mission trip; engaging in or creating a service/action project; developing a mentor relationship; and more.

6. Publish the *Playlists* on a digital platform and use social media for connection, interaction, and sharing learning reflections. You can add the playlists to your existing church website or create a website just for faith formation and link it to your church website. Building a website is made much easier today by the availability of online website builders that provide predesigned website templates, drag-and-drop features to create webpages, and hosting for the website. Three popular website builders to explore are *Weebly*, *Wix*, and *Squarespace*. All three have easy to use features and very reasonable subscription fees. For advanced users *WordPress* provides thousands of predesigned templates, lots of customization features, and ready-to-use apps. *WordPress* does require an understanding of web design and some programming ability.

Curating Resources for Faith Formation

One of the essential skills for developing Playlists of rich content and experiences is learning how to *curate* high quality faith formation content in all forms and media that can engage people in learning and growing in developmentally appropriate ways targeted to their faith growth needs.

Curation may be a new word for many, but it has a long history. The term *curator* comes from the Latin word *curare* meaning “to care for.” Every time we visit a museum we experience the work of museum curators who acquire, care for, develop, display, and interpret a collection of artifacts or works of art in order to inform, educate, and entertain us. Museum curators are subject-matter experts who guide a museum’s overall art collection. Librarians have a similar curation task—they curate books and media in a variety of forms, including digital—to inform, educate, and entertain us. Like museum curators, librarians have done this for centuries. The Library of Alexandria (Egypt) in the ancient world have had curators over two thousand years ago!

A content curator is someone who continually finds, groups, organizes, and shares the best and most relevant content on a specific subject to match the needs of a specific audience. Content curators provide a personalized, high-quality selection of the best and most relevant content and resources available. They do not create more content, but make sense of all the content that others are creating.

How does curation apply to faith formation? When faith formation was a matter of selecting the right print resource or program from the right religious publisher, there was little need for curation. Leaders simply selected the right resource. But even in the era of “the resource is the curriculum,” many faith formation leaders were curators. To design home-grown programming they would search through print resource, films, and music to design a retreat or a youth meeting or an adult topical series or a parent workshop. They never thought of themselves as curators, but that is what they were doing—searching through a variety of resources, selecting the most appropriate resources to match with the needs of the people and the program, and then using the resource in the program design.

We now live in a era where there is an abundance of religious content in digital form—audio, video, apps, e-books, websites—and in print form. We are benefiting from the rise of online resource centers with freely accessible, high quality religious content and experiences that congregations, families, and individuals can access. In the new digital world of abundant resources, the role of the faith-formation leader is shifting from *providing* religious content and programming to *curating* religious content and experiences for all ages.

So what is a faith formation curator? A faith formation curator is a trusted guide who continually finds, groups, organizes, and connects the best and most relevant content and resources on a specific subject to match the needs of a specific audience. The resources can come in many forms: people resources, programs at church and in

the community, and media resources (print, audio, video, online, digital). Curation is the way that faith formation leaders connect programming with high quality resources.

We can identify three steps in the process of curating faith formation: 1) research and organize resources, 2) evaluate resources, and 3) connect the resources to programming. The research and organize phase of the process is continuous. Good curators are always searching for new resources and organizing them for future use.

Step 1. Research and Organize the Resources

The first step in the curation process is researching and reviewing resources. This is the collection phase. There's no need to select or evaluate resources at this stage—the key is to collect as many high-quality resources for faith formation.

It is helpful to develop a list of trusted expert curators to assist you in researching and evaluating resources. We all know people in faith formation who make it part of their work to stay current with the best resources. Make a list of these people and invite them to be part of the curation support system.

It is also helpful to develop a list of high-quality online resource centers with high-quality content. Be selective—this does not have to be a long list of websites. Select resource centers with well-produced content. Review websites from national and regional denominational agencies, religious publishers, churches, and religious organizations online faith formation content. For a list of online resources for faith formation go to the “Curation” section of the LifelongFaith.com website.

Be sure to subscribe to faith formation blogs and newsletters that review faith formation resources to make it easier for you to keep up-to-date on what's new. Blogs and newsletters are produced by individuals, denominational offices, seminaries, religious organizations, and religious publishers. A good example of a faith formation blog (and online resource center) is *Building Faith* (www.buildfaith.org) from Virginia Theological Seminary.

Here is a checklist of the types of resources to research:

- People: teachers, mentors/guides, program leaders, small group leaders, guest presenters
- Community programs: churches, agencies, organizations,
- Educational institutions: colleges, seminaries, educational organizations
- Retreat and spiritual life centers, monasteries
- Regional and national denominational programs, events, and websites
- Museums
- Books (with study guides)
- E-books
- Apps
- Audio podcasts
- Audio learning programs
- Videos, feature films, and TV shows
- Video learning programs
- Online courses
- Online activities

One of the easiest ways to develop a library of faith formation resources is to create homegrown resources by saving and archiving church programming. Develop a plan for recording presentations and programs at church in audio/and or video format. Think of all of the opportunities throughout the year for recording program that can be used in other learning formats such as self-study or small group study. Consider weekly sermons,

presentations, special events, concerts, and more. Develop a YouTube channel for the congregation to store and categorize all of the video recordings.

Step 2. Evaluate Resources

Every faith formation curator needs standards for evaluating faith formation resources that reflect their Christian tradition and the needs of their congregation. A set of evaluation standards needs to be developed locally. Consult denominational resources for evaluating curriculum resources. Most denominations have evaluation standards for assessing educational resources or textbooks. This can serve as a basis for developing the congregation's evaluation standards.

Here are ten categories for developing a resource evaluation checklist. Add one or more focusing questions to each category. Try to keep the checklist short so that it is easy to use. Use the evaluation criteria to review potential resources.

1. Biblical content and interpretation
2. Theological content and emphasis
3. Developmental appropriateness
4. Ethnic-cultural appropriateness
5. Inclusive of diversity
6. Respect for diverse ways of learning
7. Appearance and visual appeal
8. Ease-of-use
9. Quality of experience
10. Ability to be incorporated into daily and home life

Step 3. Select Resources for Playlists

Select the best resources for your target audience to match with each faith maturing characteristic on your *Pathways Guide* and with the different "levels" of faith growth. Select content and experiences for your *Playlists* that include intergenerational, family age-specific, and online and digital.

Example: Adult Faith Growth Pathway Model

We believe that growth in our relationship with God and in following Jesus (discipleship) is a lifelong process. We are constantly trying to grow deeper in our relationship with God and in living the Christian way of life each day. Our church is committed to helping you grow wherever you may be in your faith journey. We are committed to helping you live the Christian way of life everyday.

To help you discover areas for growth and to help us serve you better, please take a few minutes to complete the Adult Faith Growth Pathway. It will help you identify strengths and areas of growth in your own life. Use these statements to assess where you are honestly and prayerfully. Rate “How true each statement is for you” using the rating scale: 1 = not true from me , 3 = somewhat true for me, and 5 = very true for me.

- | | |
|--|-----------|
| 1. I am growing in a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 2. My faith shapes how I think and act each and every day. | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 3. I make the Christian faith a way of life by integrating my beliefs into the conversation, decisions, and actions of daily life. | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 4. I am aware of God present and active in my own life, the lives of others, and the life of the world. | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 5. I have a real sense that God is guiding me. | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 6. I seek spiritual growth by actively pursuing questions of faith, learning what it means to believe in God, and what it’s like to be a disciple of Jesus Christ. | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 7. I devote time to reading and studying the Bible. | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 8. I use the Bible to discover how I should think and act. | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 9. I pray to God and take quiet time to reflect and listen to God. | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 10. I am growing spiritually through spiritual practices such as contemplation, <i>lectio divina</i> , praying Scripture, daily Examen (reflection), and meditation. | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 11. I can articulate the fundamental teachings of the Christian faith. | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 12. I am growing in my understanding of the Christian faith—beliefs, traditions, and practices. | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 13. I exercise moral responsibility by applying Christian ethics, virtues, and values to making moral decisions. | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 14. My faith helps me know right from wrong. | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 15. I live a life of service by caring for others and reaching out those in need. | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 16. I am involved in ways to promote social justice and address injustice in the world. | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 17. I am involved in actions to care for creation. | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 18. I share the Good News of Jesus through my words and actions. | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 19. I participate actively and regularly in the worship life of the church community. | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 20. I participate in the life, ministries, and leadership of the church community. | 1 2 3 4 5 |

Ways I Can Grow

- Areas Where I Need to “Get Started” (look at the numbers 1 and 2)
- Areas Where I Need to “Grow” (look at the numbers 2 and 3)
- Areas Where I Want to “Going Deeper” (look at the numbers 4 and 5)

Connecting with God

Planting
I am learning about daily devotions and praying to find those that I want to practice.
I read the Bible from time to time.

Nurturing
I am practicing some spiritual devotions occasionally, including reading from the Bible.
I am learning about STER (Scripture, Tradition, Experience, Reason).

Shaping
I am using spiritual devotions regularly.
I also use other resources to understand the Bible at times.
I use STER to make decisions.

Sharing
I am revising my spiritual practices.
I can share with others how I connect with God through spiritual practices.

I attend worship at least once a month.
I say the Lord's Prayer during worship, grace before meals and prayers in the morning and/or at bedtime.

I participate in Sunday mornings at least twice a month.
I participate in Central Connect Groups (faith formation opportunities).

I share Biblical and/or Christian stories with my family/friends.

I provide worship leadership and/or other service on Sundays.
I help organize Central Connect Groups (faith formation opportunities).

Planting
I aim to accept others, including those whose color, status, etc. are different from mine.

Nurturing
I go out of my way to be hospitable to members and guests in our church.

Shaping
I listen and try to help others with their spiritual questions, joys, and concerns.
I share my faith through personal testimony/story.

Sharing
I invite others to worship and church events.
I share my faith with others through invitation and witness.

I attend seasonal events or special events.
I am learning about ministry opportunities.

I participate in a Central Connect Group for fellowship or faith formation.
I attend or serve at events.

I provide leadership for special events.
I am open to being trained in church leadership.

I am a leader in a Central Connect Group.
I am open to training others for leadership in church administration, education, etc.

In Community

Individualy

In Community

Planting
I like to hear how my church meets the needs in the community.
I like to hear stories from others about how they have been changed by either giving or receiving.
I contribute with some Sunday offerings, at Christmas and Easter.

Nurturing
I commit to share my TTFG regularly.
I help a neighbor or a charity with my TTFG occasionally.
I can share a story about my TTFG.

Shaping
I make an annual commitment and give in proportion to my income.
I share my TTFG regularly.
I am a member of a church committee or team.

Sharing
I make an annual commitment and give in proportion to my income at a tithe (10%) and beyond.
I share my TTFG regularly.
I am inviting others to be a member of a church committee or team.

I learn from the church about caring for others in the community.
I help in the community in the fields of arts, academics, athletics, politics, charity, etc.
I am learning how to apply Christian ethics and faith in my work world.

I participate in community service through church ministries occasionally.
I am learning how to apply Christian ethics and faith to local and political issues.

I participate in community service through church ministries regularly.
I invite others to try a variety of opportunities outside the church.
I assist the church to advocate for peace and justice for all.

I participate in ongoing service beyond the walls of the church.
I recruit and equip leaders for ministries and missions.
I participate in a community peace and justice group.

Generosity of Time, Talents, and/or Financial Gifts (TTFG)

In Community (Evangelism, Mission Tips, Service Projects, Social Action)

Changing Our World with Christ's Love

Connecting with Others

Planting
I aim to accept others, including those whose color, status, etc. are different from mine.

Nurturing
I go out of my way to be hospitable to members and guests in our church.

Shaping
I listen and try to help others with their spiritual questions, joys, and concerns.
I share my faith through personal testimony/story.

Sharing
I invite others to worship and church events.
I share my faith with others through invitation and witness.

I attend seasonal events or special events.
I am learning about ministry opportunities.

I participate in a Central Connect Group for fellowship or faith formation.
I attend or serve at events.

I provide leadership for special events.
I am open to being trained in church leadership.

I am a leader in a Central Connect Group.
I am open to training others for leadership in church administration, education, etc.

I attend worship at least once a month.
I say the Lord's Prayer during worship, grace before meals and prayers in the morning and/or at bedtime.

I participate in Sunday mornings at least twice a month.
I participate in Central Connect Groups (faith formation opportunities).

I share Biblical and/or Christian stories with my family/friends.

I provide worship leadership and/or other service on Sundays.
I help organize Central Connect Groups (faith formation opportunities).

In Community

Individualy

In Community

Planting
I like to hear how my church meets the needs in the community.
I like to hear stories from others about how they have been changed by either giving or receiving.
I contribute with some Sunday offerings, at Christmas and Easter.

Nurturing
I commit to share my TTFG regularly.
I help a neighbor or a charity with my TTFG occasionally.
I can share a story about my TTFG.

Shaping
I make an annual commitment and give in proportion to my income.
I share my TTFG regularly.
I am a member of a church committee or team.

Sharing
I make an annual commitment and give in proportion to my income at a tithe (10%) and beyond.
I share my TTFG regularly.
I am inviting others to be a member of a church committee or team.

I learn from the church about caring for others in the community.
I help in the community in the fields of arts, academics, athletics, politics, charity, etc.
I am learning how to apply Christian ethics and faith in my work world.

I participate in community service through church ministries occasionally.
I am learning how to apply Christian ethics and faith to local and political issues.

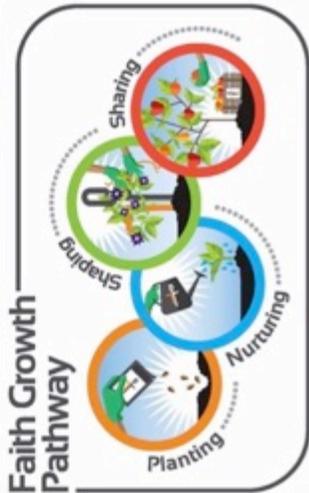
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I participate in a community peace and justice group.

Generosity of Time, Talents, and/or Financial Gifts (TTFG)

In Community (Evangelism, Mission Tips, Service Projects, Social Action)

Faith Growth Pathway



Central United Methodist Church
Waterford, MI

For more information, please contact:
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Pastor of Lifelong Faith Formation
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4. Designing Adult Faith Formation

- 1. Describe the life stage (or multiple life stages): Young Adult, Midlife Adult, Mature Adult, Older Adult:**
 - Who is your target audience? Develop a profile of your target audience by describing the life stage & religious-spiritual characteristics of your target audience. What are their greatest needs or interests?
 - What challenges are you trying to address in reaching/engaging your target audience?
- 2. Develop creative responses:**
 - What are you currently doing with the target audience - programs, activities, etc.? How is your target audience currently engaged in parish life?
 - What do you need to strengthen in your current approach?
 - What do you need to eliminate or redesign in your current approach?
 - What do you need to create? How can you creatively address the needs and interests of your audience? Imagine the types of experiences, programs, activities, resources you could offer.
 - Think of the settings where faith formation could happen: at church, at home, as individuals, online, and other settings.
- 3. Identify potential directions:**
 - Review your list of what to strengthen, redesign, and/or create: Which ideas, strategies, programs, activities have the most promise?
 - Do your ideas respond to the challenges you are trying to address in reaching/engaging your target audience.
 - Select the ideas you would like to develop.
- 4. Design for the four religious-spiritual identities:**
 - People with a vibrant faith and relationship with God who are engaged in the faith community.
 - People who participate occasionally in the faith community and whose faith is not central to their lives.
 - People who are uninvolved in a church but spiritual.
- 5. Personalize the process and the faith formation offerings with a variety of content, methods, times, and formats designed to engage all people.**
- 6. Use digitally enabled and connected strategies to enhance and expand faith formation.**
- 7. Design a website platform and a social media strategy.**
- 8. Develop the complete faith formation plan, implementation steps, and timeline**