Imagining the Future of Faith Formation

John Roberto, Vibrant Faith Leadership Team

PowerPoint Presentations

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CHALLENGE #1

Back to the Future... 2009-10

Two Critical Uncertainties

More Receptive OR
More Resistant to
Organized Religion

An Increase OR Decrease
in People’s Hunger for
and Openness to
God and the Spiritual Life
Faith Formation 2020 Scenarios

RELATIONSHIP WITH ORGANIZED RELIGION AND CHRISTIANITY

RECEPTIVE TO ORGANIZED RELIGION

Scenario #4: Participating but Uncommitted
Scenario #1: Vibrant Faith and Active Engagement

HUNGER FOR GOD AND THE SPIRITUAL LIFE

LOW
Scenario #3: Unaffiliated and Uninterested
Scenario #2: Spiritual but Not Religious

HIGH

RESISTANT TO ORGANIZED RELIGION

Spiritual-Religious Identities

Not Spiritual, Not Religious
Unaffiliated

The Spiritual but Not Religious
Uninvolved

Faith & Engagement – one among many priorities
Occasionals

Faith & Engagement at the Center of Life
Actives
Challenge #1
How are we developing faith formation for the four spiritual-religious profiles?

CHALLENGE #2
People @ the Center

FROM
Program-Centered Focus
Linear, Age-Graded Curriculum
Texts and Resources
Classroom or Church Environment
“One Size Fits All”

TO
Person-Centered Focus
Maturing in Faith
Personalized Offerings
Multiple Learning Environments
“One Sizes Fits One”

A Person-Centered Focus
Guided by a Vision of Faith Maturing

- Growing in relationship with Jesus
- Learning the Christian Story
- Worshipping God
- Living discipleship
- Praying
- Serving, working for justice, caring for creation
- Reading & studying the Bible
- Living with moral integrity
- Being actively engaged in the faith community
A Vision of Faith Maturing

Challenge #2
How is faith formation at each age guided by the vision of maturing faith?
CHALLENGE #3

Faith Forming Dynamic

FROM . . .

Believe  Behave  Belong

TO . . . .

Belong  Behave  Believe
The Faith Forming Dynamic

Relationships lead to craft, which leads to experiential belief. That is the path to becoming and being someone different. The path of transformation.

It is also the path found in the New Testament; the Way of Jesus the leads to God. Long ago, before the last half millennium, Christians understood that faith was a matter of community first, practices second, and belief as a result of the first two. Our immediate ancestors reversed the order. Now, it is up to us to restore the original order.

Diana Butler Bass (Christianity without Religion)

Engaging in Faith Practices

Communicating the faith is the complex practice of empowering people, disciples, to engage in the practices that constitute the faith tradition....

What we need to do, then, is to be a community that attracts people who then want to reach the goals we strive for. That is the only way that “coaching in the faith” becomes possible. The members of a community coach each other in how to live out the faith. Faith is communicated in this two step process of desire (to live out the faith) and training (in living out the faith).

(Terrence Tilley)
Practices - A Geography of Faith

- Waking Up to God (Vision)
- Paying Attention (Reverence)
- Wearing Skin (Incarnation)
- Walking on the Earth (Groundedness)
- Getting Lost (Wilderness)
- Encountering Others (Community)
- Living with Purpose (Vocation)
- Saying No (Sabbath)
- Carrying Water (Physical Labor)
- Feeling Pain (Breakthrough)
- Being Present to God (Prayer)
- Pronouncing Blessings (Benediction)

The Habits of Faith

The **cue** is the trigger that tells your brain to go into automatic mode and which habit to use.

The **routine** is the behavior itself. This can be an emotional, mental or physical behavior.

The **reward** is (1) the reason you’re motivated to do the behavior and (2) a way your brain can encode the behavior in your neurology if it’s a repeated behavior.
Creating a Habit

1. The Cue

2. The Routine

3. The Reward

When _(_cue)__, I will _(_routine)_ because it provides me with _(_reward)_.

Challenge #3
How do we form people in Christian practices & in creating habits of faith?
CHALLENGE #4

An Ecology of Faith Forming

Intergenerational

Family

Life Stage
A Holistic Faith Formation Plan

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Faith Maturing Characteristics</th>
<th>Life Stage Faith Formation</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Relationship with Jesus</td>
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<td>Family</td>
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<td>Age Group</td>
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<td>Living as a disciple</td>
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Challenge #4
How do we design faith formation @ each stage of life that includes intergenerational, family, and age group faith forming experiences?

CHALLENGE #5
Digital Transformation

The Print Era (1500s - )
The Multimedia Era (1960s - )

The Internet & Digital Era (2000s - )
The Internet & Digital Era

Digital Transformation

1. Mobile—anytime, anyplace, 24x7
2. Abundance of high quality digital content
3. Multiple ways to learn and grow
4. Content in smaller units (micro-learning)
5. Digital platforms for online faith forming center & as portal to resources and experiences
6. Online classrooms for learning, interaction, projects, and more
Challenge #5
How do we utilize digital media, methods, and platforms in faith formation with all ages?

CHALLENGE #6
Building a Solid Foundation

On the one hand. . . .

- 62% of religious unaffiliated Americans raised in a faith group abandoned religious practice by 18.
- In a Catholic study the median age when people stop self-identifying as Catholic is 13.

On the other hand. . . .

- Almost 60 percent made their first commitment to live their lives for God before the age of 14. Most of these probably committed to God during the childhood years. (NSYR)
Building a Solid Foundation

- Religious commitments and orientations of most people appear to be set early in life and very likely follow a consistent trajectory from the early formation through the adolescent and into the emerging adult years.
- What matters for most is what happens religiously before the teenage years, which powerfully conditions most of everything that happens thereafter.

(Christian Smith & NSYR research reports)

Seamless Faith Formation

@ Home: Whole Family + Parent Only
@ Church: Age-appropriate + Whole Family + Parent Enrichment + Intergenerational Experiences
@ Online: Faith Forming Content + Connections + Interaction
Challenge #6
How do we provide seamless faith formation from 0-19 that provides a foundation & trajectory for adult faith?

CHALLENGE #7
Transforming Our Role

Balancing Both Roles

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Current Roles</th>
<th>Emerging Roles</th>
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<tr>
<td>• Developing religious content</td>
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<td>• Designing programming</td>
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<td>• Managing programming</td>
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<td>• Teaching/facilitating programming</td>
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<td>• Designing faith forming environments — architecture</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Designing Digital Platforms for faith forming content</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Curating religious content and experiences</td>
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New Leadership Roles

- We are becoming learning architects who design and/or identify environments for faith formation, and design content and experiences to “deliver” in these environments.
- We are becoming designers of digital platforms where people can connect with each other, access content, engage in faith forming activities, 24x7.
- We are becoming curators of religious content and experiences: finding and identifying high quality content in all formats, matching it with the needs of people, delivering in digital platforms.
Challenge #7
How do we transform our role to become leaders in 21st century faith formation?

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New

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