



We are on the doorstep of a new decade. So many of the trends and challenges we experience today were just emerging as this decade began:

the millennial generation starting families

the emergence of Generation Z

multiple family structures and living arrangements

internet and digital technology

declining church engagement

declining religious practice at home



The significant challenges we face in faith forming with young people call for a fresh rethinking of our current approaches.

We need to think more systemically and more ecologically about faith formation.

We need to create a new ecology of Christian faith formation that situates our young people in a intergenerational faith community, in families of faith practice and nurture, and in age-appropriate activities that promote their faith growth.



We need to fashion an ecological approach with young people that connects the three major faith forming environments

A faith community rich in intergenerational relationships and faith forming experiences

Families of faith practice and nurture

Age-appropriate environments that engage Generation Z



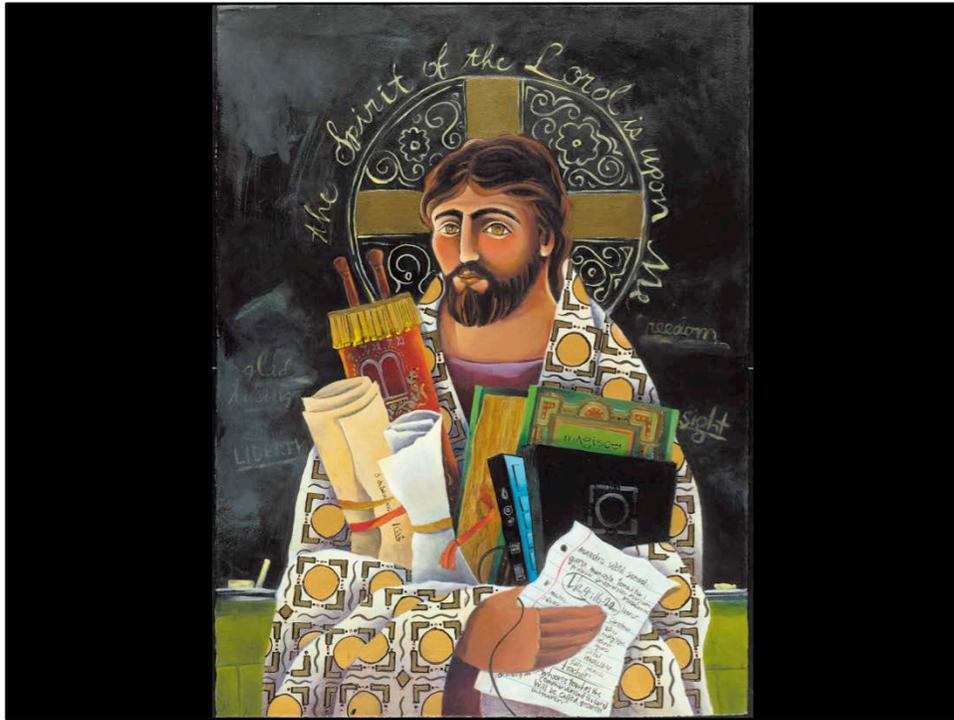
We need to create this new ecology because

The religious commitments and orientations of most people appear to be set early in life

According to the NSYR 85 percent of young adults who have committed their lives to God appear to have made their first commitment before age 14.

So What matters most is what happens religiously before the teenage years

The early formative experiences powerfully condition everything that happens later.

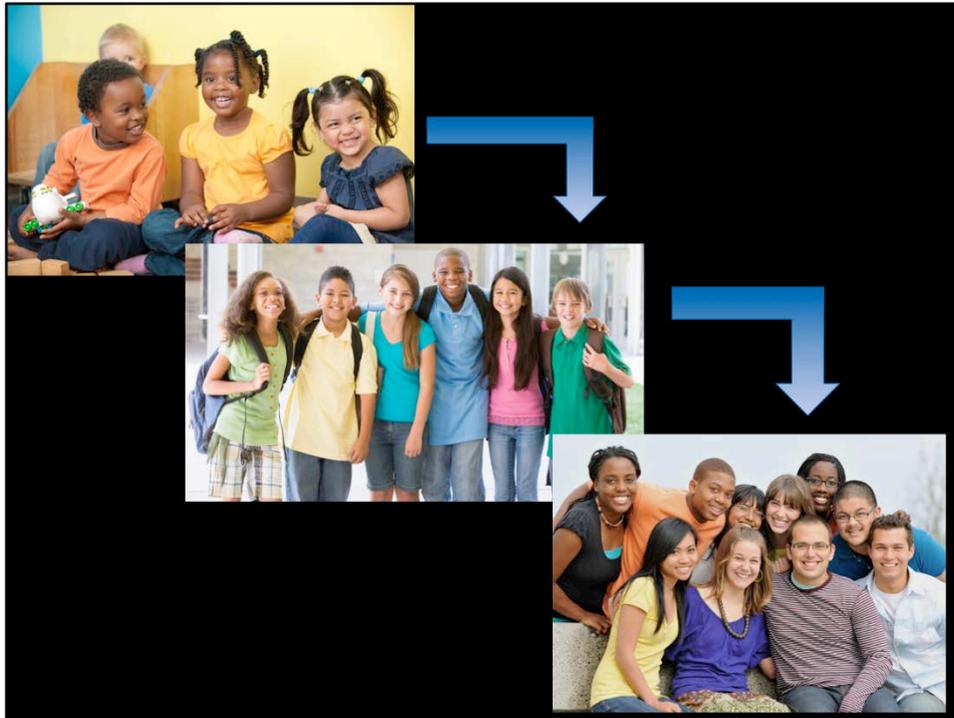


We need a new ecology so we can develop a robust, life-giving, vital and vibrant faith formation for children and adolescents

That guides them in developing a loving relationship with Jesus

embracing his Good News

and following him in their daily lives—becoming witnesses of God’s reign in the world.



Thinking systemically we need to see the discipleship making, faith forming process in a two-decade perspective

Creating a seamless approach from birth to high school graduation

With faith formation at each stage of life contributing towards the goal of committed Christian young people at graduation



To meet the challenge we need to blend intergenerational, family, and age group experiences at each stage from infancy through the end of high school.

engaging young people in intergenerational church life and events, relationships, and programs

equipping and supporting parents and the whole family in sharing and practicing their faith at home

engaging young people in programs and activities designed for Generation Z and the ways they learn and grow



We immerse young people in a multi-generational community of quality relationships informed by faith in Jesus Christ, where they get to know Jesus through the witness of believers and the life of the church

We make them feel at home in these safe and nurturing communities where their participation, energy, concerns, questions, and faith life are valued.

We welcome them and expect them to participate and lead in church-wide ministries



We **utilize** the intergenerational events and experiences of church life

community life events, worship, the seasons of the year, service and mission projects,
prayer and spiritual formation

as a primary “content” in faith formation with young people

preparing them to participate actively

engaging them in the intergenerational experience

And

Helping them *reflect* upon its meaning and *live* their faith



We **infuse** intergenerational experiences and relationships into existing ministries and programs,

Bringing the other generations into children and youth programs and to serve as mentors and guides

Transforming age-group programs like vacation Bible school and service projects into intergenerational experiences by involving multiple generations



We **connect** generations through intergenerational programs and experiences for learning, celebrating, praying, serving and working for justice, and worshipping.

We offer intergenerational learning to educate the whole community,

bringing all ages and generations together to learn with and from each other,

And to build community, share faith, pray, celebrate, and practice the Christian faith.

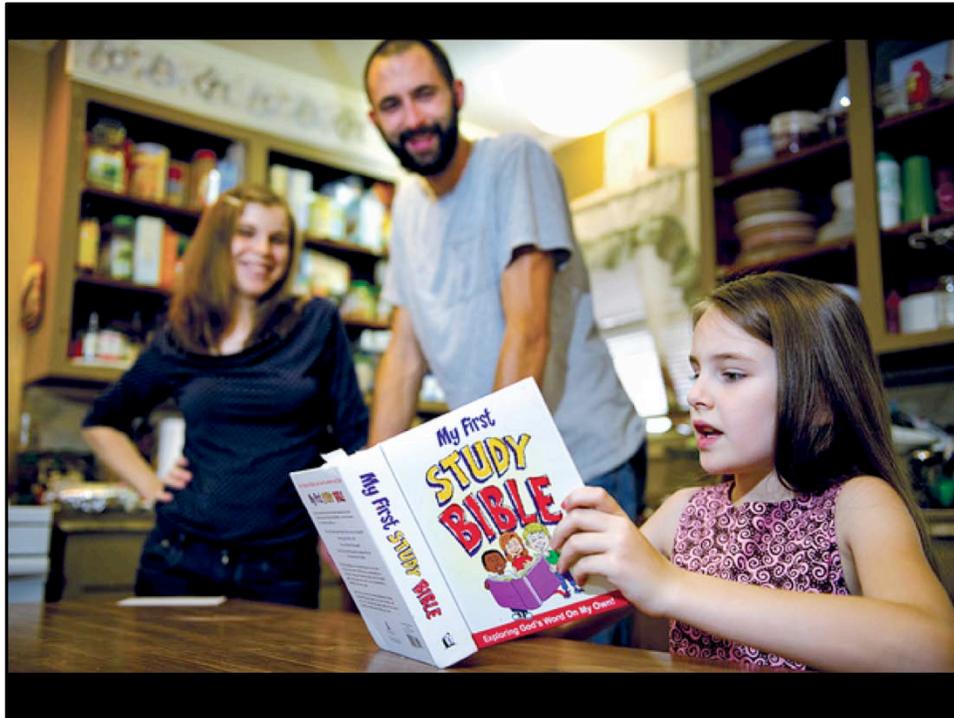


We recognize that the primary mechanisms by which Christian identity becomes rooted in children’s lives are the day-to-day religious practices of the family

and the ways parents model their faith and share it in conversation, collaboration, and exposure to outside religious opportunities.

through the processes of religious socialization young people with seriously religious parents come to think, feel, believe, and act as serious religious believers,

and that that training “sticks” with them even when they leave home and enter emerging adulthood.



We develop a “curriculum for the family” designed around the faith practices that make a significant difference in nurturing the faith of young people

Reading the Bible as a family

Praying together as a family

Participating regularly in Sunday worship

Being involved in the life of a faith community



Serving people in need as a family and supporting young people in service

Celebrating holidays, rituals, and church year seasons at home

Having family conversations

Talking about faith, religious issues, and questions and doubts

Ritualizing milestone experiences

Providing moral instruction



And we prepare today's parents and grandparents to teach and live these faith practices at home

We create a parent plan with a progression of workshops, webinars, courses, activities, support groups, and resources from infancy through the end of the adolescent years.

We utilize the new digital tools and media to reach parents and families where they live, 24x7



We design faith formation around the lives and needs and hungers of Generation Z

We create faith forming environments that use approaches and methods suited for twenty-first century learners–

immersive, interactive, participatory, experiential, visual, and multi-sensory.



We design faith formation environments that address Gen Z's need for authentic and meaningful experiences

environments where they can share with and co-create their learning with their peers.

Using methods such as project-based learning, and activities that utilize Gen Z's creativity, such as artwork, video presentation, and more.



We provide Gen Z with immersive faith forming experiences – intergenerational, family-centered, and age group –

that are hands-on, relational, participatory, visual, and multi-sensory.

These immersive experiences include family and intergenerational programming, extended VBS type experiences throughout the year, retreats, service and mission trips, and much more.



We make use of the new digital tools and media to enhance and expand faith formation with young people and their families.

We provide young people and parents online faith forming content and experiences at home - 24x7.

We blend faith formation in physical and online settings and use models like Flipped Learning

Where young people and their parents learn online through video or other digital media

and then participate in gathered sessions that provide an interactive environment for experience, discussion, and application.



With these new insights, I believe we are at the threshold of a new day in faith formation

Now it is up to us.

Let's build a faith forming ecology that provides the environments for our children and grandchildren to become disciples of Jesus Christ and live their Christian faith for a lifetime.

Nothing is more important.