

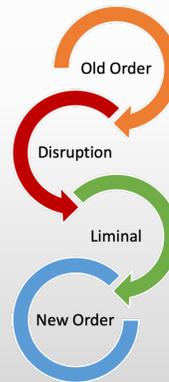
The Adaptive Journey for Churches

Church 1.0

Disruption

Liminality

Church 2.0



Learning #1 Focusing on People

We are focusing on our people—their needs, struggles, life issues, and more. Faith formation—and maybe the whole church—is becoming more person-centered (as opposed to church-centered or program-centered).

Leaders have learned a lot about the lives of their people, especially parents and families, during the pandemic, and how everything in life has been disrupted.

Leaders are listening first and then designing initiatives that address people's real needs and issues.

Leaders are moving from a top-down (church-down) approach to the community to a bottom-up stance of listening first and learning from their people.

Learning #2 Expanding Vision

We are expanding our vision of where church and faith formation happens.

We've moved from a church-building mindset to a multi-space approach where faith forming happens at home, in online spaces, in small groups, in mentoring relationships, in independent learning, in the world.

Church isn't the building; it's the people of God, the community of believers, the mystical Body of Christ. And it can't be contained by a physical space.

Learning #3 Using New Approaches

In the past we over-relied on faith formation in **Physical** spaces for the majority of our programming which the pandemic has made difficult, if not impossible.

We are now using **Online** spaces (websites, social media, online communities, online classrooms, and more) as integral for forming faith.

And we are using **Hybrid** spaces that combine physical gathering with online content and experiences. Using pandemic safety precautions, occasional group gatherings (such as monthly programs or classes) at church or family clusters (pods) at home or small group meetings are combined with online playlists that provide a menu of learning experiences on the theme of the program. In addition to gatherings in physical spaces, hybrid faith formation often includes streaming presentations and demonstrations, online classrooms, and online group meetings in Zoom or other video conferencing platforms.

Learning #4 Being Synchronous & Asynchronous

We are offering faith formation in synchronous (real time) and asynchronous (on your own time) formats with Online and Hybrid approaches—thereby expanding the opportunities for people to engage in faith forming experiences.

We are delivering synchronous faith formation using safe physical gatherings, live streaming, video conferencing, online courses, and online small groups.

We are using asynchronous formats using online playlists of faith forming content, video and audio programs, online discussion groups (like Facebook Groups), online learning platforms, websites, and more.

Programming Models



Synchronous and Asynchronous



Online Programming

1. Livestream + online faith formation through playlists
2. Livestream + online faith formation through playlists + online small group meetings
3. Online faith formation (playlist) + online small group meetings
4. Online, asynchronous faith formation for individuals and families (playlists)

Hybrid Programming

1. In-person gathered faith formation + at-home online faith formation (playlists)
2. In-person gathered + at-home online (playlists) + online gatherings
3. In-person gathered + livestream or video presentations + at-home online (playlist)
4. Online + in-person small group gatherings + playlist
5. Worship + online faith formation (weekly playlist)



Learning #5 Being Mobile

We are making faith formation mobile—bringing faith formation to where people live using the new digital tools, methods, and media.

We are creating playlists of faith forming content for all ages on a variety of themes for families and people of all ages from children through adults.

We have invested time and effort in providing faith forming experiences online so that people can access high quality content on a phone, tablet, or laptop.



Learning #6 Using Traditional Tools in New Ways

We are usually traditional tools in new digital ways.

We are redesigning our weekly newsletter (or bulletin) into a content- and connection-rich resource that can be delivered directly to people's inboxes using a service like MailChimp, Constant Contact, or Flocknote.

Churches that relied on a print resource now find they can reach a wider audience with a newsletter delivered digitally.

Learning #7 Connecting through Social Media

We are using social media platforms for connection and sharing.

We are connecting and communicating with people of all ages, sharing and discussing faith and spirituality, engaging people to share what they are learning and how they are practicing their faith through videos, images, stories, and more.

How Will We Move into the Future?

- ◆ Will churches try return to business as usual in faith formation—returning to the approaches, curriculum, programming, settings, and schedules they used prior to March 2020?

OR

- ◆ Will leaders listen to lives of their people and their situation today; identify how their lives have been impacted by the pandemic and the issues, struggles, joys, and challenges they face; discern how to respond to this new context; and then develop new and innovative faith formation—content, approaches, methods, media—that responds to people today?



How do we build on our innovative efforts as a platform for creating the future of faith formation?

How do we move into the Adaptive Phase?

Anticipating the Future

The Cambridge Dictionary defines *anticipating* as “to imagine or expect that something will happen; to take action in preparation for something that you think will happen.”

The Merriam Webster dictionary defines *anticipating* as “to give advance thought, discussion, or treatment to.”

We need to become “***anticipators of the future***”—embracing a role as keen observers of what is happening in our communities and churches—imagining in advance what shape life will take as the pandemic winds down and a new way of life emerges; and planning to take action.

Promoting the Wellbeing of People

There is a tremendous opportunity for churches and faith formation to focus on wellbeing through pastoral care, community life, support groups, educational programs/activities, and resources. We know from research that religious faith, belonging to a faith community, and practicing one's faith contributes significantly to a person's wellbeing. We can work on building a supportive community life for people, intergenerationally, as well as life-stage support groups. Life skills education and forming people in Christian practices, such as prayer (meditation, contemplation) and serving others, contribute to a person's sense of wellbeing. Parent education, resources, and support can become a major focus of faith formation in the post-pandemic world.

- ◆ How can you listen for the anxieties, stresses, struggles, and worries of people of all ages, and especially of children, teens, and parents?
- ◆ How can the church community and faith formation proactively address the mental health needs of individuals and parents, and promote their sense of wellbeing, purpose, and meaning in life?

Focusing on "How Shall We Live Now?"

As we enter the new post-pandemic world, the church has the opportunity to help people of all ages answer the question "How shall we live now?" The pandemic has disrupted our lives in ways that we have only begun to name. We are searching for meaning and purpose – now in a post-pandemic world. We are trying to process our losses and the grief that brings. We are struggling to build a world of justice, peace, care for creation, and respect for the dignity of all people. We are starting to rebuild our network of relationships and our resiliency as families and communities. We are all looking to answer the question, "How shall we live now?" in a post-pandemic world.

- ◆ What are the approaches, resources, people, and wisdom we need to address this question?
- ◆ How can we form people in a Christian way of life today?

Addressing the Injustices & Inequalities in U.S. Society

This is a tremendous opportunity for the church community to join with the younger generations—to work as partners in transforming the world. The opportunity now exists to get the church community engaged with young people in the world. This is a great opportunity for intergenerational connection and action—the young and old working together for justice. This is an opportunity for faith formation with all ages, but especially the young, to focus on justice issues, bring the Scriptures and Christian tradition into dialogue with the issues, and equip people to transform the world.

- ◆ How can you listen to the stories and struggles of people experiencing injustice?
- ◆ How can you observe and analyze the social forces in your community (and the nation) that give rise to injustice?
- ◆ How can the church community and faith formation educate people of all ages in a faith that does justice and engage them in transformative actions—personal, communal, and systemic—that address injustice: racism, economic inequality, climate change, immigration?

Embracing Hybrid Lives & Hybrid Christian Communities

We can design new **hybrid** models of faith formation that integrate in-person gatherings at church or in family groups or in small group meetings with online playlists that provide a menu of learning experiences on the theme of the program.

The creation of hybrid models of faith formation means that faith formation programming can be **synchronous** (real time) and **asynchronous** (on your own time)—thereby expanding the opportunities for people to engage in faith forming experiences that are responsive to their time, commitments, and availability.

Hybrid models of faith formation are more resilient, flexible, and adaptable—just what we need to respond to the challenges of change in our world and in lives of our people!

- ◆ How can the church community and faith formation create, strengthen and/or expand **hybrid** initiatives that utilize in-person settings with online platforms and digital tools, methods, and media for nurturing relationships, growing spiritually, worshipping, learning, and engaging in ministry in the post-pandemic world?

Reconnecting the Generations

This may be the moment when your church makes a commitment to become more intentionally intergenerational in all that it does.

- ◆ Transforming multigenerational into intergenerational.
- ◆ Transforming age-specific into intergenerational
- ◆ Designing new intergenerational initiatives.
- ◆ Engaging with the neighborhood community intergenerationally.

Resources

www.LifelongFaith.com

Diocese of Alabama

PowerPoint Presentations

Articles

Program Resources