

# Families at the Center of Faith Formation

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## Changing the Questions

- *What does a vibrant and vital family faith look like in a 21<sup>st</sup> century world?*
- *How do we meaningfully engage/connect with today's families?*
- *How do we empower/equip/resource families to transmit faith at home - to practice a vital and vibrant faith?*
- *How do we reach families who are not involved in a faith community or feel religion is not important?*

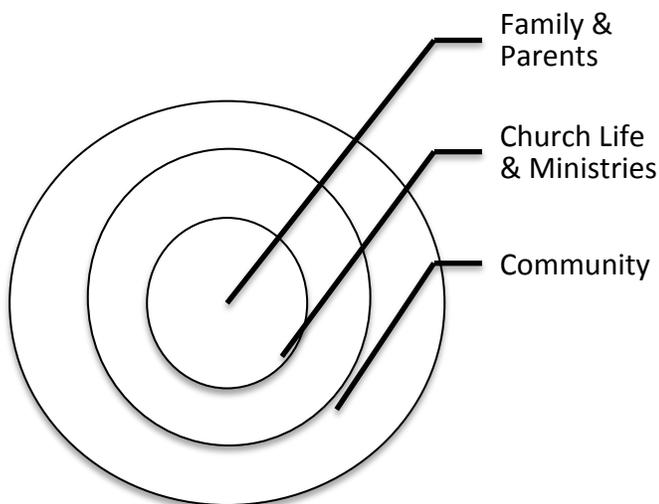
## What is Changing in Families

- Diversity of Family Forms: no dominant family form in U.S.
- Generational Parenting Approaches: Gen X—Protecting Parenting; Millennials—*Responsive Parenting*
- Diversity of Ethnicities: distinctive ethnic identities, histories, and religious traditions and practices
- Diversity of Spiritual-Religious Identities: *Engaged*-----*Occasionals*-----*Spirituals*-----*Unaffiliated*

## What Makes a Difference in Faith Growth

1. Parents' personal faith and practice
2. Parent-child relationship: close and warm
3. Parents' modeling and teaching a religious faith
4. Parents' involvement in church life
5. Grandparents' religious influence & relationship
6. Religious tradition a child is born into
7. Parents of the same faith
8. Family conversations about faith
9. Embedded family religious practices: praying, reading the Bible, serving, celebrating holidays and rituals

## Families at the Center of Faith Formation: Changing the Narrative



The *Family-at-the Center Approach* recognizes that parents and the family are the most powerful influence for virtually every child and youth outcome—personal, academic, social, and spiritual-religious; and that parents are *the* most important influence on the social and religious lives of children, youth, and emerging adults. Given the central role of families in shaping the lives of children and youth, the value of engaging, supporting, and educating families should be self-evident to all of us.

1. See the home as the essential and foundational environment for faith nurture, faith practice, and the healthy development of young people.
2. Reinforce the family's central role in promoting healthy development and faith growth in children and youth, and enhancing the faith-forming capacity of parents and grandparents.

3. Express care with the families in our congregations and communities, including listening to them, showing interest in their lives, and investing in them.
4. Provide support and advocacy when families really need it.
5. Share power with families, treating them as true partners by giving them voice in things that matter to them and collaborating with them to solve problems and reach goals.
6. Build faith formation around the lives of the today's families and parents, rather than having the congregation prescribe the programs and activities that families will participate in.
7. Address the diversity of family life today by moving away from "one size fits all" programs and strategies toward a variety of programs and strategies tailored to the unique life tasks and situations, concerns and interest, and religious-spiritual journeys of parents and families.
8. Offer regular gatherings of all families for learning, worship, service, relationship-building, and more throughout the year.
9. Engage families together with the whole community for learning, worship, service, relationship-building, and more throughout the year.
10. Find ways to reach families at home with support, resources, and activities to develop family life and grow in faith.
11. Strengthen families by helping them develop the practices and skills for healthy family life.
12. Equip parents with the knowledge and skills for effective parenting and forming faith in young people.

### Families at the Center of Faith Formation: Strategies

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|---|---|
| 1. Discovering God in Everyday Life             | 5. Encountering God in the Bible through the Year |
| 2. Forming Faith at Home through the Life Cycle | 6. Connecting Families Intergenerationally        |
| 3. Forming Faith through Milestones             | 7. Developing a Strong Family Life                |
| 4. Celebrating Seasonal Events through the Year | 8. Empowering Parents and Grandparents            |

### Families at the Center of Faith Formation: Programming

1. A **variety** of relationships, content, experiences, and resources
2. New **methods**: immersive, multimedia, multi-sensory, highly visual, participatory, experiential
3. New **formats**: episodic engagements and experiences, micro-learning, on demand, mobile, 24x7
4. New **digital** media and digital platforms; connect with parents/families through social media; redesign programming with digital connections and extensions; address new needs through online experiences
5. **Multiple environments**: self-directed, mentored, at home, in small groups, in large groups, church-wide, in the community, and in the world.
6. **Multiple versions**: design a program once and offer it in multiple formats and environments, e.g., a gathered program that is recorded and can be used for individual study or small group study

### Digitally Enabled and Digitally Connected Faith Formation

Online		Digital Continuum		Face-to-Face
Fully Online	Mostly Online	Online and Gathered	Gathered and Online Content	Gathered with Online Content
An online program with all learning done online and limited face-to-face, gathered learning settings	A mostly online program with opportunities for regular interaction in face-to-face, gathered settings	Online learning focused on presenting the content of the program <i>combined with</i> face-to-face, gathered sessions using active learning methods to discuss, practice and apply the content.	A gathered event or program that provides online content and activities to extend and expand the learning from the gathered program	A gathered event or program that uses online content as part of the design of the event or program