



FOUR

Bringing Faith Formation 2020 Scenarios to Life

► *How can churches create a future for faith formation using the four scenarios as a guide to responding creatively and proactively to the religious and spiritual needs of people—today and into the future?* Part Four presents sixteen strategies with practical ideas and resources for addressing the challenges and opportunities in each scenario over the next ten years. The sixteen strategies are not just “good ideas.” Each one is grounded in practices that are already being implemented in one form or another in congregations and religious organizations today. The good news is that there are proven strategies, ideas, and resources that can bring the four scenarios to life in a congregation.

The sixteen strategies are offered as a starting point for designing the future of faith formation in each scenario. They are not intended as a definitive list, but as a helpful guide. Many of the strategies can be customized for use in multiple scenarios. Every church can learn from the experience of these strategies and innovations, and adapt them to the size, geography, people, and cultures of a particular church.

The Strategies and Ideas

1. Faith Formation through the Life of the Whole Church
 - A faith formation curriculum of church life and events
 - Preparation for participation in church life
 - Immersion in the life of the church community

2. Faith Formation using Digital Media and Web Technologies
 - Face-to-face and virtual faith formation
 - Church website
 - Online faith formation center
 - Online learning and digital learning
3. Family Faith Formation
 - Family faith practices
 - Faith formation with young children
 - Parent formation
 - Milestones faith formation
 - Family learning programs
 - Family service
 - In-home resources
 - Increase active engagement
 - Expectations for family faith growth
 - Christian practice immersion experience
4. Intergenerational Faith Formation
 - Intergenerational faith formation for the whole community as a core learning model
 - Intergenerational small group faith formation
 - Intergenerational Bible study or lectionary-based faith formation
 - Intergenerational version of a topic or theme in the children or youth program
 - Intergenerational faith formation before church year feasts and seasons and churchwide events
 - Intergenerational learning and relationship building through existing programs and activities
5. Generational Faith Formation
 - Faith formation with the iGeneration and Millennial Generation
 - Faith formation with Generation X
 - Faith formation with the Baby Boomer Generation
 - Faith formation with the Builder Generation
6. Milestones Faith Formation
 - Lifelong faith formation centered on milestones
 - Multi-faceted faith formation for each milestone
 - Moments of return

7. Faith Formation in Christian Practices
 - Formation in Christian practices
 - Apprenticeships
 - Christian practice immersion experiences
 - Christian practices infused in current faith formation programming
8. Transforming the World: Engagement in and Formation for Service and Mission
 - Service and mission projects for all ages
 - Education and reflection with service and mission projects
 - Service with the wider community
 - Study-action small groups
9. Spiritual Formation
 - Formation in spiritual practices and disciplines
 - Churchwide program for spiritual formation
 - Spiritual formation infused in all faith formation programming
 - Contemplative approach to faith formation
 - Spiritual guides or mentors
 - Spiritual formation for the wider community
10. Multi-Ethnic Faith Formation
 - Culturally-specific faith formation
 - Intercultural faith formation
 - Culturally-inclusive faith formation
11. Faith Formation for Spiritual Seekers
 - Spiritual formation process for spiritual seekers
 - New expressions of Christian community for spiritual seekers
12. Apprenticeships in Discipleship
13. Pathways to Vibrant Faith and Active Engagement
 - Multi-step formation process
 - Catechumenal formation process
14. Faith Formation in Third-Place Settings
15. Empowering the Community to Share their Faith
16. Interfaith Education and Dialogue

Faith Formation 2020

Strategies for Each Scenario

Scenario #4
Participating but Uncommitted

- Faith formation through the life of the whole church
- Faith formation with digital media and web technologies
- Family faith formation
- Intergenerational faith formation
- Generational faith formation
- Milestones faith formation
- Faith formation in Christian practices
- Transforming the world
- Spiritual formation
- Multi-ethnic faith formation
- Pathways to vibrant faith and dialogue

Scenario #1
Vibrant Faith and Active Engagement

- Faith formation through the life of the whole church
- Faith formation with digital media and web technologies
- Family faith formation
- Intergenerational faith formation
- Generational faith formation
- Milestones faith formation
- Faith formation in Christian practices
- Transforming the world
- Spiritual formation
- Multi-ethnic faith formation
- Empowering the community to share their faith
- Interfaith education and dialogue

Scenario #3
Unaffiliated and Uninterested

- Faith formation for spiritual seekers
- Faith formation in Third-Place settings
- Faith formation with digital media and web technologies
- Milestones faith formation
- Faith formation in Christian practices
- Transforming the world

Scenario #2
Spiritual but Not Religious

- Faith formation with digital media and web technologies
- Family faith formation
- Faith formation with Millennials
- Milestones faith formation
- Faith formation in Christian practices
- Transforming the world
- Spiritual formation
- Multi-ethnic faith formation
- Faith formation for spiritual seekers
- Apprenticeships in discipleship
- Pathways to vibrant faith & active engagement
- Faith formation in Third-Place settings

Faith Formation through the Life of the Whole Church

People are formed and transformed in and through their participation (immersion) in the whole church community. Before there were curriculum, programs, activities, and resources, there was the power of the life and ministries of the congregation to “make disciples.” Central to all faith formation is people’s participation in a church community that forms its members in and through *koinonia* (community and communion), *leiturgia* (prayer, liturgy, and worship), *kerygma* (preaching and proclaiming the Word of God), *diakonia* (service), and *didache* (teaching). In community people can be formed and transformed by Scripture, tradition, creed, prayer, and sacrament through worship or preaching; by the tradition when it is transmitted by the community, who are the tradition in their own persons; by the sacramental life when the community takes part in baptizing, in confirming, and in coming together at the Table. The “whole church” is educating and empowering the community to engage in ministry in the midst of the world. The whole community is, by its way of living together, speaking together, praying together, and worshipping together, causing people to recognize that they are being educated by and in this community to growth in Christian faith and to lives as disciples in the world today. And when what the community believes is reflected in how the community lives, their witness invites others to join.

Bishop and scholar N.T. Wright expresses the significance and power of the church community in forming and transforming people.

When the church is seen to move straight from worship of the God we see in Jesus to making a difference and effecting much needed change in the real world; when it becomes clear that people who feast at Jesus’ table are the ones in the forefront of the work to eliminate hunger and famine, when people realize that those who pray for the Spirit to work in and through them are the people who seem to have extra resources of love and patience in caring for those whose lives are damaged, bruised, and shamed, then it is not only natural to speak of Jesus himself and to encourage others to worship him for themselves and find out what belonging to his family is all about, but it is also natural for people, however irreligious they may think of themselves as being, to recognize that something is going on that they want to be part of. In terms that the author of Acts might have used, when the church is living out the kingdom of God, the word of God will spread powerfully and do its own work. (Wright, 267)

The whole church is a center for authentic Christian learning—learning that is viewed as a lifelong endeavor, that grows out of the life of the community, and that, in turn strengthens the community. In the words of Maria Harris, “The church does not have an educational program; it is an educational program.” The hallmark of a

“congregation of learners” is a *culture of learning*, in which learning permeates every aspect of the congregation. Every activity is viewed as an opportunity for learning. The church, animated by the Holy Spirit, becomes the primary “teacher.” The local church’s embodiment of the gospel is the master communicator of the gospel. Faith formation becomes the process of transmitting the gospel, as the Christian community has received it, understands it, celebrates it, lives it, and communicates it. Robert Webber summarizes this insight well when he writes,

In the postmodern world education will shift from the passing down of information to the passing down of wisdom through experience. Christian truth, which was regarded as propositional, intellectual, and rational will be experienced as an embodied reality. Faith will be communicated through immersion into a community of people who truly live the Christian faith. The corporate community will communicate through its depth of commitment, through hospitality, and through images such as baptism, the importance of Scripture, the significance of Eucharistic celebration, and the feasts and fasts of the Christian year. These events will shape the imagination of the believer and provide transcendent points of reference that bring meaning to the cycle of life. The meaning of the stories, symbols, cycles of time, and audiovisual experiences of faith may become the center for thoughtful discussion and application in the small group and stimulate both an intellectual and emotional knowing. (Webber, 155)

IDEAS

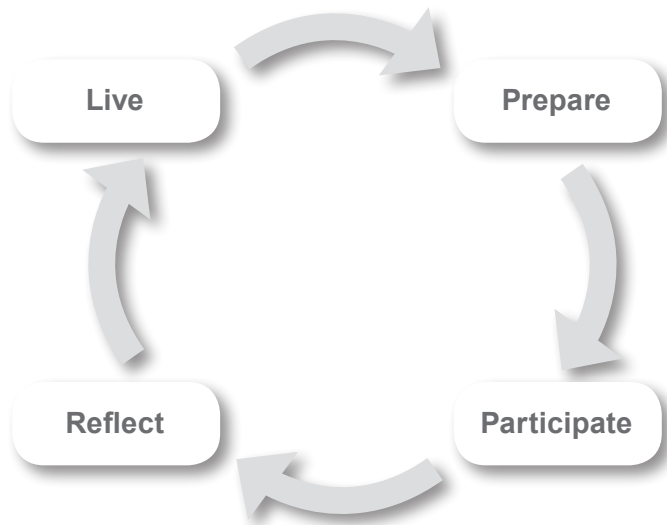
A faith formation curriculum of church life and events.

The events in the life of the Christian community can serve as the foundation for developing a common curriculum for all ages and generations. Charles Foster in *Educating Congregations* proposed an events-centered approach to faith formation. Church year feasts and seasons, sacraments and liturgy, justice and service, prayer and spiritual traditions, and community life events and activities can become the core of a curriculum for the whole community. This approach makes the life of church the “educational program.” The goal is to develop a common curriculum which immerses everyone more deeply into the Christian faith and into the lived experience of the Christian community. The fundamental unity of the church is strengthened by establishing a core curriculum for all members of the community. The events-centered core curriculum is designed for the whole Christian community and can be supplemented by age-specific programs for children, teens, and adults.

Develop an events-centered curriculum by studying the life of your church community. Church year feasts and seasons, and Sunday worship and the lectionary readings provide an excellent starting point for developing an events-centered curriculum.

Digging deeper, the church's participation—through its ministries, community, and individual members—in serving the poor, working for justice, being peacemakers, and caring for creation provide opportunities to engage the whole community in actions for justice and in learning about the justice teachings of the Bible and Christian tradition. For example, your church's efforts to address hunger and poverty, locally and globally, can become the basis for a learning program on poverty and the needs of the poor which leads to action. Your church's involvement in caring for creation during Earth Day in April can become the basis for a learning program on the environment and stewardship.

Churches can teach the events-centered curriculum through intergenerational learning programs for the whole faith community or by integrating events-centered learning into existing faith formation programs. The learning process for events-centered faith formation involves: (1) preparing people of all ages to participate meaningfully and actively in the church event that is the focus of the curriculum; (2) engaging people in the event so that they can be formed and transformed by their participation; and (3) guiding people in reflecting on the significance and meaning of their participation in the church event, and empowering them to live their faith at home and in the world.



Preparation for participation in church life.

Faith formation can increase active engagement in the church by connecting faith formation programming to participation in church life. Churches can prepare people of all ages, but especially children and youth and their families, for participation in the life, ministry, and activities of the church community by incorporating education

and resources in the language, practices, rituals, and habits that enable them to participate meaningfully in the life of the community: in worship, prayer, service, leadership, sacraments, church year feasts and seasons, and other activities and events of church life. This restores the connection between learning and practice, as well as overcoming age segregation through intergenerational experiences in community. The key is that what people are learning in their programs is aligned with hands-on participation in congregational life. For example, many churches utilize a lectionary-based model of faith formation in which the content of the learning program is the Sunday scripture readings. Here the connection is direct: what is learned in an educational program is experienced at Sunday worship. Connecting learning programs and congregational life takes many forms: liturgical seasons, Sunday lectionary readings, preparation for a congregation-wide service projects, and so on. The formation of a distinctive Christian identity is shaped by participation in the mission and practices of the faith community. Through their participation, people of all ages come to be recognized and accepted as full members of the congregation. People are not only shaped by the practices in which they participate. They also ‘act back’ on the community of practice, with new insights, ideas, and actions that can contribute to the transformation of those practices, and therefore, of the community.

Immersion in the life of the church community.

Faith is communicated through immersion into a community of people who truly live the Christian faith. Faith formation for all ages and generations would benefit by making hands-on participation integral to all learning experiences. “The heritage of scripture, tradition, the lives of our ancestors in the faith, creed, gospel, prayer, sacrament, and law is often taught better through worship or preaching than through classroom instruction. The tradition itself is handed on more fully when it is done in the midst of the people, the community, who are the tradition in their own persons. The life of prayer educates us most not when we read books about it but when we fall on our knees. The sacramental life nourishes us when we take part in baptizing, in confirming, and in coming together to the Table” (Harris, 44). Incorporate the actual participation in an experience of church life into the program design for age-group, family, or intergenerational learning. Instead of teaching “about” the Christian life, experience it directly as part of the overall learning program.

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Faith Formation with Digital Media and Web Technologies

Faith formation can utilize powerful web-based and digital technologies and resources to blend face-to-face, interactive faith formation with virtual faith formation, providing 24/7/365 faith formation for all ages and generations, anytime and anywhere. Websites, social networking services, and digital technologies (iPod Touch, iPad, smart cell phones) mean that churches can deliver faith formation experiences and resources anytime and anywhere, reaching people wherever they go online (home, work, school, vacation, coffee house). The interplay between learning in physical places and virtual online spaces can revolutionize faith formation in churches.

Web-based technologies and digital media provide the means to connect with spiritually hungry people and provide online tools and resources for them to explore faith and spirituality, engage in a spiritual conversation with others, and invite them to a faith community.

The new digital tools can empower people to connect with each other online, share their stories and faith experiences, give witness to the ways they are living their faith (practices), create faith formation content (print, audio, video) to share with others, and so many other user-generated activities.

IDEAS

Face-to-Face and Virtual Faith Formation.

There are two ways to envision the relationship between the physical and virtual.

- The **first approach** begins with people's participation in face-to-face learning activities (small group, large group, whole church, community/world) and then uses virtual online spaces with learning activities, print/audio/video resources, and social networking to extend, deepen, and support the learning that began in the physical program. For example, a church sponsors a three-session program on the Gospel of Luke in preparation for Cycle C of the upcoming liturgical year. The learning from this short program can be extended and deepened online with 1) weekly commentaries on the Sunday Gospel from Luke, 2) online Bible study program (independent or with a small group) on the Gospel of Luke, 3) a university course on the Gospel of Luke on iTunes U, and 4) an online blog that allows people to post their reflections on each Sunday's reading and invites discussion online.
- The **second approach** begins with people's involvement in online/digital learning activities and leads them to participate in face-to-face learning activities. For example, a church uses its website to develop an online spiritual formation center using a variety of already existing resources: (1) daily fixed hour prayer (liturgy of the hours), (2) weekly and seasonal prayer resources,

(3) links to prayer sites around the world (www.sacredspace.ie, www.taize.fr, www.upperroom.org), (4) an online retreat (A thirty-four week retreat for Everyday Life from Creighton University, <http://onlineministries.creighton.edu/CollaborativeMinistry/cmo-retreat.html>), and (5) online courses with spiritual guides like Thomas Merton, Joyce Rupp, Henri Nouwen, Joan Chittister from Spirituality and Practice (www.SpiritualityandPractice.com): Forty-day retreats with daily emails containing short readings for reflection, practice suggestions, and access to a private “Practice Circle” where people can share their wisdom and experiences with other e-course participants. The online spiritual formation center could connect people to church-based learning activities and resources, such as a relationship with a spiritual director, a spiritual formation course (such as the small group program *Companions in Christ* from Upper Room Books), a retreat experience at church or a retreat center, a series of workshops on the spiritual disciplines (for example, *lectio divina*, silence, contemplation, the *Examen*, meditation, spiritual reading, fixed hour prayer), and so on.

These relationships between faith formation in physical places and virtual spaces can be visualized in the following way:



One example of this integrated approach to adult faith formation is “Bible with Brian” from Ginghamburg Church in Ohio. Brian Brown, the teaching pastor at Ginghamburg, teaches through the entire Bible in a year, including practical application on how to live out God’s truths everyday. Every Tuesday and Wednesday nights, “Bible with Brian” follows the book of the Bible featured in the daily Transformation Journal produced by the church. The journal is centered around a weekly topic and provides Bible verses about that topic, wisdom about the day’s study from authors, and questions to help people apply the reading to their daily life. The Bible study begins with a meal from 5:30–6:30 p.m. and then the program from 6:30–8 p.m. or 7–8:30 p.m. Children’s care and activities for birth through grade 5 are available. In addition to the gathered program, the program is available as an MP3 audio file so people can listen to it online or download it to their computer or mp3 player. Adults can also subscribe to the podcast on iTunes and listen to current and past episodes. Adults can download the “Bible with Brian” handout and use it to follow along with the audio broadcast of the program. People can also subscribe to the “Bible with Brian Spiritual Vitamins” newsletter—a daily take on the Transformation Journal from Brian Brown. (For more information go to <http://ginghamsburg.org/biblewithbrian>.)

Digital Media Resource in Faith Formation.

As textbooks and print resources are transformed into digital multimedia resources, faith formation in churches will increasingly use the new digital media in face-to-face programming (courses, small groups) and in providing faith formation to individuals and households via the church website, smart phone apps (iPhone), e-books, and so on. E-books and eTextbooks, which began as print resources viewed in a digital format, are being transformed into multimedia “books” when enhanced by images, web links, audio, and video when experienced on an iPad or similar devices. Packed with rich and relevant digital content, enhanced e-books expand the experience of reading a book by listening to an author read a favorite passage, watching supplementary video, or flicking through a library of photos or unpublished excerpts. One of the first digital, multimedia Bibles is the Glo Bible (www.bibleglo.com), available on DVD with support resources online. Content is accessed through Glo’s five lenses: Bible (the text in its traditional form); Atlas (biblical events represented geographically); Timeline (biblical events represented chronologically); Topical (browse by subject); and Media (HD video, works of art, virtual tours and zoom-able high-resolution images). Additional content to the NIV Bible text and its study notes includes more than five hundred virtual tours with 360-degree views, 7500 encyclopedia articles, 2400 high-resolution photos, seven hundred pieces of artwork, three and a half hours of high-definition video, nearly 150 maps, and much more, allowing users to immerse themselves in the world of the Bible. All of these new digital media resources can be used in group settings, as well as individual or family settings.

Church Website.

Churches can develop a robust church website as the centerpiece of your online faith formation strategy—providing a variety of faith formation opportunities, experiences, and activities for age groups and the whole family, connecting people to recommended websites, and providing ways for people to connect with each other (social networking) and share their own reflections, stories, faith practices, and so on. Use the resources and features of your website to extend relationships and learning initiated in church events and gathered faith formation programs, and to reach people who are uninvolved in church life (Scenarios 2 and 3) or participate occasionally (Scenario 4). Incorporate a variety of features and content in your church website, such as:

- a learning center with courses and webinars on topics such as faith themes, Bible studies, life issues, and Christian practices, self-paced and facilitated by church staff and church members at scheduled times
- audio and video podcasts of gathered learning programs at the church
- links to selected online learning programs and activities from Christian churches, seminaries, universities, and publishers; links to courses on iTunes University and other online course providers
- links to selected audio and video podcasts on iTunes, YouTube, and other providers
- links to free e-book libraries, such as Google Books and Internet Archive, and online Bibles, such as Bible Gateway and Biblica
- a faith formation resource center with daily, weekly, and seasonal resources for all ages and families, including faith conversation activities, devotions and prayer, Bible reading activities and Bible studies, service projects, and rituals and traditions
- a milestones and life transitions center with sections for each milestone that include rituals, blessings, commentaries, personal stories, and a “gathering space” for sharing stories and ideas
- a worship center sharing audio and video clips of some of the sermons and other worship experiences, and extending it through the daily posting of images, songs, meditations, inspirational stories, prayers of the people, and online worship exercises
- an online parenting center with “how to” parenting articles and videos, faith enrichment resources, a “gathering space” for parents to interact, a blog staffed by parent mentors, parent-generated ideas and activities, and links to highly rated parent and family websites
- themed “gathering spaces” for synchronous and asynchronous interaction, including live text-based chat and live audio/video conferences, threaded discussions, collected blog links, self-paced tutorials on a range of topics, and so on

- a library pod with access to e-journals, e-books, archived streaming video of speakers and events, a clearinghouse-type collection of links to resources, and other Internet-mediated resources
- a mission/service opportunity clearinghouse for local, national, and international internships, volunteer opportunities, and jobs
- small group gatherings online for faith sharing, Bible study, and book discussions
- a calendar of events with locations, times, and descriptions, with Web-streamed audio and video recordings of select offerings

Several Examples of Full-Featured Church Websites

- Ginghamburg Church: <http://ginghamsburg.org>
- New Hope Church: www.enuhope.org
- Newsong Church: www.newsong.net
- Northcoast Church: www.northcoastchurch.com
- Redeemer Presbyterian Church: www.redeemer.com
- St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church: www.sapres.org
- Trinity Wall Street: www.trinitywallstreet.org
- United Methodist Church of the Resurrection: www.cor.org

Online Faith Formation Center

Churches can create a virtual spiritual- or faith formation center where people can diagnose their spiritual health and growth needs, find gathered and online classes and small groups, and access resources for developing their faith and spiritual life. Incorporate in this center a spiritual assessment tool that helps people discern where they are in their spiritual journey, and a planning tool that helps people develop a spiritual growth plan for developing their personal relationship with Christ and discerning ways to live their faith in daily life. Provide mentors or guides to assist people in developing their spiritual growth plan and accessing the programs and resources that fit their plan. Mentors or guides can be available for one-on-one conversations as people move through their growth plan. (For an example of a spiritual assessment process go to the website for Church of Resurrection in Leawood, Kansas: www.cor.org/programs-ministries/the-journey/welcome-to-your-self-assessment.)

Online Learning and Digital Learning

Churches can utilize the ever increasing “library” of online learning programs and digital learning resources as an integral element of learning programs and faith formation offerings for all ages and for families.

Examples of Religious “Content” Websites

- Bible Mesh: www.biblemesh.com (learn the Bible and connect with friends)
- Book of Faith Initiative: <http://bookoffaith.ning.com> (Bible resources)

- Busted Halo: www.bustedhalo.com (for young adults)
- Disciples Now: www.disciplesnow.com (for youth)
- Explore Faith: www.explorefaith.org (for adults)
- Kids Spirit Online: <http://kidspiritonline.com> (for 11–15-year-olds)
- Odyssey Networks: www.odysseynetworks.org (multi-faith media resources)
- MethodX: www.upperroom.org/methodx (for young adults)
- Patheos: www.patheos.com (world religion and spirituality)
- Spirit and Song: <http://www.spiritandsong.com> (for youth)
- The Thoughtful Christian: www.thethoughtfulchristian.com (learning resources)
- Vatican Museum: http://mv.vatican.va/3_EN/pages/MV_Visite.html (all ages)
- Yfaith: <http://www.yfaith.co.uk> (for 10–13-year-olds)

Examples of Video Websites

- iTunes: www.apple.com/itunes
- God Tube: www.godtube.com
- Tangle: www.tangle.com
- YouTube: www.youtube.com
- Vimeo: <http://vimeo.com>

Examples of Course Websites

- Many universities and seminaries offer continuing education courses in theology, scripture, and the Christian life for adults, such as: C21 Online at Boston College (www.bc.edu/sites/c21online), STEP Online Theology at University of Notre Dame (<http://step.nd.edu>), and The Virtual Learning Community for Faith Formation (VLCFF) at University of Dayton (<http://vlc.udayton.edu>).
- iTunes University (www.apple.com/itunes) has over two hundred thousand educational audio and video podcasts from top universities, museums, and learning organizations, and provides the ability to download lectures, discussions, language lessons, audiobooks, and podcasts.
- OpenCourseWare Consortium (www.ocwconsortium.org) is a free and open digital publication of high quality educational materials, organized as courses, from more than two hundred higher education institutions and associated organizations from around the world.

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- Classroom 2.0: www.classroom20.com
- Digital Catechesis: <http://digitalcatechesis.ning.com/>
- Edutopia: www.edutopia.org
- HASTAC (Humanities, Arts, Science, and Technology Advanced Collaboratory): www.hastac.org
- Reimaging Learning in the Twenty-First Century, John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation: www.macfound.org
- Joan Ganz Gooney Center at Sesame Workshop: www.joanganzcooneycenter.org

Family Faith Formation

The task of religious socialization and faith formation falls almost entirely to two communities today. First are family households where parents do the primary socializing. Family religious socialization has always been the foundation for the development of faith and faith practices, and for participation in church life and worship. Second are religious congregations where the whole community, but especially faithful adults, can exert socializing influences on children and youth. These are the two critical contexts for the faith formation of children and youth in America today.

Christian Smith observers, “If formation in faith does not happen there, it will—with rare exceptions—not happen anywhere (Smith, 286).

First, churches can strengthen *family religious socialization*, especially in the first decade of life—by nurturing a vibrant faith in parents and equipping them with the skills and tools for developing faith at home. Reflecting on the long term impact of family socialization on emerging adults (eighteen to twenty-three), researcher Christian Smith, in his book *Souls in Transition*, emphasizes the importance and impact of family socialization.

Teenagers with seriously religious parents are more likely than those without such parents to have been trained in their lives to think, feel, believe, and act as serious religious believers, and that training “sticks” with them even when the leave home and enter emerging adulthood. Emerging adults who grew up with seriously religious parents are through socialization more likely (1) to have internalized their parents’ religious worldview, (2) to possess the practical religious know-how needed to live more highly religious lives, and (3) to embody the identity orientations and behavioral tendencies toward continuing to practice what they have been taught religiously. At the heart of this social causal mechanism stands the elementary process of teaching—both formal and informal, verbal and nonverbal, oral and behavioral, intentional and unconscious, through both instruction and role modeling. We believe that one of the main ways by which empirically observed strong parental religion produced strong emerging adult religion in offspring is through the teaching involved in socialization. (Smith, 232)

Second, churches can develop the *home as a center of faith formation* by promoting foundational family faith practices: caring conversations, rituals and traditions, prayer, Bible reading, and service. Research consistently shows that effective religious socialization comes about through embedded family religious practices; that is, through specific, deliberate religious activities that are firmly intertwined with the daily habits of family routines, of eating and sleeping, of having conversations, of adorning spaces in which people live, of celebrating the holidays, and of being part of a community. The daily household routine is marked by rituals of prayer, by conversations about God, and by sacred objects. Holidays provide special occasions for experiencing the warmth of family, friends, and fellow congregants.

Third, churches can *educate and equip parents* to embed foundational faith practices into the daily experience of family life. Once again, Christian Smith and the National Study on Youth and Religion point out that the evidence clearly shows that the single most important social influence on the religious and spiritual lives of adolescents is their parents.

Fourth, churches can *engage families* more fully in the life and ministries of the church community.

Fifth, churches can *strengthen the partnership between home and congregation* to focus on empowering, resourcing, and supporting the development of the family as the center of faith formation.

IDEAS

Family faith practices.

Effective religious socialization comes about through embedded practices. Churches can equip parents, and the whole family, with the skills and resources to incorporate faith practices into family life: caring conversations, eating together—especially the power of Sunday meals and holidays, praying together—especially at meals, reading the Bible, engaging in devotions, celebrating rituals and traditions, service, providing moral instruction, and worshipping together with the church community. Guide families in recognizing the presence of God in their daily life of family practices and activities.

Demonstrate family faith practices through Sunday worship and church programs and activities to teach, model, and demonstrate family faith practices that families can incorporate into home life. Weekly worship and church events are opportunities for families to experience faith practices—prayer, Bible reading, service, and rituals and traditions—which can be extended into the home. Provide practice-related resources to help families live their faith at home.

Example: Four Keys for Practicing Faith (Vibrant Faith Ministries, www.vibrantfaith.org)

1. **Caring Conversation.** Christian values and faith are passed on to the next generation through supportive conversation. Listening and responding to the daily concerns of children and youth makes it easier to have meaningful conversations regarding the love of God, and are ways to express God's love to others. Hearing their parents' "faith stories" is one of the most important influences on the faith of children and teenagers.
2. **Family Devotions and Prayer.** The Christian faith shapes the whole of our lives and involves a lifetime of study, reflection, and prayer. Family devotions provide a way to learn more about the Bible and Christian tradition as a family, and apply the teachings to daily life as a follower of Jesus Christ. This understanding of a devotional life includes, but is not limited to, public worship, bedtime prayers, Bible reading and study, table grace, evening and morning prayers, and praying alone at any time of the day or night.
3. **Family Rituals and Traditions.** Families identify themselves and tell their family stories through daily routines, celebrations, and rituals. Family rituals

can take many forms from daily rituals such as mealtime, bedtime, leaving and returning; celebrations such as birthdays, anniversaries, and special achievements; church year rituals at home such as Advent and Lent; milestones such as births and deaths, first day of school and graduations, and so on. Family rituals and traditions speak volumes about what the family values, believes, and promotes, and how much the family values its faith.

4. **Family Service.** Engaging in service with one's family is a powerful opportunity for growing in faith. Both youth and adults are more likely to have a growing, strong faith when their family serves others together: in the home, in the congregation, in the community and world. (Anderson and Hill)

Example: FAITH 5—Faith Acts in the Home
(Faith Inkubators, www.faithink.com)

The FAITH 5 connects church to home, faith to life, and parents to kids in a powerful way. The five steps of the FAITH 5 are:

- *Step One: Share highs and lows.* Name something good and bad you experienced today.
- *Step Two: Read a verse from your Bible.* Bible verses that families explore every night.
- *Step Three: Talk about how the verse relates to highs and lows.* Unpack the verse a bit. What does it mean in your own words? How might it relate to where you are today in your highs and lows?
- *Step Four: Pray for one another's highs and lows, for your family, and for the world.* Simply talk to God, thank Jesus for the good, and ask the Holy Spirit for guidance in specific problems.
- *Step Five: Bless one another.* Trace the sign of the cross on one another's forehead or palm as a reminder that you belong to God and to one another.

Faith formation with young children.

Churches can begin family faith formation with new parents during pregnancy by nurturing the faith growth of the parents, preparing them for the vocation of parenting, understanding their new child, celebrating the baptism milestone, providing resources for nurturing family faith (continuing through the next several years), welcoming and engaging them in the Christian community as a new family. Begin parent education and formation before the birth of the child and continue throughout life, providing the setting for teaching, modeling, and demonstrating family faith

practices that can be incorporated into home life. Establish “pregnancy and early childhood advice centers” to support parents through the pregnancy and early years of childhood. Provide parent mentors, such as parents whose children are now young adults, to provide one-on-one mentoring and support. Connect new parents by providing mall groups for encouragement, support, and learning. Utilize the church website and other websites and online resources for resourcing and social networking among parents. Parent education and faith formation will need to address the religious and spiritual needs and backgrounds of the millennial generation of parents who are in their twenties and thirties.

Parent formation.

Churches can target milestones and critical transitions during childhood, adolescence, and young adulthood, to provide opportunities for parent faith formation and parent education, in-person and online. Provide stand-alone parent faith formation and education programs and incorporate parent programs and activities into existing faith formation programs and support groups for parents, such as a mom’s group. Develop a progression of parent workshops through the life cycle: (1) preparing for parenting, (2) parenting young children, (3) parenting children, (4) parenting teenagers, (5) parenting emerging adults (eighteen to thirty), and (6) parenting alone.

Milestone faith formation.

Churches can develop family faith formation around the naturally-occurring religious and lifecycle milestones in family life such as baptism, start of school, school graduations, and so on. Between milestones celebration, provide developmentally-appropriate resources—in print, audio, video, and online formats—to continue faith growth at home. (See the Milestones Faith Formation strategy for more information.)

Family learning programs.

Churches can engage families in structured learning programs for the whole family—providing opportunities to learn and grow in faith together and develop skills for sharing faith, praying, celebrating traditions, serving others, and practicing the Christian faith in daily life. Churches can utilize a variety of family learning formats such as: monthly family or intergenerational learning programs, family workshops through the year, family cluster or small group learning programs (at the church or in homes), family-centered Bible study or lectionary-based Scripture reflection, family-centered vacation Bible school, family retreats and camps, and family-centered sacramental preparation programs.

Family service.

Churches can offer a variety of developmentally-appropriate family service projects where families can choose from different levels of commitment from beginner experiences to advanced projects that are local, regional, national, and international,

such as: (1) local mission projects lasting anywhere from a few hours to one day in length, (2) short-term mission trips lasting anywhere from two to five days and requiring an overnight stay on location, and (3) weeklong mission trips within the United States as well internationally, designed for families who are ready for a more intensive experience. Include a learning component for each mission/service project that focuses on understanding the issue being addressed, exploring the teachings of Scripture and tradition, developing the skills for mission and service, and then, upon completion of the project, reflecting upon the involvement. (See *Transforming the World: Engagement in and Formation for Mission and Service* for more information.)

In-home resources.

Churches can provide families with a variety of resources—print, audio, video, and online—to help families embed faith practices in family life at each stage of life, including resources for parents at each stage of life, for in-home celebration of church year feasts and seasons, for extending Sunday worship into the home, for celebrating milestones, for engaging in service, and so many more. Use the church website and online resources to deliver timely faith formation resources to the home, and provide social networking among families to support each other and share faith stories and practices.

Increase active engagement in church life.

Churches can connect faith formation programming to family participation in church life by designing faith formation programming to prepare families for participation in the life, ministry, and activities of the church according to their abilities. Develop learning programs and resources that provide families with the language, practices, rituals, habits that enable them to participate meaningfully in the life of the community: in worship, prayer, service, leadership, sacraments, church year feasts and seasons, and other activities and events of church life. The key is that what people are learning in their programs is aligned with hands-on participation in congregational life. For example, many churches utilize a lectionary-based model of faith formation in which the content of the learning program is the Sunday Scripture readings. Here the connection is direct: what is learned in an educational program is experienced at Sunday worship. Connecting learning programs and congregational life takes many forms: liturgical seasons, Sunday lectionary readings, preparation for a congregation-wide service projects, and so on. The formation of a distinctive Christian identity is shaped by participation in the mission and practices of the faith community. Through their participation, people of all ages come to be recognized and accepted as full members of the congregation. People are not only shaped by the practices in which they participate. They also ‘act back’ on the community of practice, with new insights, ideas, and actions that can contribute to the transformation of those practices, and therefore, of the community.

Expectations for family faith growth.

Churches can engage families more consciously, actively, and experientially in learning, growing in faith, and participating in church life through an annual, multi-dimensional faith growth plan. The annual plan can be a blend of whole family activities and individual parent-child activities. Families can be organized into groups, each with a leader who meets with the family group regularly to facilitate learning and reflection. Churches set expectations for learning and participation. Families create their annual plan around a menu of offerings designed to help them fulfill the church's expectations, for example: (1) participating in Sunday worship (regularly, but at least twice monthly); (2) participating in important church year feasts and celebrations, such as Advent, Christmas, Lent, Holy Week; (3) participating in monthly family learning programs on religious themes; (4) participating in at least six mission/service projects during the year, (5) participating in an annual spiritual formation retreat experience, and (6) engaging in family home practices, such as reading the Bible, celebrating rituals and traditions, and praying.

Christian practices immersion experiences.

Churches can offer families Christian practice immersion experiences that give them a firsthand experience of a Christian practice, such as hospitality, reading the Bible, and keeping Sabbath, and then guide them in living the practice in their daily lives. Each immersion experience begins with a direct experience of the practice—in a learning program, in the church, or in the community/world, followed by reflection on the experience, education about the practice, and resources for living the practice in daily life. Offer a variety of immersion experiences throughout the year in various program formats and timeframes. (See Faith Formation in Christian Practices for more information.)

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Additional Strategies

For additional ideas and resources consult the following strategies in Part Four:

- Faith Formation with Digital Media and Web Technologies
- Intergenerational Faith Formation (for a learning process for family programs)
- Milestones Faith Formation
- Faith Formation in Christian Practices
- Transforming the World: Engagement in and Formation for Service and Mission
- Spiritual Formation
- Multi-ethnic Faith Formation

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- Forming Faith (Center for Ministry Development): www.fashioningfaith.org
- Home Word: www.homeword.com
- Legacy Milestones (Brian Haynes): www.legacymilestones.com
- LifelongFaith Associates: www.lifelongfaith.com
- Parent Further (Search Institute): www.parentfurther.com
- Search Institute: www.search-institute.org
- Think Orange: www.whatisorange.org
- Tumblon: <http://tumulon.com>
- Vibrant Faith Ministries: www.vibrantfaith.org

Intergenerational Faith Formation

Most churches are intergenerational or multi-generational by membership. Some churches are *intentionally* intergenerational. They make their intergenerational character a defining feature of their community life, ministries, and programming. These churches make it a priority to foster intergenerational relationships, faith sharing, and storytelling; to incorporate all generations in worship; to develop service projects that involve all ages, and to engage all generations in learning together. For these churches, being intergenerational is a way of life. It is an integral element of their culture. It is who they are!

Bringing generations together within the church provides benefits and blessings on a variety of levels. Insights from research and pastoral experience tell us that being intentionally intergenerational:

- reclaims God’s intent for faith to be shared in community and across generations
- affirms each person’s value in the total community (regardless of age)
- fosters a foundation of support of each other’s concerns, interests, and activities
- provides “up close and personal” formation in faith as children, teens, young adults, middle-aged adults, and older adults engage in sharing faith, teaching, learning, and praying for one another
- teaches us to care for one another
- provides role models for children and youth
- teaches us to value older adults
- allows us to pass on the traditions of family and faith
- enhances people’s identification with their congregation and integration within the community
- encourages greater faith in all generations
- creates special relationships between adults and youth
- fosters leadership regardless of age or stature
- utilizes the strengths (the wisdom, experience, and knowledge) of one generation to meet the needs of another generation
- promotes understanding of shared values and respect for individuals in all stages and ages of life
- utilizes the creative talents of younger and older generations to provide service to the church and community
- overcomes the age-segregated nature of our society, taking a pro-active, counter-cultural stance in the face of the countless ways society separates and pigeon-holes into age-specific groups

Holly Catterton Allen observes, “No better place exists for the most number of people to learn Christian ways from ‘more experienced members of the culture’ than in intergenerational Christian communities. People of all ages and maturity levels are present actively carrying on the very essentials of Christianity. In intergenerational communities, children learn from each other, younger children, older children, teens, and adults. And adults learn from teens and children. All benefit from each other with a sense of mutuality; in essence, they grow each other up into Christ. As Lave and Wenger say, ‘The *person* has been correspondingly transformed into a practitioner, a newcomer becoming an old-timer, whose changing knowledge, skills, and discourse are part of a developing identity—in short, a member of a community of practice.’”

The key to educating the whole community is intergenerational learning—bringing all ages and generations together to learn with and from each other. Intergenerational learning is a model that integrates learning, building community, sharing faith, praying, celebrating, and practicing. It is for all members of the community—young and old, single and married, families with children and empty-nest families. It involves the whole family in learning together. It equips individuals and families with the knowledge, skills, and faith-sharing activities for learning and practicing faith at home. Many churches have made intergenerational learning their primary model of learning, supported by age group learning models.

One model of intergenerational learning that is used by hundreds of churches begins with an All Ages Learning Experience (intergenerational); moves to an In-Depth Learning Experience (age-specific or intergenerational) taught in one of three formats: age group, whole group or learning activity centers; and concludes by Sharing Learning Reflections and Preparing for Home Practice (intergenerational). (For more information on this approach see the book *Intergenerational Faith Formation* in the resources.)

1. Gathering and Opening Prayer
2. All-Ages Learning Experience. Intergenerational learning begins with a multigenerational experience of the theme that all the generations share together.
3. In-Depth Learning Experience. Through structured learning activities each generation—families with children, adolescents, and adults—explores the meaning of the Church event and develops the ability to participate meaningfully in the event. In-depth learning experiences are conducted in different formats:
 - The *Age Group Format* provides parallel, age-appropriate learning for groups at the same time. Though age groups are separated, each one is focusing on the same topic—utilizing specific learning activities that are designed for their life cycle stage: families with children, adolescents, young adult, and adults.
 - The *Whole Group Format* provides a series of facilitated learning activities for everyone at the same time using intergenerational or age-specific small groups or table groups.
 - The *Learning Activity Center Format* provides structured intergenerational and age-specific learning activities at a variety of stations or centers in a common area.

4. Sharing Learning Reflections and Home Application. In intergenerational groups participants share what they learned and prepare for applying their learning to daily life using the Home Kit.
5. Closing Prayer Service

Example: Justice and Solidarity

Part 1. Gathering and Opening Prayer

Part 2. All Ages Learning Experience

Activity 1. Where Are You From?—tracing each individual or family journey to the U.S.

Activity 2. If the World Were a Village of 100 People

Part 3. In-Depth Learning Experience: Age Group Format

Activity 1. How Are We Connected to People around the World?

- Family Activity: What's Inside Your House? (from around the world)
- Adolescent and Adult Activity: What's in Your Life? (from around the world)

Activity 2. The Journey of Interdependence

- Option 1. The Journey of the Chocolate Bar (all ages)
- Option 2. The Journey of the Banana (all ages)
- Option 3. The Journey of Coffee (teens or adults)

Activity 3. Presentation: Solidarity through Fair Trade

Activity 4. What do the Scriptures and Christian tradition Say about Solidarity?

- Activity: The Good Samaritan for Today
- Activity: Who Do We Need to Be in Solidarity With?

Activity 5. How Can We Build Solidarity among People?—Developing Action Projects

Part 4. Sharing Learning Experiences and Home Application

Part 5. Closing Prayer

(From: *Acting for Justice* by John Roberto, OSV Curriculum, 2005.)

Example: Jesus Christ, Son of God

Part 1. Gathering and Opening Prayer

Part 2. All Ages Learning Experience: Who Do You Say That I Am?

Part 3. In-Depth Learning Experience: Experiencing the Son of God through Gospel Stories

The focus of the activity centers is to discover the qualities of God by exploring a variety of gospel stories that present the words and actions of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. Each learning activity center provides an interactive and experiential way for people to explore one aspect of Jesus' divinity through gospel stories. Activity centers will engage participants in presentations, discussions, and activities. Several centers include dramatic presentations, while others engage participants in creative arts or prayer or a ritual activity. One center includes a film presentation. There is even one that includes eating. If the children get tired, there is a storytelling center just for them. Each center is staffed by a team that guides participants through the learning activities. Each center is designed for all ages, so participants can select the centers that interest them the most. Families with children stay together.

Activity Centers

- Jesus is Born (Infancy Narratives)
- Jesus is God's Beloved Son (Baptism of the Lord and Transfiguration)
- Jesus Teaches Parables of the Kingdom of God
- Jesus Heals People
- Jesus Forgives Sin
- Jesus Raises People from the Dead
- Jesus Feeds People
- Stories of Jesus (Storytelling Center)

Part 4. Sharing Learning Experiences and Home Application

Part 5. Closing Prayer

(From *Professing Our Faith* by John Roberto, OSV Curriculum, 2006)

IDEAS

Intergenerational faith formation for the whole community as a core learning model.

Churches can develop intergenerational faith formation as their core learning program for the whole Christian community, supplemented by age-specific learning for children, teens, and adults. Churches can develop a multi-year curriculum for the whole community that includes themes from the Bible, the cycle of Sunday lectionary readings, church year feasts and seasons, Christian practices, service and social justice, prayer and spiritual disciplines, core Christian beliefs, and moral teachings. When the intergenerational faith formation is the core program, churches develop

topics for a year of monthly programming for the whole faith community. Here is an example of topics for an entire year of intergenerational learning developed around the rhythm of the church year feast and seasons. This example makes clear the intimate connection between faith formation, Sunday worship (with a special focus on the lectionary), and the liturgical seasons.

Advent-Christmas	Jesus, Messiah and Son of God
January-February	Following Jesus: Called to Discipleship
Lent	Following Jesus: Praying, Fasting, and Almsgiving
Holy Week	Death of Jesus
Easter Season	Resurrection of Jesus
Pentecost	Living as the Community of Jesus Christ
Summer	Living as Disciples in the World: Serving Others

(For an additional example of an intergenerational program year, see Faith Formation in Christian Practices.)

Intergenerational small group faith formation.

Churches can form weekly (or biweekly) intergenerational small groups as a primary form of faith formation or one of the options offered people in the faith community. These groups can meet at church or in homes or in other conducive settings. They provide a setting for exploring any of the themes suggested above, but have the relational advantages of a small group and the flexibility of a small group format, for example, a group could engage in a common service project as part of their group meetings. Small groups provide an excellent way to integrate learning, praying, serving, and socializing. Many churches already offer small group faith formation, such as Bible study, which would provide an opportunity to redesign an existing age-group program into an intergenerational learning program.

Intergenerational Bible study or lectionary-based faith formation.

This approach might take a variety of forms such as an intergenerational course or workshop, a whole congregational study, intergenerational small groups, or intergenerational sessions after Sunday worship focused on the scripture readings and sermon or homily.

An intergenerational version of a topic or theme being featured in the children or youth program.

A topic that the children or youth are studying can be extended to the whole community through intergenerational learning. For example, if the children are studying about Jesus, consider offering an intergenerational program on the identity of Christ. If the young people are preparing for a service project or mission trip, use the opportunity to conduct an intergenerational session on Christian service, and get everyone

engaged in supporting the teenagers. Add an intergenerational learning component to vacation Bible school by taking a theme from the program and offering an intergenerational program on that same theme for the whole community. Intergenerational learning provides a common learning experience for the whole community that can support age group learning programs.

Intergenerational faith formation before major church year feasts and seasons, and churchwide events.

The church calendar is rich with possibilities for intergenerational learning for the whole community. Conduct intergenerational programs to prepare all generations for major liturgical feasts and seasons, such as Advent, Christmas, Lent, Holy Week, and Pentecost, as well as significant events in the life of your church, such as the anniversary of the founding of the church, stewardship Sunday, or a ministries fair. There are dozens of opportunities for preparing the whole community to participate more intentionally and meaningfully in church events.

Intergenerational learning and relationship-building through existing programs and activities.

- Integrate intergenerational programming into the age-group program plan and calendar, such as quarterly intergenerational nights as part of the children's faith formation program.
- Structure age-group programs with an intergenerational connection, such as an educational program that includes interviews, a panel, and/or storytelling with people of different generations.
- Incorporate intergenerational dialogues into programming—provide opportunities for children and youth to experience the wisdom, faith, and interests of older adults through presentations, performances, and discussions. Then *reverse* the process and provide opportunities for the older adults to experience the wisdom, faith, and interests of children or teens through presentations, performances, and discussions.
- Develop mentoring relationships between youth and adults, such as prayer partners, learning-to-pray spiritual direction, service involvement, and Confirmation mentors.
- Link people of different generations (older-to-younger or younger-to-older) in the church who have insights and life experiences that may be helpful to the other, such as mid life and older adults helping young adults and new parents with money management and household management, or young people helping older adults navigate e-mail and the online world.

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Congregational Examples of Intergenerational Learning

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Sacred Heart Church: www.sacredheartchurch.info/gift.html

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Faith Inkubators: www.faithink.com

Fashioning Faith (Center for Ministry Development): www.fashioningfaith.org

LifelongFaith Associates: www.lifelongfaith.com

Vibrant Faith Ministries: www.vibrantfaith.org

Generational Faith Formation

Faith formation for the past five or six decades has been guided by insights from developmental psychology that have shaped curriculum, program development, and educational methods. While developmental understandings will continue to shape faith formation into the future, sociological and cultural research into the “personalities” of five generations in America provides another way to shape curriculum and programs in faith formation. Generations are broader social, culture, and historical constructs, and not as precise as developmental stages of life. But each generation has distinct features that provides insights and clues for faith formation.

Today in America, and in many churches, there are five distinct generations, each with their own characteristics and worldviews and life experiences. Each generation has been shaped by unique culture, social, and religious perspectives.

- Generation 2000 or the iGeneration (2000–)
- Millennial Generation (1980–1999)
- Generation X (1965–1979)
- Baby Boom Generation (1946–1964)
- Builder Generation (1945 and earlier)

One way to develop innovative approaches and strategies to address each of the four scenarios is to become *generationally-specific*—responding to the specific religious and spiritual needs of each generation. Developing programs, activities, and resources that target specific generations and their generational characteristics. What follows are brief descriptions of the religious and spiritual needs of each generation and suggestions for faith formation that you can use to design innovative programming.

Faith Formation with the iGeneration and Millennial Generation

Twenty-First-Century Learning with the iGeneration and Millennials

The youngest generations in America—the Millennials (1980–1999) and the iGeneration (2000 and later)—reflect significant generational differences from previous generations. While still young, thirteen distinct traits of the iGeneration of children (and teenage Millennials) can already be identified: “(1) introduction to technology, literally at birth, (2) constant media diet, (3) adeptness at multitasking, (4) fervor for communication technologies, (5) love of virtual social worlds and anything internet-related, (6) ability to use technology to create a vast array of “content,” (7) unique learning style, (8) need for constant motivation, (9) closeness to family, (10) confidence, (11) openness to change, (12) need for collective reflection, and (13) desire for immediacy” (Rosen, 26).

Learning experiences for Millennials and the iGeneration need to be experiential, image-rich, multi-sensory, interactive, engaging, and varied in learning style. Research is demonstrating that they learn more deeply when they apply knowledge to real-world problems and when they take part in projects that require sustained engagement and collaboration. Active learning practices have a more significant impact on learning than any other variable. The youngest generation (the “iGeneration”) is a creative and multimedia generation. They think of the world as a canvas to paint with words, sights, sounds, video, music, web pages, and anything they can create. Multimedia means using multiple modalities to reach these students. They are also a generation of “content creators” who live to create, and given the chance to do so they will merge multiple media into one complex but comprehensive whole.

- Apply Howard Gardner’s research on the eight **multiple intelligences** to education and provide a greater variety of ways to learn: verbal-linguistic (word smart, book smart), logical-mathematical (number smart, logic smart), visual-spatial (art smart, picture smart), bodily-kinesthetic (body smart, movement smart), musical-rhythmic (music smart, sound smart), naturalist (nature smart, environment smart), interpersonal (people smart, group smart), and intrapersonal (self smart, introspection smart).
- Apply research on **learning styles** to education by incorporating a diversity of learning activities and methods in a learning experience, recognizing that some people learn best through direct, hands-on, concrete experiences, some through reflective observation, some through an exploration and analysis of knowledge, theories, and concepts, and others through active experimentation with the new knowledge and practices.
- Engage in **active, in-depth learning** through well-designed projects, problems, and design tasks that focus learner inquiry around central questions in the disciplines and engage learners in *doing* the work of writers, scientists, mathematicians, musicians, sculptors, and critics.
- Incorporate **project-based learning** which involves completing complex tasks that typically result in a realistic product, event, or presentation. Project-based learning is (1) organized around driving questions that lead the learners to encounter central concepts or principles of a discipline; (2) focused on a constructive investigation that involves inquiry and knowledge building; (3) learner-driven, in that the learners are responsible for making choices and for designing and managing their work; (4) authentic, by posing problems that occur in the real world and that people care about.
- Have learners engage in **collaborative learning**—working in small, non-competitive groups—where they can discuss and process together what they are learning, work together on projects and activities, and practice and present what they are learning. Learning spaces are organized for learners’ participation in a “learning community”—recognizing that learning takes place in a social context and relies on communication and interaction with others.
- Engage learners in **practicing** and **performing** what they are learning by incorporating real life application activities into the learning experience. Practice is a part of the learning process, not the result of it.
- Develop **visual literacy** in all learners: learning to “read” or interpret visual images and learning how to use visual images to communicate. The need to

learn visual literacy arises because images were relatively rare until recently. The rise of electricity made movies, television, and the digital era possible. Visual literacy includes: (1) interpreting, understanding, and appreciating the meaning of visual images, (2) communicating more effectively by applying the basic principles and concepts of visual design, (3) producing visual images using computers and other technologies, and (4) using visual thinking to conceptualize solutions to problems.

- Utilize **digital media** to exploit the potential of the learning opportunities available through online resources and networks. We live in a digital age of a media-rich, networked world of infinite possibilities. Digital media promotes engagement, self-directed learning, creativity, and empowerment by using the Internet, computers, iPods and iPads, smart cell phones, and many other digital tools to learn and communicate in ways that were not possible in previous generations. Today's children, teens, and young adults smoothly and seamlessly dive into new Web 2.0 communication technologies. With a flick of the cell phone, they share more texts, photos, music, and video than any other demographic group on Earth. Digital media allows learners to be active creators and producers who use a wide range of digital tools to express themselves, interpret the world around them, and deepen their understanding of academic content. Their products include original music, animation, video, stories, graphics, presentations, and Web sites. They can become actively engaged in their learning processes rather than passive recipients of knowledge. They can actively collaborate in many new ways in the digital, virtual world, an environment parallel to the traditional one of face-to-face interaction. Given their fluency with digital tools, today's youth and young adults become teachers for younger and older generations. They maintain content-rich Web sites, share favorite resources, lead online workshops and classes, and develop multimedia products designed to share their knowledge with others. This teaching role enables young people to gain confidence and reinforce their own learning, because the best way to learn something is to teach it.

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Faith Formation with the Millennial Generation

In *Finding Faith: The Spiritual Quest of the Post-Boomer Generation* Richard Flory and Donald Miller report on a study of churches that are engaging emerging adults (post-boomers) and the experience of young adults in these churches. They observe that these emerging adults have embedded their lives in spiritual communities in which their desire and need for both expressive/experiential activities, whether through art, music, or service-oriented activities, and for a close-knit, physical community and communion with others are met. They are seeking to develop a balance for individualism and rational asceticism through religious experience and spiritual meaning in an embodied faith. The dominant characteristic across the young adults they interviewed was a desire for a faith that makes cognitive sense to them and that is also an expressive, embodied spiritual experience. Young adult Christians are searching for a more holistic faith than what a purely cognitive and rational approach can offer. They are seeking both a deep spiritual experience and a community experience, each of which provides them with meaning in their lives, and each of which is meaningless without the other.

Flory and Miller characterize post-Boomer faith as *expressive communalism*—reflecting an emphasis on embodiment and community: using one’s body in worship; in living out, or embodying, Christian teachings, in service; and in a desire for life in a particular faith community where they can be both personally fulfilled and serve others. They desire a theologically grounded belief that makes cognitive sense to them and that is also an expressive, embodied spiritual experience. Using their research as a guide, emerging adults seek congregations and faith formation that:

- offer community and spirituality in the context of a clearly defined faith tradition
- offer worship and faith formation that is visual and experiential
- respond to their needs for empowerment, leadership opportunities, responsibility, and accountability, as well as authenticity and accessibility
- strengthen their distinctive Christian identity so that they know who they are and what they believe, and are able to honestly encounter religious differences, understand people of other faiths, and explore areas of mutuality
- provide opportunities for serving the surrounding community, “bringing the church to the community”
- study the Bible and Christian tradition, then apply it to life in an environment that promotes relationship building and encourages questioning
- engage them in creative uses of the history, traditions, and rituals of different Christian traditions for a more physically and visually oriented practice; and encouraging the development of ancient spiritual disciplines, such as silence and contemplation

In *Lost and Found: The Younger Unchurched and the Churches that Reach Them*, Ed Stetzer, Richie Stanley, and Jason Hayes, report on the findings from three LifeWay Research projects, including a large scale survey of young adults and a survey of 149 churches that were reaching an extraordinary number of young adults. Based on the responses of young adults in the research studies, the research team identified four markers of vibrant young adult ministry:

Community is vital to the emerging generations. For them, life is meant to be experienced together, and they sense a need to be involved in genuine relationships with others. They are looking for friends they can call for help when their tire is flat and people who will call and celebrate when they get a promotion. They want to walk through life with their friends. They have a need for people, and they show a deep desire for relational equity. In other words, they long to be deeply invested in others and have others deeply invested in them. They desire to be a major part of each other’s lives—the day-to-day, big and small “stuff of life.” They also think

that others should be a part of the most important aspect of their lives—their spiritual journey.

Depth is important. Young adults want to be people of significance. Deep significance. They care about who they are and what they're becoming—"ankle deep" doesn't work for them. They told us that they'd rather be "in over their heads" in life as opposed to kicking around in the shallow end. Young adults also have interest in addressing the hard-to-talk about topics. They appreciate tough questions and despise pat answers. Their responses indicate that they like wrestling with difficult things and chewing on challenging ideas. They express a high degree of interest in processing information, and they often find the questions more important than the answers.

Responsibility is strongly valued because young adults know their choices make a difference. Decisions are everywhere: Recycle. Buy or trade fair. Sponsor a child. Respect your elders. Tithe. Love your neighbors. Respond to the crisis in Darfur. These are the type of opportunities that define this generation. They affirmed the importance of these issues, and they are committed to doing the "right" thing even as they grow in their understanding of what right means. They've concluded that all of these decisions matter, and what matters most is how they respond.

Connection is the fourth area of importance. This could be called mentoring or intergenerational ministry. They want to learn from those who have already experienced the things they are about to face. They're looking for a connection with people who will walk alongside them and advise them. They want a connection that gives them the opportunity to have someone pour their lives into them and teach them along their journey. And interestingly enough, they're willing to do that for someone else too (Stetzer, *et al.*, 67-68).

These four markers of ministry point to implications for developing faith formation and ministry with emerging adults. The young adults in the study, both church and unchurched, expressed the following needs and interests:

- to interact with members of a group multiple times per week
- to participate in small group activities that promote relationships and belonging
- to connect with a mentor; to receive information and advice from individuals with experience
- to participate in Bible study that minimizes pat answers in the exploration of Scripture
- to participate in small group meetings to discuss life application of Scripture
- to determine their own beliefs through hands-on, practical learning experiences

- to utilize their talents and abilities through opportunities to meet needs
- to participate in hands-on outreach activities on a frequent basis that meet the needs of others
- to benefit others through global service projects

Based on its research with 149 churches that were reaching an extraordinary number of young adults, the research team found nine common characteristics in churches that are reaching young adults.

1. **Creating Deeper Community.** Churches that are effective at attracting and developing young adults place a high value on moving people into a healthy small group system. Young adults are trying to connect and will make a lasting connection wherever they can find belonging.
2. **Making a Difference through Service.** Churches that are transforming young adults value leading people to serve through volunteerism. More than being pampered, young adults want to be part of something bigger than themselves and are looking to be part of an organization where they can make a difference through acts of service.
3. **Experiencing Worship.** Churches that are engaging young adults are providing worship environments that reflect their culture while also revering and revealing God. More than looking for a good performance, young adults desire to connect with a vertical experience of worship.
4. **Conversing the Content.** Churches that are led by authentic communicators are drawing young adults into the message. Though their styles vary from topical to exegetical, authentic communicators are true to their own personal style of communication and are usually more conversational than preachy.
5. **Leveraging Technology.** Churches that are reaching young adults are willing to communicate in a language of technology familiar to young adults. Young adults sense that these churches are welcoming churches that value and understand them, engaging them where they are.
6. **Building Cross-Generational Relationships.** Churches that are linking young adults with older, mature adults are challenging young adults to move on to maturity through friendship, wisdom, and support. Young adults are drawn to churches that believe in them enough to challenge them.
7. **Moving Toward Authenticity.** Churches that are engaging young adults are reaching them not only by their excellence but by their honesty. Young

adults are looking for and connecting to churches where they see leaders that are authentic, transparent, and on a learning journey.

8. **Leading by Transparency.** Churches that are influencing young adults highly value an incarnational approach to ministry and leadership. This incarnational approach doesn't require revealing one's personal sin list so much as it requires that those in leadership must be willing to express a personal sense of humanity and vulnerability.
9. **Leading by Team.** Increasingly churches reaching young adults seem to be taking a team approach to ministry. They see ministry not as a solo venture but as a team sport—and the broader participation it creates increases the impact of the ministry. (Stetzer, *et al.*, 143–44)

Young adults are longing for community and fellowship with peers, looking for ways to reach people in need, and circling the church but not always finding a home in it. Connection is the key. Community with other young adults is extremely important in their lives. Young adults seek authentic answers in the Bible and Christian tradition, best learned through participation in small group meetings. Making a difference is essential by having the opportunity to meet the needs of others on a regular basis. Social action is cited as the major reason uninvolved young adults would consider being part of a church.

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Congregational Examples

(See also Kairos and the Bridge in the Faith Formation with Spiritual Seekers strategy.)

Example: Church of the Apostles, Seattle, WA (www.apostleschurch.org)

Church of the Apostles is a young, emerging, Episcopal and Lutheran mission congregation—a future church with an ancient faith. The church's purpose is to *help-godchangeeverything*, by participating in God's future, within today's culture and their local zip code, living and serving in intentional, sacramental community in the way of Jesus Christ.

- **Home Groups.** At Apostles, common life in Christ starts at home and among friends. God meets us where we live and wherever two or three come together in God's name to share in Christian community. The point is not just "going to a church," but being church in our daily lives and everyday interactions with others. Home groups gather in actual houses, but also in other kinds of spaces. Some groups meet in coffeehouses, others in pubs, and some in parks or at the beach. The spaces vary, but the purpose is the same: small cells of people (followers and seekers) gathering weekly or every other week to share life, tell stories, eat meals, pray, serve and grow together in Jesus Christ. Each group has its own vibe, way of gathering, and basic path. Some groups are on a cognitive path (studying the Bible and deepening knowledge), some are on an expressive path (making music, creating art, or writing poetry), some are on a communitarian path around a lifestyle or common interest (young moms, hikers, AA recovery). Some are on a contemplative path (gathering for evening prayers or spiritual exercises), while others are on an active path (working soup kitchens, tutoring kids, building houses). Although they may take up different activities, each group is an expression of church and will therefore take time to worship, pray, reflect on scripture, and engage in a group ministry in the world.
- **Service.** Doing justice and showing mercy is core to the DNA of Christian life. What distinguished the early Christians from the surrounding society (and fueled the growth of the church) was just and merciful living, steeped in love for Jesus Christ. People took notice of how Christians cared for "orphans and widows in their distress" and kept themselves from being jaded by the ways of the world. This same love of justice and kindness is Christian spiritual formation of the highest order. Christians are called to actively serve poor, oppressed, hungry, sick and needy people; to live into and share with others the justice and mercy that God continues to rain upon the world in Christ. Apostles' Missio Dei Group coordinates a different local service project each month, as well as coordinating out of state or country projects once or twice per year.
- **Sunday Mass.** Smaller groups that meet at various times during the week for community groups, prayer, scripture reflection and service, come together each week for Mass. Apostles' worship is neither "traditional" nor "contemporary" but ancient-future. Ancient-future liturgy speaks across generations and draws equally upon ancient (hymns, chant, candles, communion) and techno-modern (alt. rock, art, ambient, projection, video) sources.
- **Events.** A variety of other activities include a Supper Club, a Theology Pub every other Tuesday night, Soul Café, and Film Nights.

**Example: Generation Axis, Willow Creek Community Church, South Barrington, IL
(www.generationaxis.com)**

- **Missional Community Hubs** are the epicenter of Willow Creek Church's ministry with emerging adults. These are community-based out of someone's house, apartment, or condo throughout the Chicago-land area. They exist to bring redemptive change to their neighborhoods through gatherings, serving initiatives, social events, and discipleship opportunities. This is where life happens in Axis and their dream is to see Missional Community Hubs launched all over our city.
- **Life Transformation Groups** are seasonal, gender-based groups of three to four people that seek to live out the teachings of Jesus in intimate community with focuses on Scripture, prayer, and accountability. These communities are generally born out of relationships with an Missional Community Hub.
- The **Axis Experience** is the place where the entire Axis community gathers for prayer, worship, and to celebrate what has happened in their Missional Community Hubs. This provides the opportunity to connect with each other around our shared language, vision, and values.
- **Generation Axis Videos** on Vimeo: stories, devotions, Bible study, promotion. (<http://vimeo.com/channels/generationsaxistv>)

**Example: Newsong Third Culture Community, Irvine, CA (www.newsong.net)
(<http://irvine.newsong.net/ministries/lifestage/youngadults>)**

Newsong's Young Adult Ministry exists to transform the world by empowering young adults in their twenties and thirties to be radical in their love for God and for people. There are four main elements of young adult ministry:

- **Young Adult Small Groups.** Small Groups meet once a week and live out the third-culture values of loving, learning, and serving (through Bible studies, cultivating relationships, serving the community together). The groups consist of seven to twenty people depending on which group you decide to commit to.
- **Momentum Nights.** Momentum is an event that happens once a month where people connect meaningfully with one another and with God and take steps forward in living out their faith in community. This takes a variety of forms. Some nights this has meant a speaker who delves into a topic relevant to young adults and on other nights this translates into inviting local musicians to come share their art in a café type setting.

- **Travel with a Purpose.** Travel to local and global destinations to experience culture, learn, serve, and live in community for a week. These *Travel with a Purpose* trips take place twice a year for young adults to use their vacation time in a unique way.
- **Service.** Each person is carefully created with unique experiences, pains, gifting, and calling. At Newsong there are many ways to love, learn, and serve. To help people make a difference a FLOW Consult can help people recognize God's unique shaping and calling on their life. FLOW helps people find the passion that God has placed in their heart and bring it to life. Discovery is important but each person's journey is different. There isn't a program or process that fits everyone and that is why it is important for a FLOW consultant to serve as a sounding board to provide a fresh perspective as people tell their stories. They identify obstacles in a person's path and resources to encourage growth.

In addition to these four elements there are also:

- **Message Study Guides** (and audio and video podcasts) provide a way for people to dig deeper into the weekly message from worship gatherings. Each study incorporates questions that will help you examine a Bible text, apply scripture to daily life, and put your faith into action. These studies can be used for small groups or individuals.
- **Connections Dinner** is a non-threatening and fun way to learn about Newsong and to meet several members of the pastoral staff. This introduction to Newsong provides an opportunity to meet new members and share the genesis of the Newsong church community and its vision and how people can participate in the life of Newsong.
- **Foundations—Beginning the Journey** is a six-week class that explores the basics of what it means to be a Christ follower. **Foundations—The Bible** helps people discover what the Bible is all about and learn tools to dig into the Bible for themselves.
- **Justice N.O.W.** is a Night of Worship and music dedicated to bringing light to global issues of injustice that need immediate attention. By catching God's heart for justice through meeting God in passionate worship, people experience the call to a life of justice

Example: St. Vincent de Paul Church, San Francisco, CA
(www.svdpsf.org/youngadults)

The Young Adult Group at St. Vincent's is a community of young adults in their twenties and thirties who value socializing, volunteering, and exploring questions of their faith with others who share a similar Catholic heritage and value system. Their mission is to promote a spiritual, social, and service-oriented community for Catholics in their twenties and thirties. The core events of this group take place on the second and fourth Monday nights of each month. Many young adults also gather for Mass on Sunday at 5:15 pm and social and service activities take place on a weekly basis.

- **Monday events** are the foundation of the young adult community, meeting every second and fourth Monday to explore faith and values in a fun and relaxed atmosphere, get details on upcoming social and community service activities, and make a few new friends. Whether young adults are rejoining the church after a long absence, want to learn more about Catholicism, or just want to meet other Catholics who value their faith and heritage, the Monday events are for them. Every meeting features a new topic and speaker. Generally, most of our topics center around questions and issues facing young adult Catholics in the world today.
- **Service** projects include regular commitments to a retirement community, delivery of food to the homeless, cooking at the soup kitchen, as well as special projects in the community.
- **Annual Retreat** provides an opportunity for reflection, spiritual renewal, fellowship, and more. Desired outcomes for the retreat include: taking an inventory of one's life, exploring one's passions and purpose in life, discerning what God is calling one to do, gaining insight and encouragement from others' experiences, increasing alignment between one's values and actions, and building relationships with other young adults.
- **Small Faith Groups** bring together young adult Catholics to deepen their faith and love of God while fostering fellowship and deepening the ties with the St. Vincent De Paul community. The format involves reflecting on the Sunday's gospel reading with questions to guide people in delving deeper into the scripture and applying it to their lives. Typically, groups decide to meet every three weeks on Sunday evening after our 5:15 pm Mass. The meetings take place at one of the groups members' houses in what often will end up being a pot-luck dinner format. The facilitator or small faith community leader is generally rotated. Groups form after the Annual Retreat, and tend to last a minimum of six months and oftentimes longer.

Additional Congregational Examples

20something (North Coast Church, Vista, CA): www.northcoastchurch.com; <http://northcoast20something.com>

Kairos and Young Adult Ministry (Brentwood Baptist Church, Nashville, TN): www.brentwoodbaptist.com/kairos

Contemporary Roman Catholics (CRC) (Holy Trinity Church, New York City): www.crcnyc.org

The Crossing (St. Paul's Episcopal Cathedral, Boston, MA): www.thecrossingboston.org

Marble Connection (Marble Collegiate Church, New York City): www.marblechurch.org/Programs/20sand30s/tabid/100/Default.aspx

St. Lydia's Dinner Church (New York City): www.stlydias.org

Strategies

Use the following faith formation strategies and customize them for the particular needs and perspectives of Millennials:

- Faith Formation using Digital Media and Web Technologies
- Intergenerational Faith Formation
- Milestones Faith Formation
- Faith Formation in Christian Practices
- Transforming the World: Engagement in and Formation for Service and Mission
- Spiritual Formation
- Multi-Ethnic Faith Formation
- Faith Formation for Spiritual Seekers
- Apprenticeships in Discipleship
- Interfaith Education and Dialogue

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Faith Formation with Generation X

In 2014 the oldest member of Generation X turns fifty years old. Generation X reflects a diversity of adults including single adults, married couples without children, and parents of children, teens, and even college-aged young adults.

Generation X shares many of the characteristics of post-Boomer faith that describe the Millennial Generation, especially the defining feature of *expressive communalism*, which reflects an emphasis on embodiment and community: using one's body in worship; in living out, or embodying, Christian teachings, in service; and in a desire for life in a particular faith community where they can be both personally fulfilled and serve others. Generation X, like Millennials, desire a theologically grounded belief that makes cognitive sense to them and that is also an expressive, embodied spiritual experience.

In *Gen X Religion*, researchers Richard Flory and Donald Miller identify five major characteristics of Generation X religion:

- Generation X religion emphasizes the sensual and experiential, combining the sacred and the profane and incorporating text, image, music, dance, and the body as venues for the expression of religious beliefs.
- Generation X religion is entrepreneurial in finding cultural and institutional space to create new religious expressions based on their existing lifestyle interests.
- Generation X religion is, on the one hand, similar to Baby Boomer religion in that it emphasizes personal identity, religious experience, and spiritual seeking; but it differs in that it roots the quest for religious identity in community, rather than a more purely personal spiritual quest.
- Race, ethnic, and gender diversity and inclusiveness is an explicit goal of Generation X religion.
- There is an insistence on an “authentic” religious experience in Generation X religion, both on the part of the individual and as found in the religious

communities that GenXers choose to join, that acknowledges the ambiguities, trials, and successes of life. (Flory, 234–35)

Generation X is looking for and creating community, belonging, and authenticity. Their desire seems to be first for community and belonging, and second for personal fulfillment. Personal fulfillment comes through commitment to the community, and through the experience of belonging to such a religious/spiritual community.

For Generation X, religious truth, while important, is not a fixed target, and is found through their religious experience, not in texts and doctrines. Truth, for Xers, is best conveyed through stories and myth, and is authenticated through the lived experience of themselves and others, rather than through the pronouncements—and propositional arguments—of external authorities.

Generation X is moving from written text to narrative and image as a basis for religious belief. Image and story have become dominant and text background. Second, there is a move away from proposition truth claims to truth validated by experience in the religious community. There is a move from the essentially individualistic spiritual quest that characterizes baby boomers to a religious/spiritual identity rooted in the larger community.

In his study of Catholic young adults (Generation X), researcher Dean Hoge summarized his key findings, which can easily apply to all Christian churches. He concluded that Generation X will tend to maintain their basic values, beliefs, and faith perspectives as they grow older. Today a religious identity is chosen, not imposed. This brings new personal freedom and autonomy, but it also brings new spiritual needs. Identity must now be chosen through experience and study. Compared with older generations, Generation X will uphold greater individual authority in religious and moral decisions and will desire more lay influence in institutional decision-making. They will tend to distinguish faith in God from obeying the rules of the institutional Church, clinging more to the former than to the latter. The challenge for churches is to encourage young adults to search the richness of the Catholic (Christian) tradition for themselves and to construct a Catholic (Christian) identity which they feel is genuinely inspiring.

In the study *Congregations That Get It* the researchers found that young adults (older Millennials and Generation X) “exercised typical American individualism as they decided about associating with religious communities, sometimes participating in more than one simultaneously” (Belzer, *et al.*, 106). The research team identified the following factors as influencing young adult’s participation in a faith community.

- choosing a specific community, rather than committing to a larger denomination
- making choices based on a number of factors, such as interpersonal relationships, worship style, geographic location, opportunities for involvement, and accessibility of leadership

- deciding how often to attend and the extent of their participation
- choosing how much of the official teachings to accept and how much ritual observance to practice
- balancing their individual authority with their identity as members of a community and religious tradition
- seeking a community where there is both flexibility and structure
- being experientially engaged as opposed to a “show up and watch” style of religious participation
- building interpersonal relationships with people who express and explore their religious identities in similar ways; relationship building was a fundamental aspect of young adults’ congregational experience (Belzer, *et al.*, 106–7).

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Strategies

Use the following faith formation strategies and customize them for the particular needs and perspectives of Generation X:

- Faith Formation using Digital Media and Web Technologies
- Intergenerational Faith Formation
- Family Faith Formation
- Milestones Faith Formation
- Faith Formation in Christian Practices
- Transforming the World: Engagement in and Formation for Service and Mission
- Spiritual Formation
- Multi-Ethnic Faith Formation
- Faith Formation for Spiritual Seekers
- Apprenticeships in Discipleship
- Pathways to Vibrant Faith and Active Engagement
- Interfaith Education and Dialogue

Resources

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Faith Formation with the Baby Boomer Generation

In 2011 the first members of the Baby Boomer Generation turn sixty-five years old. In the United States today Americans over sixty-five now outnumber teenagers by nearly two to one. What used to be referred to as the “graying of America” is now understood to be a social revolution. Some thirty-nine million Americans, or 13% of the U.S. population, are ages sixty-five and older—up from 4% in 1900. By 2050, according to Pew Research projections, about *one-in-five* Americans will be over age sixty-five, and about 5% will be ages eighty-five and older, up from 2% now. Nearly every industry in society, from health care to entertainment, is scrambling to respond to this age wave that is crashing onto our shores.

America is in the midst of a demographic revolution, but this revolution is about much more than longevity. It’s about the changing perspective of the Baby Boomers as they reach what was traditionally viewed as a time to enjoy the golden years. It’s about Americans who have already retired, but are still seeking purpose and productivity. We are witnessing the emergence of a new stage of life between adult midlife—typically focused on career and child-rearing—and old age, traditionally marked by increasing frailty and decline. This new stage of life spans several decades and is characterized by generally good health, relative financial stability, and an active, engaged lifestyle.

Among all adults ages sixty-five and older, nine in ten talk with family or friends every day. About eight in ten read a book, newspaper, or daily magazine; three-quarters watch more than a hour of television; about the same share prays daily. Less than half spend time on a hobby. Roughly one in four use the internet (Pew Research).

Two-thirds of adults ages sixty-five and older say religion is very important to them. Moreover, among adults ages sixty-five and above, a third (34%) say religion has grown more important to them over the course of their lives, while just 4% say it has become less important and the majority (60%) say it has stayed the same.

From research and discussions with adults fifty-five and older, Civic Ventures has identified four major needs and desires among older Americans that cut across all income categories, educational levels, and races or ethnicities. People are seeking:

- Opportunities to explore options for the next stage of life
- Opportunities to retool skills, obtain new training, or pursue educational interests

- Flexible work or service opportunities that use their skills and experience in meaningful ways
- Opportunities to make meaningful connections with others their own age and throughout the community

Civic Ventures believes that this changing notion of aging in America offers the prospect of an “experience dividend” of staggering proportions. In other words, the growing, knowledgeable older population can offer a tremendous return to our society. Never before have so many Americans had so much experience—with so much time and interest in using it.

Gary McIntosh describes the Baby Boomer generation as educated, media-oriented, independent, cause-oriented, fitness conscious, activists, quality conscious, and questioning of authority. He says that as church members Boomers are (1) committed to relationships, rather than organizations; (2) want to belong, rather than join; (3) supportive of people, rather than programs; (4) long to live their faith, rather than talk about it; (5) wish to be seen as unique individuals, rather than a monolithic group; (6) desire to design their own programs, rather than attend ones developed for them; (7) yearn to serve others, rather than only being served; and (8) crave meaningful activity, rather than empty days.

McIntosh makes the following recommendations for ministry with Baby Boomers based on his research:

- Build a ministry for boomers that is adventurous. Consider hiking in the mountains or cross-country skiing. Boomers have always seen themselves as a youthful generation, and they still do.
- Build a ministry for boomers that is fun. Consider catered parties, fishing trips, paint ball competition, and team-building camps. Boomers are not looking for a senior’s ministry; they are seeking an older youth ministry.
- Build a ministry for boomers that is significant. Rather than being served, consider serving others by building a home for Habitat for Humanity, assisting missionaries, helping out-of-work people to find a job, or tutoring children. Boomers desire to make a difference in the world by taking on great causes.
- Building a ministry for boomers that is educational. Along with Bible studies, consider CPR, basic first aid, personal health, and managing finances. Boomers are an educated generation, and they wish to continue learning to the end of their days.
- Building a ministry for boomers that is spiritual. Boomers are a mosaic of sub-groups, and it will take a multi-dimensional approach to spiritual formation to reach them. (McIntosh, 303)

Boomers tend to be far less driven by programs than the Builder Generation (1945 and earlier). They like activities that seem purposeful to them, that promote health and

wellness, and keep them feeling young. They are less interested in attending a meeting “just because they’re supposed to” and more interested in involving themselves in something they consider productive and worthwhile. For example, a ministry targeted toward the Boomer Generation might best resemble a day of serving together at a local homeless shelter followed by dinner together and a time of reflection.

Amy Hanson, in *Baby Boomers and Beyond*, proposes three essential components for creative ministries with maximum impact on Baby Boomers: *service, spiritual growth, and intergenerational relationships*.

- **Service:** Boomers want to do something interesting and challenging. They are ready to jump into a worthwhile cause where they feel that they can make a significant difference. Boomers want service opportunities that have a mission. They want to do things that give their lives purpose, meaning, and fulfillment. They want to know their contributions truly matter. There is no greater mission for Boomers to immerse themselves in than the mission of Christ to redeem and heal a broken world. Encourage Boomers to serve in an area where they’ve always had an interest, and provide them with exposure to a variety of service opportunities. Short term trips can be a great way for people over fifty to discover the one thing they want to invest themselves in. Show Boomers how they might use their past work experiences as tools for service. Help them tap into their passion.

“Engaging Boomers to make a major impact for Christ in the world should be a primary foundation for ministry with Boomers—if not *the* primary foundation. We have an open window of time right now to help individuals refocus their priorities and recognize how God wants to use them for his purposes in this season of their lives.” (Hanson, 143)

- **Spiritual Growth:** There are several fundamental resources why Boomers are responsive to the message of the gospel and to spiritual growth. Later Adulthood is a season of significant life transitions and people are more responsive to religion. A second reason is Boomers quest to find meaning and purpose in life as they enter the second half of life and evaluate the things that really provide lasting fulfillment. A third reason adults are open to faith and spiritual growth is their desire for meaningful relationships. The church can be a primary place of social interaction where people can connect with one another and talk about life issues. “All three factors—help dealing with life’s changes, a search for purpose, and a desire for meaningful relationships—can powerfully work together in drawing adults to Christ’s saving grace.” (Hanson, 151)

Effective ways to bring older adults into a relationship with Christ include: (1) small group faith formation, (2) hanging out in the places where Boomer

adults gather, (3) hosting events that appeal to Boomers' interests and needs, and (4) service opportunities.

- **Intergenerational Relationships:** Ministry with Baby Boomers includes an intergenerational component. Developing intergenerational relationships is one of the best ways to break age-related stereotypes, to share faith across generations, and to help the church become more unified. There are a variety of ways to connect the generations and develop intergenerational relationships: (1) encourage generations to serve together on a worthy cause; (2) form groups according to similar interests rather than age; (3) encouraging adults to intentionally pray for young people and vice versa; (4) host strategic intergenerational events that are fun for all, and have ready-made questions that permit age groups to engage easily in conversation, and encourage relationships to continue after the event is over; (6) ask adults to tell their stories, at workshop or events or programs, and capture them on video and/or in print; (7) develop intergenerational small group and large group programming; (8) integrate all ages in Sunday worship; and (9) educate people as to the uniqueness of each generation.

“As multiple generations work, worship, serve, and play together, the result will be that people lay down their own self-centeredness and take up the attitude of Christ. True, we may have to do church a little differently, but when all ages are regularly interacting and loving one another, God is honored, and we become an example to our hurting world.” (Hanson, 185)

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Strategies

Use the following faith formation strategies and customize them for the particular needs and perspectives of Baby Boomers:

- Faith Formation through the Life of the Church
- Faith Formation using Digital Media and Web Technologies
- Intergenerational Faith Formation
- Milestones Faith Formation
- Faith Formation in Christian Practices
- Transforming the World: Engagement in and Formation for Service and Mission
- Spiritual Formation
- Multi-Ethnic Faith Formation
- Faith Formation for Spiritual Seekers

- Apprenticeships in Discipleship
- Pathways to Vibrant Faith and Active Engagement
- Empowering the Community to Share their Faith
- Interfaith Education and Dialogue

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- Encore Careers: www.encore.org
- Half Time: From Success to Significance: www.halftime.org
- Older Adult Ministries (United Methodist Church): www.gbod.org/site/c.nhLRJ2PMKsG/b.3784737/k.7977/Older_Adult_Ministries.htm

Faith Formation with the Builder Generation

The present generation of senior adults (the Builder Generation) has probably gone through more changes in their lives and in society than any previous generation. They have gone from horse and buggy days to space travel, to electricity, telephones, computers, VCRs, DVDs, iPods, iPhones, and so many more changes that have

effected the way they live, work, eat, play, and worship. They have lived through two world wars, the Korean Conflict, Vietnam, wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, and world terrorism. Through it all, the believers among them have depended upon their spiritual strength to manage the changes, the losses, and the challenges that historical events and the process of growing older have brought upon them.

Today's maturing adults are different from those who came before. They are more motivated by a desire for personal purpose; they tend to be more participatory, more interested in being actively involved with issues that "matter." Continuing their spiritual growth in the later years is crucial—for them and for churches.

Richard Johnson describes several fundamental tasks, overarching units of faith-work, which serve as the scaffolding for comprehensive faith formation programs for maturing adults. These tasks not only guide church leaders in constructing fundamental and functional faith formation ministries, they also act as spiritual development handholds for maturing adults as they work toward a greater realization of God's presence in their lives. (For a description of all sixteen tasks, see Richard Johnson's book and article listed in the resource section.)

1. **Develop basic faith formation competencies with a strong spiritual base.** All maturing adults need to have some basic information, such as about common misconceptions about aging, the fundamental emotional needs of elder adults, common reactions to loss, lifestyle adjustments that come with aging, ways to build relationships that are both nurturing and spiritually, and so on. This information helps form the foundation for the process of "holy aging."
2. **View aging as a spiritual process.** Aging is a spiritual process every bit as much as it is a physical and mental process. In order to understand and personally "own" this expanded view of aging, maturing adults must be given the tools to help them deal positively and constructively with all the issues that aging brings.
3. **Build spiritual companionship skills into the intergenerational patterns of the Christian community.** By forming relationships with diverse groups, across lines of age and other categories, maturing adults can become more aware of the movement of the Spirit in their own lives and in the lives of others. For example, helping maturing adults form mentoring relationships with younger members of the congregation can be a source of positive growth for all involved.
4. **Develop ways to see illness through a lens of faith.** Older adults can grow to see their illness as a normal part of growing older, and as an opportunity to embrace God's love more dearly.

5. **Understand wellness as a spiritually holistic concept.** Wellness is more than the absence of disease; it's a state of being where one is functioning in an optimal manner, physically, mentally, emotionally, and spiritually. Maturing adults need a personal wellness program, a framework that gives them specific guidance on how to achieve wellness regardless of the condition of their objective health.
6. **Learn the essentials of giving care in a way that encourages spiritually growth.** Many maturing adults will be called on to be caregivers. Caregiving is so much more than performing tasks; it's an engagement of the heart as well as the mind, an illumination of the spirit as well as an activity of the soul. Caregivers need to know that their role is a ministry, an opportunity for spiritual growth.
7. **Connect the experiences of the maturing years with God's grace.** The maturing years offer a time of graced and gracious growth. As the body slowly diminishes and shows the signs of physical "dis-integration," the heart and soul have the potential to more fully integrate. The road to spiritual development in the maturing stage is not an easy one; walking it requires continual guidance and enlightenment. This is where an ongoing faith formation program can rise to the occasion.
8. **See all relationships as opportunities for expressing the love of Jesus Christ.** Maturing adults need, and perhaps even crave, the warmth and connection of relationships regardless of whether they are married or single, living at home or in a care setting. Faith formation for maturing adults can raise up all relationships, regardless of how difficult they can sometimes be, as reflections of God's love in action. Maturing adults need to hear the message of love accented again and again so they can reflect the light of Christ in their everyday lives.
9. **Rise to the role of spiritual mentor-coach.** Younger persons in the faith community need the spiritual wisdom of maturing adults. At the same time, maturing adults need the encouragement and skills to carry out the role of mentor-coach.
10. **Enter into a renewed practice of prayer.** In our advancing maturity we discover new urges to find more intimate communion with the divine, and a desire for deeper connection with Jesus. Prayer, our continuous connection with God available 24/7, brings us ever further into the mystery of life, while providing the means for a more peaceful and secure existence.

Consider the following ideas for develop faith formation for the Builder Generation of older adults.

- **Spiritual Enrichment:** “spirituality of aging” programs and retreats, spiritual disciplines and practices, special worship and ritual experiences focused on older adult spiritual and religious needs, prayer groups, retreat experiences, journaling classes, rituals to acknowledge life transitions, and healing services
- **Learning:** book clubs, adult education classes, Bible study classes and groups, small group faith sharing, life review classes, seminars on “end-of-life” issues, trips to museums and other learning venues
- **Nutrition and Wellness:** exercise programs and groups, “walking” together groups, daily exercise resources, good nutrition classes led by a qualified nutritionist, cooking classes for preparing meals with a balanced diet, modeling good nutrition in church meals, nutrition resources
- **Community:** social activities, dinners, travel to religious sites, pilgrimages, intergenerational relationships and programming, trips, intergenerational coaching and mentoring, “movies with a message” programs, field trips
- **Service:** tutoring children, “foster” grandparent program, service projects—local and global, ministry within the church community

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Strategies

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- Empowering the Community to Share their Faith
- Interfaith Education and Dialogue

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- Senior Adult Ministry (Reformed Church in America): www.rca.org/sslpage.aspx?pid=1743
- Senior Adult Ministry (Johnson Institute): www.senioradultministry.com

Milestones Faith Formation

Faith formation around milestones, sacramental celebrations, and life transitions provides an excellent way to promote the spiritual and faith growth of all ages and generations, enhance family faith practice at home, and strengthen people’s engagement in the church community or invite people to join or rejoin the church community.

First, churches can develop lifelong faith formation around the significant lifecycle milestones, sacramental celebrations, and transitions in the lives of individuals and families across the whole life span from birth to death. Second, churches can develop multi-faceted faith formation (learning, worship/ritual, faith practices) around lifecycle milestones, sacramental celebrations, and life transitions to deepen people’s faith, strengthen their engagement in church life, and equip them with practices for living their faith. Third, churches can utilize lifecycle milestones, sacramental celebrations, and life transitions to develop relationships with those who are not actively engaged in the church community. Milestones faith formation provides an important means to address the religious and spiritual needs of all four scenarios.

Lifelong faith formation centered on milestones.

Churches can fashion a plan for lifelong faith formation for home and church around congregational, lifecycle (individual or family), and annual milestones. Congregational milestones include: baptism, welcoming young children to worship, first communion, presentation of Bibles, confirmation, marriage, funeral, commissioning

members for ministries and mission trips, and much more. Lifecycle milestones include: entering a new stage of schooling, graduations (middle school, high school, college, or graduate school), getting a driver’s license, leaving home for college or the military, first home or apartment, new career or job, moving, retirement, death of a family member, and much more. Annual milestones include birthdays, anniversaries, start of the school year (blessing backpacks), seasons of the church year (Advent, Christmas, Lent, Holy Week), and much more.

A milestones plan for church and home for the first two decades of life could be developed in the following way:

Age	Milestone
Birth	Baptism
Yearly	Anniversary of Baptism
2-5 years old	Prayer
2-5 years old	Welcoming Young Children to Worship
5 years old	Entering School
Yearly	Blessing of the Backpacks
1st-2nd grade	Money & Being a Steward (Allowance)
2nd-3rd grade	First Communion
3rd-4th grade	Bible Presentation
4th-5th grade	Sexuality (“My Body, God’s Gift)
5th-6th grade	Entering Middle School
8th grade	Graduation
Teens	Confirmation
Teens	Driver’s License
12th grade	Graduation

Multi-faceted faith formation for each milestone.

Churches can incorporate and integrate the following essential elements to provide a multi-faceted faith formation for individuals, couples, families around each milestone:

1. a ritual celebration or a blessing marking the milestone with the whole church community
2. a home ritual celebration or blessing marking the milestone
3. a learning program, often for the whole family or intergenerational, that prepares the individual and the whole family for the milestone and for faith practice at home
4. a tangible, visible reminder or symbol of the occasion being marked
5. resources to support continuing faith growth and practice after the milestone

Example: Plan milestones faith formation that includes: (1) preparation for marking or celebrating a milestone, (2) the experience or celebration of the milestone, and (3) follow-up after the milestone. A milestones plan includes congregational activities and individual/home activities. For example, developing a milestones plan for marriage could include the following elements:

1. Education: marriage course or workshop (theology, life skills, faith practices)
2. Ritual: preparation for the marriage ritual
3. Marriage ceremony
4. Connection to the community: prayers at Sunday worship for the married couple (before and after the ceremony); a “Book of Blessings” from the congregation to the married couple with prayers and words of support and encouragement
5. Continued support: monthly married couples small group meeting; online resources for married couples at the parish web site, a free magazine subscription for the first year of marriage, monthly e-newsletter for married couples
6. Reunion: a reunion breakfast or dinner for newly married couples every six months for the first several years of marriage
7. Anniversary: celebrating marriage anniversaries each month at Sunday worship with a special remembrance and blessing; sending a note of congratulations and a prayer on the anniversary of marriage
8. Resources: Bible readings and reflections for married couples, prayers for a new couple, suggestions for starting a faith-filled home life, ways to be involved in the faith community, ways to be involved in service and justice ministries as a couple

Moments of return.

At each stage of life, significant milestones and life transitions provide churches with “moments of return” when people who have not been involved in church life can return to the church for a ritual experience, family celebration, religious perspective on life’s transitions, encouragement, and/or comfort and support. By maximizing these opportunities churches are nurturing people’s faith and welcoming them back into the life of the faith community. Marriage, baptism, moments of sickness (personal, family, friends), the death of a loved one, and life decisions are all important milestones or life transitions that provide an excellent opportunity for “moments of return.” Marriage and baptism present special opportunities to build a relationship with young adult couples that can lead to an invitation to participate in a church program to guide them in becoming spiritually committed or in renewing their faith as a foundation for deeper growth and more active engagement with the church community. Adulthood is especially filled with transitions: geographic relocations, family formation and re-formation, career changes, empty nests, unanticipated illness, divorce, and the loss of loved ones. In times of

transition, people can experience feelings of disorientation and tend to question personal priorities; they may seek to “finish unfinished business” or develop new dimensions of their lives.

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- Vibrant Faith Ministries: www.vibrantfaith.org

Faith Formation in Christian Practices

Churches can offer people of all ages a compelling vision of a Christian way of life that is worth living and then guide them in developing that way of life. The recovery of historic Christian practices—honoring the body, discernment, dying well, forgiving, healing, hospitality, keeping Sabbath, managing household life, praying, reading the Bible, testimony and witness, transforming the world (caring for creation, doing justice, peacemaking, serving), singing our lives—provides a way to shape and focus faith formation for all ages. These are practices in which Christian communities have engaged over the years and across many cultures. Christian practices have helped people to understand their continuity with the Christian tradition—an important matter during this time of change and in the midst of a culture infatuated with what is new. These Christian practices have endured over time and can help contemporary people to treasure their continuity with the past. Faith formation in Christian practices equips people to apply these practices to everyday life in our own time and place. Those who embrace Christian practices engage in them in the light of God’s presence and in response to God’s grace as it is known in Jesus Christ.

Churches can make Christian practices central to faith formation for all ages and generations, at church and home, by focusing on these historic Christian practices. Craig Dykstra writes,

In my view, an essential task of education in faith is to teach all the basic practices of the Christian faith. The fundamental aim of Christian education in all its forms, varieties, and settings should be that individuals—and indeed whole communities—learn these practices, be drawn into participation in them, learn to do them with increasingly deepened understanding and skill, learn to extend them more broadly and fully in their own lives and into their world, and learn to correct them, strengthen them, and improve them. (Dykstra, 71)

Christian practices can be incorporated into all of church life and faith formation through a holistic formation process of teaching the practice, listening to God's Word and celebrating the practice at worship, experiencing the practice in the life of the church community, living/acting on the practice at home and in the world, and reflecting upon the lived experience. Churches can form people in Christian practices through educational programs, apprenticeships, and immersion experiences that give people a firsthand experience of a Christian practice, equip people to live the Christian practice in their daily lives, and guide reflection on living the practices. Faith formation can offer a wide variety of programs for all ages and generations to teach Christian practices, such as family and intergenerational programs, summer camps, workshops, courses, retreats, children's Liturgy of the Word and discussions after Sunday worship, field trips, action projects, and small groups.

As churches become intentional about Christian faith practices, a renewed sense of identity and mission is fostered in the whole community. Engaging in Christian practices elevates the sense of intentionality throughout the congregation that leads to greater vitality and spiritual depth. The church becomes intentional about teaching practices by how it lives—teaching the practice of hospitality by how it welcomes the stranger, teaching about the place and significance of Scripture by how it is read in worship, treated in sermons, and held in the communal and personal lives of church members.

IDEAS

Formation in Christian practices.

Churches can design educational programs for all ages and generations that are designed intentionally to teach people how to live the Christian practices in their daily lives. Utilize a learning process that incorporates the following elements in an educational program:

- *Yearning*: tap into people's hunger for living meaningfully using real-life stories.
- *Reflecting*: give people an opportunity to become aware of how they experience

the hunger for the Christian practice in their own lives, and how they may already be living this practice.

- *Exploring*: present the biblical teaching on the practice, how the practice addresses basic human need and hungers, and why the practice is important for living a Christian life.
- *Living*: provide people with a variety of ways to live the Christian practice and integrate the practice into their daily lives.

A variety of different program formats, tailored to needs of different ages and generations, can be used to teach Christian practices: family and intergenerational programs, courses and workshops, retreats, summer programs (Vacation Bible School and summer camps), youth meetings, small group learning, and Bible study groups. For example, by organizing Christian practices small groups with each one focused on a different Christian practice, a church can offer people a variety of learning topics on different days of the week, at different times of the day, and in a variety of places (home, restaurant, coffee shops) that can fit their busy lives. A church can publish, in print and online, a menu of Christian practice groups, times, and places.

A church can develop a one-year plan Christian practices faith formation plan which integrates a monthly intergenerational learning model for all ages with a connection to the Sunday worship (Scripture readings, music, and sermon), household Christian practice activities, and a churchwide “practices project.” In addition the monthly Christian practice can also be taught in other settings such as a youth meeting and small groups. Here’s an example of a one-year plan on the theme of “Living Faith: Real Faith for Real Life.”

September: Caring for the Body

October: Celebrating Life

November: Discernment

December: Eating Well

January: Forgiving

February: Keeping the Sabbath

March: Managing Household Life

April: Praying Well

May: Reading the Bible

June: Transforming the World

(This example uses the *Living Well: Christian Practices for Everyday Life* resource.)

Apprenticeships.

Churches can develop Christian practice apprenticeships where people of all ages can learn how live a practice from “Practice Mentors”—living embodiments of a Christian practice, such as of service or hospitality or prayer. Structure learning opportunities around “Practice Mentors” in individualized and small group settings where mentors guide people in learning about the practice from Scripture and the tradition, doing the practice with them, and reflecting upon the lived experience of the practice. For example, if people wanted to learn how to serve people in need at the local homeless shelter, they can accompany the “practice mentor” when he or she works at the shelter, and learn about homelessness and the practice of hospitality and serving others. Each apprenticeship can include a study component with independent reading from the Bible and descriptions of service. This model of mentoring can be applied across the entire church and become integral to all learning programs in the curriculum.

Christian practice immersion experiences.

Churches can develop immersion experiences for people of all ages using the faith community’s lived experience of the Christian practices. Each immersion experience begins with a direct experience of the practice—within the church or in the wider community—followed by reflection on the experience, education about the practice, and resources for living the practice in daily life. Churches can offer a variety of immersion experiences throughout the year in various program formats and timeframes, or integrate immersion experiences into an existing program. Immersion experiences can include field trips to see and experience Christian practices in action, such as dying well at a hospice center or praying at a monastery or hospitality at a soup kitchen or homeless shelter.

Christian practices in current faith formation programming

- **A Focus for the Whole Year:** Make a Christian practice a focus for the whole year through all education programs, worship, preaching, and service/action, for example: reading the Bible, praying, hospitality, and transforming the world.
- **A Focus for a Season:** Make a Christian practice the focus for a season of the year through all education programs, worship, preaching, and service/action, for example: during the Lenten Season focus on the practice that is in keeping with the theology, liturgies, and Scripture readings of the season, such as forgiving or discernment or praying or transforming the World.
- **A Focus for a Month:** Focus on a Christian practice each month for a whole year or more in family-intergenerational programming, aligned with Sunday worship and preaching, action projects, and so on. For example: If the

family-intergenerational program is focused on Ritual–Celebration–Worship the following practices could become the focus of learning programs: celebrating life, eating well, keeping Sabbath, praying, and reading the Bible.

- **A Connection to Worship:** Connect the Sunday lectionary readings and preaching to Christian practices and offer educational programs on Christian practices to prepare for or follow-up on the particular Sunday.
- **A Connection to Milestones:** Connect Christian practices to milestones and life transitions. Every milestone presents an opportunity to teach a Christian practice that directly connects to what is happening in the life of the individual or family. For example, confirmation (or high school graduation) is for teaching the practice of discernment and transforming the world; marriage is an opportunity for teaching managing household life.

Resources

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Pohl, Christine D. *Making Room: Recovering Hospitality as a Christian Tradition*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999.

Saliers, Don, and Emily Saliers. *A Song to Sing, A Life to Live: Reflections on Music as Spiritual Practice*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2005.

Wirzba, Norman. *Living the Sabbath*. Grand Rapids: Brazos, 2006.

Wolfteich, Claire. *Lord Have Mercy: Praying for Justice with Conviction and Humility*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2006.

All Ages

Faith Practices. United Church of Christ. Cleveland: Pilgrim, 2010. (www.faithpractices.org)
(Online resources for every age group and setting in your congregation with at least twenty-four different faith practices—each practice has more than six hundred activities, fifty activities per age group)

Family and Adult

Martineau, Mariette. *Living Well Children's Workbook*. Naugatuck: LifelongFaith Associates, 2009. (www.LifelongFaith.com)

Roberto, John, editor. *Living Well: Christian Practices for Everyday Life*. Naugatuck: LifelongFaith Associates, 2009. (www.LifelongFaith.com)

Youth

Bass, Dorothy C. and Don Richter, editors. *Way to Live*. Nashville: Upper Room, 2002.

Young Adult

Bass, Dorothy C. and Susan R. Briehl, editors. *On Our Way: Christian Practices for Living a Whole Life*. Nashville: Upper Room, 2010.

Adult

Living the Good Life Together: A Study of Christian Character in Community. Nashville: Abingdon. (www.livingthegoodlifetogether.com)

Websites

Faith Practices (United Church of Christ): www.faithpractices.org

Living Well: Christian Practices for Everyday Life (LifelongFaith Associates):
www.LifelongFaith.com

Practicing our Faith: www.practicingourfaith.org

Way to Live: www.waytolive.org

Transforming the World: Engagement in and Formation for Service and Mission

Church can place engagement in mission and service at the center of all of its efforts. Tapping into the tremendous interest and passion in all generations, but especially the youngest, for service to the world, faith formation can educate and empower families and individuals of all ages for the Christian mission to the community and world: serving the poor and vulnerable, working for justice to ensure the rights of all

people, being a peacemaker, and caring for creation. As Jim Wallis observes, “Two of the most powerful forces in the world right now are service and spirituality. The growing influence of both is evident almost everywhere, and together they provide the most potent combination for changing our communities. Service and spirituality are growing streams of energy, which, as they begin to flow together, could create a mighty river of action.”

First, churches can make formation for service and engagement in local and global action projects an essential component of faith formation for all age groups and families every year: serving the poor and vulnerable, working for justice to ensure the rights of all people, being a peacemaker, and caring for creation. An annual “mission involvement catalog” can be created, in print and online, to provide descriptions of the diversity of projects.

Second, churches can incorporate an educational component into all service/mission projects that includes knowledge of the justice issues being addressed, the teachings of Scripture and the Christian tradition on the issues, skills for the specific service/mission project, and reflection on the service/mission involvement.

Third, churches can sponsor local and global service/mission projects that are designed for the participation of people from the wider community, providing a public presence of the church in the community—from local efforts to feed the hungry, house the homeless, and improve education by adopting a public school to global projects that build schools, care for AIDS victims, and provide wells for water. The church partners with other churches and agencies to establish a serving presence in the community where people who are passionate about transforming the world, but not involved in church life, can work side-by-side with church members and see the gospel in action.

IDEAS

Service and mission projects for all ages.

Churches can organize service/mission projects for individuals of all ages, the whole family, and multiple generations that are developmental in scope with projects geared to different levels of involvement and challenge:

- local mission projects lasting anywhere from a few hours to one day in length
- short-term mission trips lasting anywhere from two to five days and requiring an overnight stay on location
- weeklong mission trips within the United States as well as to foreign countries, designed for those who are ready to take the next big step in service
- global expedition trips of ten to fourteen days that provide the opportunity to be immersed for a longer period in the targeted community and culture
- personalized small group mission trips, organized around the interests and time of the group

Research and utilize existing projects and organizations—locally, nationally, and globally—to offer a variety of involvements for people of all ages and for families at different times during the year and in varying lengths. Develop an annual “catalog” of all service/mission opportunities for children and parents, teenagers, adults, families, and all generations. Integrate service/mission projects into the existing faith formation programming for families, children, teens, and adults or build faith formation programming around service/mission projects.

Example: Ginghamburg Church (Adult Mission Trips)

<http://ginghamsburg.org/missions>

Education and reflection with service and mission projects.

Churches can incorporate social analysis and theological reflection with action projects to guide people in developing a deeper understanding of the causes of injustice and the teachings of Scripture and the Christian tradition. The process includes: (1) connecting to a social issue (Experience)—how people are personally affected by an issue or how the issue affects others; (2) exploring the social issue (Social Analysis) to understand the causes and underlying factors that promote or sustain the issue; (3) reflecting upon the teachings of Scripture and the Christian tradition (Theological Reflection) to develop a faith perspective on the social issue and how people of faith can address the issue; and (4) developing ways to address the issue (Action) by working for social change and serving those in need as individuals, groups, communities, and/or organizations.



The process can begin with a service involvement, leading to social analysis and theological reflection *or* it can begin with people's experience of a social issue, leading to analysis of the issue, connecting the issue to the faith tradition, and developing action projects of direct service to those in need, and social change and advocacy.

Resources

- Holland, Joseph and Peter Henriot. *Social Analysis—Linking Faith and Justice*. Maryknoll: Orbis, 1983.
- Semmens, Dave, O. Carm. *The Pastoral Circle—Explained*. Video. Washington, DC: Center of Concern. (www.educationforjustice.org/interact/PastoralCircle/player.html)
- Wisn, Frans Jozef Servaas, Peter Henriot, and Rodrigo Mejia. *The Pastoral Circle Revisited: A Critical Quest for Truth And Transformation*. Maryknoll, Orbis, 2005.

Annual churchwide service project.

Churches can mobilize the whole faith community through an annual churchwide justice and service project with local-global connections. Focus on a project, such as adopting a local or global action project organized by an organization, or focus on an annual theme, such as poverty, care for creation, or peacemaking. For each annual theme develop a comprehensive set of programs and resources (often available from organizations you partner with) for all age groups, families, and the whole community, including:

- worship and prayer experiences focused on the particular theme or project
- educational sessions including social analysis of the issues and reflection on the teachings of Scripture and the Christian tradition
- household activities on the theme or project: prayers, learning resources, action suggestions
- local action projects, if you focus on a theme
- international action projects, if you focus on a theme
- a website with the resources, activities, action projects, and features to allow people to share what they are doing
- special presentations by experts on the issues and by people engaged in action on the issue

An example of this type of churchwide involvement is *Faith in Action Day* sponsored by World Vision and Outreach, Inc. *Faith in Action* is a four-week, churchwide campaign that creates an outward focus and a heart to serve in your congregation. *Faith in Action* culminates on a Sunday on which the entire congregation engages in service projects in and with the community. (www.putyourfaithinaction.org)



Service with the wider community.

Churches can sponsor local and global service/mission projects that are designed for the participation of people from the wider community, providing a public presence of the church in the community—from local efforts to feed the hungry, house the homeless, and improve education by adopting a public school to global projects that build schools, care for AIDS victims, and provide wells for water. The church partners with other churches and agencies to establish a serving presence in the community where people who are passionate about transforming the world, but not involved in church life, can work side-by-side with church members and see the gospel in action.

Study-action small groups.

Churches can develop small groups that combine study of justice and social issues with experiential hands-on action projects. Groups can be organized around issues or themes. One example of a small group program that weaves study, small group learning, retreat experiences, and action projects is JustFaith (www.justfaith.org).

JustFaith is a thirty-week justice formation and transformation process that focuses on discipleship—engagement in the life of Jesus—and the call to be about God’s dream of justice and compassion in a world scarred by the domestic and global crisis called poverty. Meeting weekly, small groups of 10–15 people employ books, videos, discussion, prayer, retreats and hands-on experiences. Opening and closing retreats are part of the commitment each participant makes to the group. Four immersion experiences provide face-to-face contact with people living on the margins of society, and include social analysis and spiritual/theological reflection. The intent of JustFaith is to provide a tapestry of learning opportunities that emphasize and enliven the healing work of God’s compassion found in scripture, church history, teaching, and faithful witnesses.

Resources

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- Cannon, Mae Else. *Social Justice Handbook—Small Steps for a Better World*. Downers Grove: Intervarsity, 2009.
- Clark, Chap and Kara E. Powell. *Deep Justice in a Broken World: Helping Your Kids Serve Others and Right the Wrongs around Them*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2007.
- Clawson, Julie. *Everyday Justice—The Global Impact of Our Daily Choices*. Downers Grove: Intervarsity Press, 2009.
- Daley-Harris, Shannon, Jeffrey Keenan, and Karen Speerstra. *Our Day to End Poverty: Twenty-Four Ways You Can Make a Difference*. San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler, 2007.
- Delio, Iliia, Keith Douglass Warner, O.F.M., and Pamela Wood. *Care for Creation: A Franciscan Spirituality of the Earth*. Cincinnati: St. Anthony Messenger Press, 2009.
- Greer, Peter and Phil Smith. *The Poor Will Be Glad—Joining the Revolution to Lift the World Out of Poverty*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2009.
- Haugen, Gary A. *Just Courage: God’s Great Expedition for the Restless Christian*. Downers Grove, IL: IVP Books, 2008.
- Jegen, Mary Evelyn. *Just Peacemakers: An Introduction to Peace and Justice*. New York: Paulist Press, 2006.
- McLaren, Brian. *Everything Must Change: Jesus, Global Crises, and a Revolution of Hope*. Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2007.
- McLaren, Brian, Elisa Padilla, and Ashley Bunting Seeber. *The Justice Project*. Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2009.
- Massaro S.J., Thomas. *Living Justice: Catholic Social Teaching in Action*. (Revised Edition) Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield, 2008.
- Peters, Rebecca Todd, and Elizabeth Hinson-Hasty, editors. *To Do Justice*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2008.
- Powell, Kara E. and Brad M. Griffin. *Deep Justice Journeys: Moving from Mission Trips to Missional Living*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2009.
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- Sagawa, Shirley. *The American Way to Change: How National Service and Volunteers Are Transforming America*. San Francisco: Jossey Bass, 2010.
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- Sleeth, J. Matthew *Serve God, Save the Planet: A Christian Call to Action*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2007.
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- Thompson, J. Milburn. *Introducing Catholic Social Thought*. Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 2010.
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Websites

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- Catholics Confront Global Poverty: www.usccb.org/sdwp/globalpoverty
- Center of Concern: www.educationforjustice.org
- Church World Service: churchworldservice.org
- Compassion International: www.compassion.com
- Externally Focused Network: <http://www.externallyfocusednetwork.com/>
- Habitat for Humanity: www.habitat.org
- Heifer Project: www.heifer.org
- Inspired to Serve—An Online Toolkit for Interfaith Action: www.inspiredtoserve.org
- International Justice Mission: www.ijm.org
- Lifetree Adventures: www.lifetreadventures.com
- NETWORK: www.networklobby.org
- ONE Campaign: www.one.org
- Saddleback Church: The PEACE Plan (www.saddleback.com/lakeforest/adults/peace) (www.thepeaceplan.com)
- World Vision: worldvision.org

Spiritual Formation

Churches can respond to the hunger of people of all ages for growing in relationship and intimacy with God and exploring more deeply the life of the Spirit by providing formation in spiritual disciplines and practices. Churches can engage individuals and families in learning about and practicing historic Christian spiritual disciplines, and in developing a “rule of life” that allows for regular space for the practice of the spiritual disciplines. Churches can offer spiritual formation for individuals, families, and multiple generations that includes education in the spiritual disciplines and practices, retreat experiences, spiritual guides who serve as mentors on the spiritual journey, and resources on the spiritual disciplines and practices.

IDEAS

Formation in spiritual practices and disciplines.

Churches can develop the spiritual life of all age groups and families through the intentional teaching of spiritual practices and disciplines in age-appropriate ways. Focus on essential spiritual practices such as *Lectio Divina*, Scripture reflection, spiritual reading, contemplation, fixed-hour prayer, the examen, solitude and silence, Sabbath, praying with art and music, discernment, fasting, and prayer styles and traditions. Select one practice or develop a program with multiple spiritual practices. Utilize a variety of models to teach spiritual practices and disciplines, such as individualized growth plans, online spiritual formation centers and resources, one-on-one spiritual direction or mentoring, small group spiritual formation, retreats, Lenten programs, and large group programs (courses, workshops).

Spiritual formation small groups for teens, young adults, and adults provide a flexible way to explore and experience the spiritual practices and disciplines, and apply them to daily life. Offer small groups in a variety settings (church, home, coffee shop) and times, and lengths suited to people's lifestyles. Offer a variety of content topics such as "Spiritual Disciplines Bible Study Groups" focused on the core spiritual practices in the Bible (see *Spiritual Disciplines Companion: Bible Studies and Practices to Transform Your Soul* by Jan Johnson); and small groups focused on a single spiritual practice, such as Sabbath, prayer, contemplation, fasting, Scripture reflection, pilgrimage, discernment, and liturgical year.

Set aside a prayer room stocked with resources about prayer and spiritual practices and connect people to online spiritual formation and prayer resources, as well as to online communities that nurture spiritual formation.

Churchwide program for spiritual formation.

Churches can engage all ages in the congregation in a small group spiritual formation process that explores spiritual practices, and develops new daily patterns that will open people's lives to a deepening relationship with God. This can be done in a small group format or in more structured teaching format. One example of the small group format is *Companions in Christ* (Upper Room Books), a twenty-eight-week study of five topics: spiritual formation, scripture, prayer, vocation, and spiritual companionship. Each week of study includes a reading by a recognized author in spiritual formation, reflection questions, and daily scripture readings to guide private reflection, culminating with a two-hour group session where people share their thoughts, reflect together, and take part in diverse group learning experiences. *Exploring the Way* (Upper Room) is structured more as a class, meets for just one hour each week, and includes 6 weeks of sessions. The participants are asked to engage in personal reading and reflection after (not before) the group meeting. Topics include: grace, blessedness, forgiveness, transforming discipleship, prayer, and discernment. *The Way of the Child* (Upper Room) is designed for ages six to eleven, calls children to recognize

their own relationship with God and to create quiet space in which to listen, and includes 39 modules that can be used as a whole or in sections. The Way of Pilgrimage is a five-volume, thirty-week experiential, peer study with video, designed for youth in high school and college freshmen, that engages them in ancient spiritual practices of prayer and contemplation, helping them discover new ways to go deeper spiritually. Topics include: way of pilgrimage, the Bible, prayer, companions on the pilgrimage, and stepping into the world.

Resources

- Chambers, Sally, Jonathon Norman, Gavin Richardson, Kyle Dugan, Craig Mitchell, Ciona Rouse, Jenny Youngman, Steve Matthews and Kara Lassen. *The Way of Pilgrimage*. Nashville: Upper Room, 2007.
- Dawson, Gerrit Scott, Adele J. González, E. Glenn Hinson, Rueben P. Job, Marjorie J. Thompson, and Wendy M. Wright. *Companions in Christ: A Small-Group Experience in Spiritual Formation*. Revised Edition. Nashville: Upper Room, 2006.
- McGregor, Wynn. *Companions in Christ: The Way of the Child*. Nashville: Upper Room, 2006.

Website

Companions in Christ: www.companionsinchrist.org

Spiritual formation in all faith formation programming.

Churches can utilize existing faith formation programming with children, teens, adults, and families to teach spiritual practices and disciplines. Select a spiritual practice as a focus for each month and incorporate the teaching, demonstration, and experience of the practice in all faith formation programming and church meetings, provide a resources for individuals and families to live the practice in daily life (print or online), reinforce the practice through Sunday worship. Introduce prayer, silence, and a slower pace to faith formation programs and to all congregational meetings and programs. Incorporate prayer practices, contemplation, reflection, and discernment into service projects and mission trips.

A contemplative approach to faith formation.

Churches can nurture the spiritual life of all ages and generations by infusing a contemplative approach to faith formation—spiritual disciplines and contemplative practices—into all faith formation programming. Utilize the seven principles and their corresponding practices developed by Mark Yaconelli and the Youth Ministry and Spirituality Project in developing a contemplative approach to faith formation.

- **Sabbath.** A contemplative approach is grounded in a Christian community committed to the sacred balance between work and rest. A life that honors Sabbath rest helps us to be more in touch with our heart and soul, more aware of the Spirit of God, and more available for relationships of love.

- **Prayer.** A contemplative approach is rooted in desire for intimacy with God in Christ through a life of prayer. Practice and teach many forms of prayer, especially regular periods of *contemplative* prayer in order to be healed, inspired, and guided by the power of the Holy Spirit.
- **Covenant Community.** A contemplative approach is practiced within a covenant community of Christian disciples. Encourage, support, and practice small covenant groups who sense a common call to spiritual growth and meet regularly in covenant communities for sharing, prayer, Scripture study, and discernment.
- **Accompaniment.** A contemplative approach is focused on discipleship through accompaniment, for example, initiating young persons into mature Christian faith through relationships with elders who join them in living the way of authentic discipleship and offer them friendship, guidance, and listening hearts as they make the passage through adolescence into spiritual maturity.
- **Discernment.** A contemplative approach is guided by discernment. Teach and practice the disciplines of individual and group discernment so that people can learn to be fully available and responsive to the movement of God's grace in their covenant communities.
- **Hospitality.** A contemplative approach seeks to welcome, bless, and joyfully integrate all people into the whole church community—the full inclusion of people and their many gifts into every dimension of church life: worship, teaching, proclamation, fellowship, and service.
- **Authentic Action.** A contemplative approach seeks to engage people in authentic actions that reflect God's mercy, justice, and peace. Communal practices of Sabbath, prayer, discernment, and accompaniment find their fulfillment in actions with youth that make visible the gifts of the Holy Spirit.

(For a complete description of the seven principles see chapter 4 in *Growing Souls* by Mark Yaconelli.)

Resources

- Yaconelli, Mark. *Contemplative Youth Ministry: Practicing the Presence of Jesus*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2006.
- _____. *Growing Souls: Experiments in Contemplative Youth Ministry*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2007.
- _____. *Downtown: Helping Teenagers Pray*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2008.
- _____. *Wonder, Fear, and Longing: A Book of Prayers*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2009.

Spiritual guides or mentors.

Churches can identify people who model discipleship and live the spiritual practices to serve as spiritual mentors or guides for people of all ages on their spiritual journeys. Prepare people through a retreat experience focused on their spiritual life, spiritual practices, and guiding others on their spiritual journeys. Create a community of spiritual mentors/guides who meet regularly for sharing, prayer, Scripture study, and discernment in the service of their ministry of spiritual formation. Engage the spiritual guides or mentors in one-on-one or small group spiritual formation by adding a spiritual mentoring component to existing spiritual formation programs and small groups.

Spiritual formation opportunities for the wider community.

Churches can develop opportunities for spiritual formation by taking existing programs and activities, or creating new ones, that are targeted to spiritual seekers in the wider community. Stillpoint—A Centre for the Practice of Christian Spirituality in Oxford, England was created to serve both spiritually searching people who would not previously have considered the Christian way as a path to deepen their spiritual search, as well as people who already identify themselves as Christians but are looking for opportunities to learn practices that will deepen their interior journey. Stillpoint offers conferences, courses, classes and group work, resources, artistic and cultural events, and spiritual direction and mentoring that are open to the whole Oxford community (www.thestillpoint.org.uk).

Resources

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- Redmont, Jane. *When in Doubt, Sing: Prayer in Daily Life*. Notre Dame: Sorin, 2008.
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- Vennard, Jane E. *A Praying Congregation: The Art of Teaching Spiritual Practices*. Herndon: Alban Institute, 2005.
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- Yust, Karen Marie, and E. Byron Anderson. *Taught by God—Teaching and Spiritual Formation*. St. Louis: Chalice, 2006.

Websites

- Metamorpha: www.metamorpha.com
- Online Retreat: A 34 week retreat for Everyday Life*. Creighton University.
<http://onlineministries.creighton.edu/CollaborativeMinistry/cmo-retreat.html>
- Renovare: www.renovare.us
- Shalem Institute for Spiritual Formation: www.shalem.org
- Soul Care (Mindy Caliguire): <http://soulcare.com> (Mindy Caliguire Spiritual Formation videos on YouTube: www.youtube.com/view_play_list?p=C0CEC630CFA4D9E8)
- Spiritual Directors International: <http://sdiworld.org/home.html> (videos about spiritual direction and how to find a spiritual director)
- Spirituality and Practice: www.SpiritualityandPractice.com
- Transforming Center: www.thetransformingcenter.org
- Triptykos: www.triptykos.com/home
- Upper Room: www.UpperRoom.org

Multi-Ethnic Faith Formation

Americans are diverse in terms of race and ethnic origins. Almost every white congregation by 2020 will have at least some Latino, Asian, or African American presence. Bicultural, multicultural, and ethnic churches are fairly common today in all Christian traditions. Cultural diversity is a normal part of congregational life in the United States. The culturally diverse church can provide a healthy environment, hospitality and welcoming, and a sense of community so that people of all cultures feel inclusion and acceptance. The church can encourage ethnic festivals, religious traditions, and feasts. Ethnic religious traditions can be woven into a tapestry of church life and faith formation. All ages and generations can experience the various aspects of another culture and begin to experience its richness.

Peter Phan describes the current relationship of ethnic cultures to American society in the following way:

What is distinctive about the newest arrivals to the United States is that they come mostly from non-European countries, especially from Africa, Asia, and Latin America, and bring with them languages, customs, and cultures vastly different from those of their host country. Most importantly, unlike their predecessors, these immigrants intend to preserve their native traditions. While working hard to move into the economic and political mainstream, culturally and religiously, these new immigrants refuse to be assimilated into the white, Anglo-Saxon culture. Rather, they want to maintain, for themselves and their descendants, their own languages, customs, and cultures. In addition to various cultures, the immigrants also bring with them a different brand of Catholicism (Christianity) and a different experience of being church. (Phan, 155–56)

Given this new approach to assimilating and inculturating, Phan presents two challenges for churches in the United States. First, churches need to help immigrants maintain and transmit, especially to their children, their languages, customs, and culture, which are the glue that binds the immigrants together. Second, churches need to embrace “inculturation,” which “is the double process of incarnating the already culture-laden gospel into the various cultures and of bringing the cultures into the gospel whereby *both* the gospel and cultures are transformed and enriched” (156). Phan continues,

Inculturation involves the interplay of five components: the message of gospel itself (divine revelation); the cultures (for example, Semitic, Hellenistic, Roman, Germanic, and so on) in which the gospel has been transmitted (the Christian Tradition); the American culture (mainly white, Anglo-Saxon, Enlightenment-inspired); the culture—predominantly pre-modern—of a

specific ethnic group (for example, the Vietnamese); and the cultures of other ethnic groups (for example, African-American, Mexican, Cuban, and so on.). The areas in which inculturation takes place include all aspects of church life: liturgy, catechesis, spirituality. (Phan, 156)

Churches can develop faith formation that is inclusive of a diversity of ethnic cultures and their religious traditions and expressions: offering *culturally-specific faith formation* that inculturates the gospel message and Christian tradition so that it is proclaimed and taught in the language and culture of the people; *intercultural faith formation* that brings ethnic communities together for learning, relationship building, faith sharing, praying, serving, and celebrating; and providing a hospitable, welcoming, and *inclusive community* for people of all ethnic cultures.

Culturally-specific faith formation.

Faith formation recognizes the uniquely lived experiences, needs, and aspirations of people from each cultural ethnic community in the church, and offers culturally-specific faith formation for the ethnic communities in the church. Culturally-specific faith formation inculturates the gospel message and tradition so that it is proclaimed and taught in the language and culture of the people. It presents the teaching of the faith in a complete and authentic way in dialogue with the language, customs, and practices of those to whom the gospel is presented. The inculturation of the gospel involves listening to the culture to discover the seeds of the gospel that may already be present in the culture; knowing and respecting the essential elements and basic expressions of the culture in the lives of people; and using the language and culture of the people as a foundation to express the common faith of the gospel and Christian tradition.

Intercultural faith formation.

Faith formation offers intercultural faith formation that brings the whole church together intergenerationally for learning, relationship building, faith sharing, praying, serving, and celebrating. An essential element of intercultural faith formation is listening to the stories, perspectives, and preferences of people from the different cultures and ethnicities present in the church. Teaching skills for intercultural communication is important so that intercultural experiences will be positive and enriching for all cultures. Also important is cultivating respect for and appreciation of the cultural heritage and religious traditions of people from the different cultures in the church. These intercultural opportunities between Christians of diverse cultures, including mainstream culture, are transforming opportunities that bear the fruits of Christian unity in the spirit of a new Pentecost. Churches bring people face to face with the contrasting realities of middle class/working class, post immigrant/new immigrant, citizen/foreigner, mainstream white/Black, Hispanic/Latino, Native American, Asian, and Pacific Islander cultures. Bringing these very different realities together provides an opportunity for building the reign of God right at home.

Intercultural faith formation provides an opportunity for ethnic cultural awareness to correct ethnic and racial myths and stereotypes by providing people with accurate information on the histories, lives, and cultures of ethnic groups; facilitating the development of attitudes and values conducive to living in an ethnically diverse church and world. Intercultural faith formation can help people develop openness, flexibility, and receptivity to cultural diversity; enrich human experiences through the study of different ethnic groups; accept and prize diversity, and reduce anxieties about encountering different ethnic groups, their life styles, value preferences, and behavior patterns.

Each ethnic group teaches the whole church about what it means to be a people of faith, and the church affirms these special gifts and welcomes them into the whole community. As an example, Hispanic/Latinos bring to the church religious practices that can enrich everyone: blessings, promesas (prayer promises), the celebration of quinceanera, the altarcito (home altar), the celebration of Los Posadas in Advent, and Our Lady of Guadalupe, to name a few. They also bring to the U.S. church small Christian communities (or CEBs), a model of church from Latin America, where people meet in homes to discuss the weekly Scriptures and how best to apply them to daily life. The small Christian communities also come together to pray, learn, respond to issues of social justice, and mutually support one another.

Culturally-inclusive faith formation.

Faith formation incorporates a diversity of ethnic faith traditions and expressions into existing programming and experiences. Infuse an ethnic cultural perspective into your congregation by adjusting programs to incorporate specific content from one or more ethnic cultures, such as a prayer tradition, ritual, devotional practice, song, artwork, or story. In this sense, faith formation for all ages and generations can become culturally inclusive and expand everyone's experience of the richness of ethnic cultures.

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Faith Formation for Spiritual Seekers

Churches can address the spiritual needs and hungers of people by developing a guided process for spiritually hungry people to become spiritually committed and join in small communities with other seekers for spiritual growth and support, thus creating new expressions of Christian community designed especially for spiritual seekers.

IDEAS

Formation Process for Spiritual Seekers.

Churches can offer a guided process for spiritually hungry people to become spiritually committed and join in small communities with other seekers for spiritual growth and support. One example of this process is an “Introduction to the Christian faith” program—an opportunity for people to investigate the claims of the Christian faith in an informal, no pressure, non-judgmental, and friendly environment. The emphasis is upon exploration and discovery in a relaxed and informal setting, and does not assume any background knowledge of or belief in Christianity. It can be offered in a variety of settings, formats, and times.

Alpha (<http://alphausa.org>) is an opportunity to explore the meaning of life in a relaxed, friendly setting. The Alpha course usually meets once per week for ten weeks, and includes a one-day or weekend getaway. Each session, people enjoy great food, laughter and learning in a fun and friendly atmosphere where no question about life or God is seen as too simple or too hostile, questions like—Is there a God? Why am I here? Where did I come from? Where am I going? Alpha is for anyone who thinks there may be more to life than meets the eye. People attend from all backgrounds, religions, and viewpoints. They come to investigate questions about the existence of God, the purpose of life, the afterlife, the claims of Jesus, and more. Some people want to get beyond religion and find a relationship with God that really changes life. Others come for the close, long-lasting friendships that are built during the Alpha course. Many guests have never been to church, others may have attended church occasionally but feel they have never really understood the basics of the Christian faith.

Each gathering begins with a meal or refreshments—a chance to get to know others. Then there is a short talk which looks at a different aspect of the Christian faith each week. This is followed by a time of discussion in small groups, where everyone is welcome to contribute their opinion and ask questions. People usually stay in the same small groups for the duration of the course so they can get to know each other, continue discussions, and deepen friendships. The emphasis is upon exploration and discovery in a relaxed and informal environment. The talks each week cover the following topics, acting as a springboard for the small group discussions:

Introduction Dinner: Is there more to life than this?

Week 1: Who is Jesus?

Week 2: Why did Jesus die?

Week 3: How can we have faith?

Week 4: Why and how do I pray?

Week 5: Why and how should I read the Bible?

Week 6: How does God guide us?

Week 7: How can I resist evil?

Week 8: Why and how should we tell others?

Week 9: Does God heal today?

Week 10: What about the Church?

Weekend: Who is the Holy Spirit? What does the Holy Spirit do? How can I be filled with the Holy Spirit? How can I make the most of the rest of my life?

The Alpha course is available in eighty-one languages such as Spanish, French, Chinese, Korean, Arabic, Portuguese, and Vietnamese.

Websites

Alpha (UK): <http://uk.alpha.org>

Alpha (USA): <http://alphausa.org>

New Expressions of Christian Community.

Churches can create new expressions of Christian community designed especially for spiritual seekers. Here are two examples of Christian communities, developed by established Christian churches, and their faith formation offerings targeted specifically for spiritual seekers in their twenties and thirties.

The Crossing, St. Paul's Episcopal Cathedral, Boston (www.thecrossingboston.org)

The Crossing is a community that seeks to walk in the life-changing, world-changing Way of Jesus, sharing the love, hope, beauty and justice of God in the city of Boston. People gather for transformative worship, spiritual practice, and authentic community. The community fuses the wisdom and mystery of ancient traditions with that of urban mystics, artists, and activists; and moves out to join God in healing, freeing, and blessing all people, communities, and the earth.

Worship. Every Thursday from 6–7:30 pm at St. Paul’s Episcopal Cathedral, people gather for a transformative encounter with God that leads people to act a bit different in the world. Here’s what the community experiences: (1) R&B grooves laid out under monastic chant, gospel, spirituals and Episcopal hymns, (2) silence and intentional spiritual practice as part of worship, (3) reflections on the gospel, usually led by a lay person, plus some brief talk-back time, (4) open space to catch your breath and let God’s word sink in, (5) Eucharist (or communion) with a groove, where everybody is welcome to celebrate the mystery of Jesus alive among us, (6) post-worship: crank the stereo and share snacks and community, (7) post-post worship: usually a field trip to a local restaurant for very cheap food or a potluck with community formation.

Small Groups and Formation. Sundays @ the Crossing

- Every Sunday @ 3–4:30 pm: An Intro to the Episcopal Church
- 1st Sundays, 5–7:30: Artist Expressions
- 2nd Sundays, 5–7:30: Bible Study
- 3rd Sundays, 5–7:30: Crossing Community Dinners
- 4th Sundays, 5–7:30: Bible Study

During the Week

Monday–Wednesday Evenings: Neighborhood Action/Reflection Groups (justice and service action/reflection), and Covenant Groups (small discipleship circles centered around prayer and stories, four to six people per group)

Thursdays after Worship: Dancing with Jesus (monthly) and Everybody Does Theology (monthly)

Rule of Life. The Crossing is a community of sisters and brothers offering a compassionate, progressive, creative, generous, radically welcoming expression of God’s life and love in the city of Boston. From that community has grown this Rule of Life, which like the Rule of a monastic community spells out our commitment to discipleship. We believe we are called to follow in the footsteps of the ancients and live the way of Jesus: nurturing God’s Spirit in and among us; gathering everybody for prayer and celebration at God’s table; bearing the good news of hope and resurrection into the world; and spreading God’s mission of healing and transformation. But we know we cannot live this dream alone. We need each other. We need authentic, concrete spiritual practices that form our lives in the shape of Jesus’ life. We need to make real commitments to God and to each other as we journey together closer to the heart of God and to the deepest callings on our own lives. This Rule for Real Life describes a way of walking together, and following Jesus together and making something extraordinary, holy, and whole of our daily and (seemingly) ordinary individual lives.

Justice and Service.

- The Hope in Action Campaign: a young adult justice effort led by Relational Evangelists at eight ministries throughout the Boston area to develop programs of public service and social justice based on the needs and interests of the community
- Monday Lunch Program at the Cathedral
- Boston Faith and Justice Network: build awareness, relationships and action around fair trade and justice issues, locally and globally
- Saint Francis House: prepare and serve meals every day
- Haley House: soup kitchen, food pantry and clothing room, bakery café and corner shop, youth culinary classes, noontime farm
- Ecclesia Ministries: social services to homeless people in concert with spiritual companionship and community

Kairos and Young Adult Ministry, Brentwood Baptist Church, Nashville
(www.brentwoodbaptist.com/kairos)

- **Kairos** is a come-as-you-are Tuesday night worship experience geared toward energetic young adults who share a passion for growing together in the Word of God. Kairos is designed to challenge young adults on both a personal and spiritual level and teach them how to uniquely apply the scriptures to their life. Kairos provides a relaxed atmosphere to make new friends and enjoy the live music as young adults connect with a loving God who has a plan and purpose for your life.
- **Kairos Podcasts** contain the audio programs of the Kairos message each week.
- **Kairos Roots** is a deeper experience, using the same Kairos setup—complete with tables, chairs, and candles. There will be a time of worship and a message with a small group table discussion regarding the topic of the night as a part of the worship experience.
- **Intersect** groups provide opportunity for young adults to socialize, learn, and grow together with like-minded people in an authentic community that seeks to find and follow Christ. New groups start several times during the year on a wide variety of young adult relevant topics, for example: Breathing New Life into Your Career; In a Pit with a Lion on a Snowy Day (book study); Life in the Journey Living Beyond Yourself; Me, Myself, and Lies; New to Fitness; Steps in Soul; TrueFaced; Unfamiliar Christianity; Unleashing Courageous Faith; and Your Bible Isn't Scary.
- **Impact** is service to the local and global community with a variety of projects including providing beds for orphans and abandoned children in

Haiti, Uganda, and Moldova; working at the Nashville Rescue Mission; and providing meals and supplies for the homeless.

Read more about Kairos in the book by pastor Mike Glenn: *In Real Time: Authentic Young Adult Ministry as It Happens* (Nashville: B&H, 2009).

Apprenticeships in Discipleship

Churches can offer an apprenticeship in discipleship for spiritually hungry people who want to grow in relationship with Jesus Christ and the Christian way of life. An “apprenticeship process” is designed to help people who are hungry for God develop a robust discipleship by helping them understand who God is, what it means to be a Christian, and what it means to live in community as part of God’s kingdom. The apprenticeship process fosters transformation by contrasting the God Jesus revealed with commonly held beliefs about God; explores how beliefs about God, self, and the world shape people’s lives; encourages soul training, spiritual practices to help people experience God’s love; and nurtures accountability in a small group setting. Through the apprenticeship process people’s understanding of God is strengthened and healed through spiritual practices, helping people more naturally live the life Jesus described in the Sermon on the Mount. An apprenticeship often incorporates one-on-one mentoring, small group sharing, personal study, prayer, and retreat experiences.

IDEAS

The Apprentice Series. James Bryan Smith.
(www.apprenticeofjesus.org)

- *The Good and Beautiful God: Falling in Love with the God Jesus Knows.* Downers Grove: Intervarsity, 2009.
- *The Good and Beautiful Life: Putting on the Character of Christ.* Downers Grove: Intervarsity, 2010.
- *The Good and Beautiful Community: Following the Spirit, Extending Grace, Demonstrating Love.* Downers Grove: Intervarsity, 2010.

The Apprentice Series is designed to help people in their efforts to grow in Christ-likeness. The series is built on a basic formula for transformation that includes a mental side (changing narratives), a physical side (practicing spiritual exercises), a communal side (doing the first two in the context of community), and a spiritual side (the work of the Holy Spirit). Real transformation must be holistic, taking into account the many dimensions of human life. When people engage in all three of

these activities—under the leading of the Spirit—transformation is not only possible but also practically inevitable. The three core books (above) follow a logical progression.

The books are intended to be used in the context of community—a small group, a class, or a few friends gathered in a home or coffee shop. The weekly formation process suggested in the Apprentice Series includes: (1) reading a chapter, (2) journaling on the reflection questions in the chapter, (3) completing the weekly exercises in the chapter, (4) interacting in a small group setting around the journal reflections, (5) encouraging each other between sessions using email or social networking.

Soul Revolution and the 60-60 Experiment (www.soulrevolution.net)

The idea behind *Soul Revolution* is to challenge people to do a very simple sixty-day experiment in faith, going all-out in a radically-responsive relationship with God. This experiment has proved itself in the lives of thousands of people. People experience how moment-by-moment connection to God with wide-open willingness fulfills their deepest longings and transforms them into life-giving people. The sections of *Soul Revolution* four major themes:

- Our longings: What shallow strategies do we use to get our deepest longings met? What are God's deepest longings for us?
- Loving God minute by minute: How do we follow God's lead to experience a growing love for God?
- Growing in character: How does God grow our character as we make ourselves willing?
- Moving toward others: How will God lead us into new, life-giving ways of relating to one another as we follow Him moment by moment?
- Impacting the world: What unique contributions did God create you to make? How might you and your friends impact the world as you follow God's lead?

Soul Revolution is designed for a sixty-day experiment, inviting people to try to stay in a continuous, honest conversation with God, willing to do his will moment by moment. The experiment involves setting a watch or alarm to beep every sixty minutes, and putting up sticky notes and reminders around the home, car, and office, as a reminder to stay connected. One of the big ideas behind using something that beeps is to remind people about the 60-60 experiment or people are likely to stay in their daily routines. People often need an external reminder, like a watch, timer or computer alarm. Though something active that beeps is the best, passive items (like sticky notes, signs, a dot on your watch, and so on) can also be used. People are encouraged to turn their thoughts back to God all throughout the day, as often as they can. This simple conscious contact with God isn't easy, but it's all people have

to do—everything else will begin to fall into place over time. Every sixty minutes people stop and recall “God is with me right now” and they allow that to propel them to ask God, “Show me your will this next moment. I want to be willing to do your will as an act of love toward you.”

Another feature of *Soul Revolution* is Spiritual Running Partners who provide encouragement, pacing, and motivation for people’s spiritual goals. Spiritual Partners agree to walk together for a season in complete honesty to help each other grow spiritually to be more like Christ. Spiritual Partners agree to listen, to care, to pray for one another, to point out patterns they see, and to urge each other to keep moving forward in growth to become all God intended them to be. The goal is to think, live, and act more and more like Jesus would if he were living my life, working at my job, and in my relationships. Spiritual Partners agree to “run together” for a defined period of time, set a time and place to meet or have a phone appointment weekly, and agree to meet face-to-face at least monthly. They take turns asking each other the “How Are You Running” questions.

There is also a curriculum guide for using *Soul Revolution* in a small group setting. The website (www.soulrevolution.net) has a variety of resources for the 60–60 experiment, for Spiritual Running Partners, and for developing groups. There is also an online community at the website.

Resource

Burke, John. *Soul Revolution: How Imperfect People Become All God Intended*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2008.

Additional Resources

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Pathways to Vibrant Faith and Active Engagement

Churches can offer formational processes for the Spiritual but Not Religious (Scenario 2) and the Participating but Uncommitted (Scenario 4) who desire to deepen their relationship with Jesus Christ, engagement in church life, and practice of the Christian faith. Churches can offer a multi-step formation process consisting of a

series of courses, small group programs, or retreat experiences that gradually deepen people's faith and engagement in the church community. A second option is to offer a yearlong process, modeled on the baptismal catechumenate.

IDEAS

Multi-Step Formation Process.

Churches can offer a multi-step "Basic Training" program (large group or small group or one-on-one) as a introduction or refresher for people who want to learn how to develop and deepen a relationship with Christ, learn the foundational teachings of the Christian faith, and live the fundamental Christian practices, such as reading the Bible, praying, and serving. This process can serve as a foundation for deeper learning and spiritual growth and engagement in church life. (See the examples below of "step" processes.)

Example: CLASS at Saddleback Church

(www.saddleback.com/lakeforest/adults/class)

CLASS (Christian Life and Service Seminar guides people in taking their next step spiritually. This could mean getting baptized, committing to digging into the Bible each day, discovering how God wants to use you to help others, or just learning more about God's plan for your life. Saddleback's classes guide people through the following steps:

- *Class 101* is the basic introduction to the Saddleback church family and is designed to clearly explain who and what our church is. People learn about the church's beliefs on salvation, statements of purpose, and the church's strategy and structure. They will hear about the history of the church, and how the five biblical purposes are necessary to fulfilling God's calling for a person's life. At the end of class, people are given the opportunity to decide whether to complete the membership process by filling out and signing the membership covenant.
- *Class 201* helps people develop the habits they need to jump-start their spiritual growth. It provides an overview of the three basic spiritual habits every Christian needs in order to grow: daily time with God (prayer and Bible study), giving, and fellowship.
- *Class 301* helps people discuss that God created them with special gifts intended for God's purposes. God didn't design ministry for just a few; God made each person a minister. At Class 301, people learn how God can use their Spiritual Gifts: Heart, Abilities, Personality, and Experiences (SHAPE) to minister to the needs of others.

- *Class 401* helps people discover their life mission and how to be a part of God's plan to reach out to the world. This class will help people develop a personal perspective of the gospel message, develop their personal story of how God has worked in their life, build confidence in sharing their story, and understand the PEACE Plan—Promote reconciliation, Equip servant leaders, Assist the poor, Care for the sick, and Educate the next generation—and how they can begin to be a part of it.

Example: Our Lady of Soledad Parish
(www.soledad-coachella.org)

Our Lady of Soledad Parish provides a step-by-step process to help parishioners deepen their faith, so they don't just enter the front door only to drift quietly out the back door later. The discipleship program mirrors the process developed by Rick Warren (Saddleback Church). It consists of five mini-retreats. Each mini-retreat includes prayer, ice breakers, talks, faith sharing, and food. Held on a Sunday when most parishioners are off work, the first session begins at 3 p.m., late enough to allow for both Sunday Mass and family time. Retreats end at 8 p.m., early enough for participants to be rested for the next day. The parish provides child care. Each mini-retreat is self-contained; no one must return to complete it. This practice eliminates absenteeism and distinguishes the retreat experience from a class. Lay teams lead the mini-retreats, which are offered in English and Spanish and repeated frequently throughout the year. Each mini-retreat focuses on a different aspect of spiritual growth:

- *Mini-Retreat 101: "Catholics Alive!"* begins with the question, "What does it mean to be a follower of Christ?" Retreatants discuss the difference between a relationship-centered faith and a rules-centered faith; consider the importance of church as a family, instead of a privatized, Lone-Ranger Christianity; and note similarities and differences between Catholic and non-Catholic Christians. The group discusses the importance of serious commitment to the Catholic faith, as well as the commitments asked of parish members. Participants are asked to sign a simple membership covenant if they wish to join the parish as registered members.
- *Mini-Retreat 201: "Alive and Growing Spiritually!"* focuses on maturation in the Catholic faith. Retreatants discuss prayer, Bible study and the importance of belonging to a small faith community. There is also a presentation of Catholic moral teachings.
- *Mini-Retreat 301: "Alive and Gifted!"* helps retreatants discern how to serve God in ministry. The activities follow the acronym Shape, as developed by Warren, where "S" is for spiritual gifts; "H" represents the "heart" or passion and desire to serve; "A" stands for natural abilities; "P" is personality; and "E"

represents life experiences. This mini-retreat helps participants discover how God has uniquely shaped them for ministry. Parishioners take up a ministry based on their gifts, not just on parish needs.

- *Mini-Retreat 401: “Alive in the World!”* helps participants live as witnesses for Christ, as contagious Catholic Christians. The group discusses evangelization, as distinguished from proselytizing. Retreatants learn how to defend the Catholic faith. They also discuss Catholic social justice teachings and specifically how this parish is active in community organizing.
- *Mini-Retreat 501: “Alive to Praise God!”* focuses on Catholic worship and the sacraments. It begins with a Taizé-style prayer, followed by a guided tour of the church during which sacred spaces, vessels, and vestments are explained. Next, retreatants rotate through four workshops on the sacraments, the liturgical year, and church traditions. The retreat concludes with a shortened Seder-like meal that leads into an explanatory Mass.

Example: S.T.E.P.S. at Impact Catholic Ministry
(<http://impactcatholic.com/steps.html>)

S.T.E.P.S. is the “Formation for Life Process” of Impact Catholic Ministry. These steps are designed to lead people towards greater maturity in their Christian life and equip them for rewarding involvement in the life of this Church community. The S.T.E.P.S. course is designed to help people grow in understanding and experience of faith and the Christian life. As people discover their own faith through these steps, they can also find their place in this community where they can grow and enjoy life.

- *STEP 100: All about Christ.* This is a first look at who Jesus is and how He can impact our lives. The course covers the basics of the message of Christ. If people are interested in investigating the Christian faith for the first time or looking to rediscover the foundation of faith, this course is for them.
- *STEP 200: All about Church.* The Christian life is never lived alone; people are designed to support one another. Church is that gathering of people who walk together in faith. This course focuses on the Impact church family. Here people find out about the statements, strategies and structure of Impact Catholic Ministry.
- *STEP 300: All about my Character.* Personal growth occurs when people make a deliberate and informed decision to put certain practices into action. This is a discipleship course that examines some of the key practices of the Christian life. People learn practical, everyday ways to grow in maturity in your faith.
- *STEP 400: All about my Capacity.* People are gifted in unique ways. This course takes people through a process of self discovery as they identify their unique gifts

and abilities, dreams and desires, temperament and personality. Finding their gifts allows people to better understand their place in the community of faith.

- *STEP 500: All about the Cause.* The message of Jesus has a transforming power. Individual lives, communities, and nations have been radically changed by that message. As followers of Jesus each person can be part of that cause. This course looks at how Jesus is working in our world and how his followers can be part of what he is doing.
- *STEP 600: All about our Commission.* Jesus' last instruction to His followers before he returned to his Father was that they should share what they have received from Him with others. His followers today share the same task as those first followers. This course covers how people can share what they have experienced in a loving and respectful way.
- *STEP 700: All about the Cross.* This final step is really the beginning of a whole new life. At the cross, Christians find an invitation to commit themselves to God in a deeper way. Here people will learn how to live intimately with God. They embark on a daring adventure into the life God has always dreamed they would live.

Example: Awakening Faith (www.awakeningfaith.org)

Seeking Christ (www.pncea.org/programs/seekingchrist.aspx)

Paulist National Catholic Evangelization Association

Awakening Faith: Reconnecting with Your Catholic Faith, is a conversation-based, small group process that helps inactive Catholics return to the Church. The group meets once a week for six weeks of conversation and socializing. The conversations are based on short, easy to read essays about spirituality, Jesus, the Holy Spirit, God's mercy, the Mass, and the Church. The meetings foster reflection, prayer, and honest sharing in a setting of hospitality and acceptance. A small community is formed and over the weeks that community becomes a bridge to the larger church community. Additional, optional essays allow the group to continue to meet if desirable for another four weeks to discuss faith, love, marriage and divorce, and money. The process is simple and inviting. A parish can offer *Awakening Faith* any time of the year and repeat it year after year.

Seeking Christ aims to solve the problem parishes face when people inquire about the Catholic Church, but the parish has no way to begin receiving them. *Seeking Christ* includes eight sessions that can be used in a variety of ways to welcome and engage people who are inquiring about becoming Catholics. After an initial interview, the program offers eight possible sessions dealing with human seeking, our words and the Word of God, faith, Jesus, the Holy Spirit, the church as the community of Jesus, freedom, and conversion. Depending on inquirers' needs, a parish chooses which sessions would be most helpful. Each session involves a short DVD

reflection, a scripture passage for discussion, and a take-home session which allows the inquirer to begin seeing Catholic approaches to various life issues. The inquirer receives a booklet for reflection and journaling.

Catechumenal Formation Process.

This can be a yearlong process, modeled on the catechumenate and Christian initiation process, to guide people in exploring, nurturing, and renewing their commitment to Jesus Christ and living as a disciple of Christ. The process can begin by exploring Scripture, worship, prayer, and sacraments; then exploring the presence of God in the world and in daily life; and then going deeper into the Biblical stories as a preparation for an affirmation of faith or affirmation of baptism at the Sunday worship (for example, Easter Vigil or Easter Sunday). Continue the process by moving to the practice of living the Christian life by exploring faithful responses to care for the earth, for humankind, relationships and daily work.

**Example: The WAY at Phinney Ridge Lutheran Church
(www.prlc.org/belonging/the-way)**

The WAY encourages, challenges and invites a deeper life of faith. The WAY refers to a style of life in which both believing and living are centered in Jesus Christ. At Phinney Ridge Lutheran Church, the WAY is an opportunity for faith to be explored, nurtured, and renewed, a commitment to Jesus Christ affirmed, and a walk as a disciple of Christ to be established or re-established in the life-giving waters of Holy Baptism or the Affirmation of Baptism. The WAY is a process over the seasons of the year:

- Autumn: Sunday evening meetings begin in October and end with an Advent Celebration in early December. The autumn meetings explore topics of interest such as scripture, worship, prayer, and sacraments.
- Winter: Sunday evening meetings resume in early January. In both small and large group conversations, participants continue to explore the presence of God in the world and in daily life.
- Early Spring: Throughout the weeks of Lent, participants “dig deeper” into the Biblical stories that prepare for Baptism and Affirmation of Baptism at the Vigil of Easter.
- Late Spring: After Easter, the WAY looks toward the practice of living the Christian life as we explore faithful responses to care for the earth, for humankind, relationships and daily work.

(See: “Forming Faith,” by Paul Hoffman in *From Nomads to Pilgrims*, edited by Diana Butler Bass and Joseph Stewart-Sicking, Herndon: Alban Institute, 2006.)

Faith Formation in Third-Place Settings

Churches can establish a Third-Place gathering space for faith formation in the community that offers hospitality, builds relationships, hosts spiritual conversations, provides programs and activities, and nourishes the spiritual life of people, especially those who are Spiritual but Not Religious (Scenario 2) or Unaffiliated and Uninterested (Scenario 3). “The Third Place is the informal public space between home and work that connects people to each other, allows them to recharge, pause, and then reengage the world. They are places in which participants feel strong, positive emotional ties because they are creating rewarding, meaningful social experiences and a warm community environment” (Herring, 123). Bookstores with a café, spaces for reading, guest speakers and programs, and reading groups are examples of contemporary Third Places.

Churches can utilize the potential of a Third Place for faith formation. In the words of Lee Sparks, “What if we could create a comfortable place and time for people to gather weekly to explore life and faith? What if it looked and felt like the kind of place we’d typically meet a friend for food and drink and fun? What if the atmosphere encouraged conversations, questions, and personal stories? What if the conversations about life somehow led to an “ah-ha” of God’s real presence and genuine love?” (Sparks, 37).

Third Places offer those who are not involved in a church community—spiritual seekers and the uninterested and unaffiliated—an informal gathering place to feel at home, nourish relationships, promote companionship, and help create a sense of place and community. In this neutral setting, faith formation can offer a variety of programs and activities, varying in purpose, scope, and depth, providing a way for people to discover their hunger for God and the need for community.

A Third Place is the ideal setting for groups to gather, each with their own focus. Some groups emphasize studying the Bible and deepening knowledge of the faith, others emphasize expressive and artistic activities (making music, creating art, or writing poetry), others are organized around a lifestyle or common interest. Some are on a contemplative path (gathering for evening prayers or spiritual exercises), while others are on an active path (working at soup kitchens, tutoring kids, building houses).

Churches use the Third-Place concept to offer a variety of programs and activities for the wider community. Programs and activities can be sponsored by the church and conducted by people and groups in the community, such as an after-school program for children, an art gallery for local artists and art classes, a “faith and film” series, music concerts by local musicians, children’s storytelling hour, book reading groups, guest speakers, and so on. A church’s Third Place serves as a venue for faith formation programming and an entry point for those who are not engaged in church life. Program offerings can include spiritual formation programs, life-centered clinics and workshops (for example, marriage enrichment, parenting, divorce and separation, bereavement, life and career planning, financial planning, recovery programs,

dealing with depression), and the “introduction to the Christian faith course” (see “Faith Formation for Spiritual Seekers” for ideas).

Some churches locate their Third-Place facility in the “marketplace”—at a coffee shop, a café, or a store in a mall, while other churches re-design space within their existing church facilities, transforming an old fellowship hall into a café where people can meet during the day and night and an indoor play area where children can play while parents gather. Churches are “building” their Third Places with a café (coffee and food), bookstore, play space, and rooms for small group gatherings; and equipping their Third Places with Wi-Fi, flat screen televisions, computers, and couches.

Example: Lifetree Café
(www.lifetreecafe.com)

A Lifetree Café offers people the opportunity to gather in warm and hospitable venues to explore life and faith. The hour-long Lifetree Café experiences feature stories of real people, guided conversation, biblical insights, time to build relationships with new and old friends, laughter, fun, and opportunities to serve. Lifetree Café offers a casual physical environment, warm hospitality, a safe place for questions and doubts, and an encouraging atmosphere for participants to share their own stories. Lifetree stories dig into the big and little stuff that shapes people’s lives: family, friends, fears, busyness, balance, money, materialism, health, heaven, peace, and purpose. Through the exploration of these stories people discover that God is active today and looking for a close relationship with them—through all that life has to throw at them. (For more information about developing a Lifetree Café contact Group Publishing at www.lifetreecafe.com.)

Example: The Lighthouse
(www.freshexpressions.org.uk)

The Lighthouse is a beacon for the unchurched on the outskirts of Bristol, England. It arose out of the prayers of two women, each a member of a different church. Their vision was the provision of a relaxed environment where people could come together to share food and share their lives. The Lighthouse meets for a meal at 6.30pm on Fridays. The focus is on sharing one another’s lives and their problems. Numbers vary from twelve to forty, most of whom would not describe themselves as Christians. Men and women, old and young, children with parents, come because they find something special. The Lighthouse has been described by them as a “lifesaver,” somewhere with “warmth,” and a place where “we find God.” Members have begun to ask for more Christian content to the evenings. This is a result of the clear Christian welcome and strength of relationship offered at the Lighthouse. It is provided through videos and interactive learning rather than acts of worship. Some members choose to attend a monthly Sunday evening service in a local community centre. Through the offering of a safe space, a new community has formed which gives local people a place to experience Christian love.

Example: Sidewalk Van
(www.sidewalk.org.uk)

Inspired by a year working with Metro Ministries in New York, Barry and Camilla Johnston are connecting with non-churched children and youth in their area by going to where they are. Every Saturday for eight months of the year (spring/summer/autumn), they take their yellow Sidewalk van to the same local park where local children gather to play. The team run an hour of activities that include songs, games, a memory verse, a drama based on a Bible story, three object lessons and a life lesson (cartoon story tying it all together). Though aimed at the children, parents and older siblings tend to watch from the back. Some are increasingly helping in minor roles and making suggestions of what would make it better. For all the children they befriend, appropriate longer-term discipleship of those who want to know more about the Christian faith is one that the Sidewalk community takes responsibility for. They make regular visits to the families of the children that come and are starting to look to establishing a community house as a base for some who are involved. The Sidewalk community who facilitate this ministry meet weekly for food and fun. They meet in the park to continue to build relationships with families there and then gather in a team member's home.

Example: Zac's Place
(www.freshexpressions.org.uk/stories/zacsplace)

Zac's Place began in the late 1990s when Sean Stillman moved to Wales and conducted a couple of funerals for members of motorcycle clubs, who in turn began to ask very deep questions and wanted to know more about God, but couldn't see how mainstream church was relevant to them. So Sean booked a function room in a local bar every Sunday night to answer some of these questions and many came including bikers, musicians, and those on the fringes of society—the vast majority of whom had very little church connection what so ever. The gatherings aimed to provide opportunity for expression of and enquiry into the Christian faith in a relaxed pub environment. The format consisted of quality live music and other performance art and straight talking in languages and images that relate at street level. Over the next seven years, somewhere in the region of three hundred events took place, using dozens of musicians, storytellers, and artists, and a significant number of people benefited from the community that surrounded them. Some folk were encouraged in their recovery from addictions, working alongside local and national agencies. Others, whose faith had been battered by negative church experience, had their wounds tended. Still more found a level of communication they could relate and respond to, to see their Christian faith develop. Zac's Place now continues to meet in their own venue in the Gospel Hall. As people have grown and matured in their walk following Jesus, this community of faith has emerged into being a church—a church for ragamuffins. The venue is used by different groups for different events throughout the week including offering a daily breakfast for the street homeless, a weekly Bible study, and an evening soup kitchen.

Example: The Playhouse

(www.freshexpressions.org.uk/stories/playhouse)

As a member of Howden Clough Methodist Church, Birstall (England), Caroline was faced with the challenge of a dwindling congregation and a community that appeared to have no need for the traditional church building on their doorstep. “Seeing all those children in these awful places to play made me really stop and think,” says Caroline. “I thought, ‘why don’t we do something like this at Howden Clough?’” Her dream has become an amazingly successful reality—thanks to the efforts of a dedicated volunteer team, key sponsors, and a church willing to take what was seen as an enormous risk. “We now have three thousand square feet of play area, a café that operates alongside it, and a supportive local community who have taken it to their hearts and now use the Wesley Playhouse as the venues for birthday parties and celebrations. We’ve even had several Christenings there as a result of people feeling so much part of what has very much become their own fresh expression of church.” Since its launch in 2007, the project has seen over twenty-four people come through its doors. Services take place in a room re-designed as a chapel downstairs every Sunday morning, and a Playhouse Praise is now a regular event on the first Sunday of the month. “It’s fantastic to see how many people have struck up friendships and are happy to be part of this community,” says Caroline. “People have asked to have their babies christened here and been amazed to discover that we can do this in the Wesley Playhouse. I explain that we may have climbing frames and all sorts of things all over the place but we are a church, and we’re here because we love God and we love them.” The Playhouse seeks “to lead people to faith and disciple them; to help them find out why we’ve done what we’ve done with this project and encourage them in their own walk with God.”

Example: Night Church

(www.freshexpressions.org.uk/stories/nightchurch)

Make your way to Exeter Cathedral on a Friday night and you may be surprised at what you’ll find in this ancient place of worship. Near its medieval entrance, the weekly barbecue provides food for visitors—whether they’re cathedral regulars, the homeless, or the downright curious. Inside, and “the congregation” for Nightchurch is meeting in small chapels and spaces throughout the building. Night Church meets on Fridays from 8 to 10:30 pm. The initial aim was to help those born after 1960, Generations X and Y, to find a way back to God. But of course it is open to all and if it grows, Nightchurch will become another part of the cathedral community. Their values, or DNA, are to be an inclusive community with Christ at its heart; and to learn how to be generous with hospitality, creative in spirituality, and passionate about justice. At Friday night gatherings people explore social justice, enjoy the creative arts in poetry or music, and become involved in discussion, prayer and meditation, and lots of other things. Every two to three months everyone involved in Nightchurch invites their friends and have a bigger than normal Friday night in the cathedral.

Resources

Croft, Steven, Ian Mobsby, and Stephanie Spellers, editors. *Ancient Faith, Future Mission: Fresh Expressions in the Sacramental Tradition*. New York: Seabury, 2010.

Fresh Expressions: www.freshexpressions.org.uk

Lifetree Café: www.lifetreecafe.com

Empowering the Community to Share their Faith

Churches can empower people of Vibrant Faith and Active Engagement (Scenario 1) in the church community—individuals, small groups, and the whole faith community—to share their faith with those “who not involved” in the church community or spiritually committed. By developing programs, processes, and resources to equip the faith community to share its faith, the church develops another means for reaching people in the other three scenarios—an approach called “everyday evangelism.” Everyday evangelism can be described in this way: “evangelism is anything you say or do to help another person move into closer relationship with God, or into Christian community” (George Hunter III); “the heart of evangelism is having an alive relationship with God, being part of a church you love, and caring that people outside the church find what you’ve discovered” (Martha Grace Reese); and “evangelism is to cooperate with the Holy Spirit and others to bring one person one step closer to Christ” (Lisa Orris).

IDEAS

Mobilize the Whole Faith Community: “The Unbinding the Gospel Project” (GraceNet: www.gracenet.info)

The process and integrated set of resources from Unbinding the Gospel Project empower the faith community—people of Vibrant Faith and Active Engagement—to share their faith with those who are not engaged in the church community and/or are not growing in faith. This process and the accompanying resources help the whole church change its habits to reflect practices of members and leaders of highly effective churches. They begin to pray daily, to talk about their faith with each other, and to take steps toward significant faith conversations with friends without a faith/church relationship.

The process was developed based on a four-year, Lilly Endowment study of superb evangelism that included over 1200 interviews, fifty site visits, and a major survey of congregations doing the best job reaching unchurched people. The study found fascinating things about churches that are doing a wonderful job with all different types of evangelism: (1) evangelistic churches exist all along the theological spectrum; (2) all sizes of churches are doing great evangelism—throughout the country; (3) leaders and

members love Jesus—their spiritual lives keep growing; (4) these churches help their people articulate their faith—they encourage faith sharing; and (5) pastors maintain a laser-like focus on evangelism, on reaching out to people beyond church walls.

The process moves through the following steps:

- Step One. Church Leader’s Study: *Unbinding the Gospel*. Designed for pastors, key congregational leaders and evangelism teams *Unbinding the Gospel* helps committed leaders deepen and start sharing their own faith, understand their cultural context, and begin to plan for authentic congregational faith-sharing. It works best as a seven- to ten-week small group study. Each chapter concludes with questions, scripture suggestions, and group exercises.
- Step Two: All-Church Saturation Study: *Unbinding Your Heart: Forty Days of Prayer & Faith Sharing*. This is a six-week, churchwide, small group E-vent that can be conducted during Lent, summer, or fall study for all established classes and small groups, and new ones formed just for the E-vent. The purpose of an all-congregation study is to help people strengthen their own faith and to learn to talk about it with each other first, and then others outside the community. Each week, for forty days, people will (1) pray each day’s scripture and prayer exercise and work with a prayer partner; (2) study a chapter of the book with their small group, and (3) worship with sermons, music, and prayers centered on the week’s chapter. *Unbinding Your Heart* enriches the church’s community life. It helps individuals risk face-to-face encounters with God. The entire congregation begins to talk about their faith. The E-vent creates momentum in the church.

(Support for Steps One and Two: *Unbinding Your Church* is a collection of fully integrated resources to help churches work and pray through the process seamlessly, including worship resources and sermons, music plans, step-by-step planning tools, and integrated web sections for easy downloads.)

- Step Three: An Experiment in Prayer and Community: *Unbinding Your Soul*. Many people who aren’t connected with a church would love to try a no-obligation experience of substantial spiritual discussion, prayer, and community. *Unbinding Your Soul* prepares church members to invite their friends into a four-week small group experience with short study chapters, an individual prayer journal, prayer partner activities, and group exercises. Groups can choose an additional four-week segment: “Faith and Courage.”

Resources

Reese, Martha Grace. *Unbinding the Gospel: Real Life Evangelism*. St. Louis: Chalice, 2006.
_____. *Unbinding Your Heart: Forty Days of Prayer and Faith Sharing*. St. Louis: Chalice, 2008.

_____. *Unbinding Your Church*. St. Louis: Chalice, 2008.

_____. *Unbinding Your Soul: Your Experiment in Prayer and Community*. St. Louis: Chalice, 2009.

Website

GraceNet: www.gracenet.info

Share Faith in Daily Life—Prayer, Care, Share: “What’s Your One Step” (Evangelical Covenant Church: <http://whatsyouronestep.com>)

People today are looking for stories, experiences, and connections to God. These realities compel church leaders to reinvent how they practice sharing the good news about Jesus. There is need to articulate a biblical view of evangelism because people in our culture are not responding and because people in our churches are not excited or engaged. Evangelism is to cooperate with the Holy Spirit and other Christians to bring one person one step closer to Christ. The call for evangelism today must be about investing in relationships, incarnating the gospel, and inviting people to the mission of Jesus. Evangelism is about participating in the work that God is already doing in the lives of people. Therefore, any spiritual conversation, any act of kindness can bring someone one step closer to Christ than where they were before. This is evangelism!

What’s Your One Step is a process, a small group series, and a website to share ideas, stories, and practical tools as church members seek to help bring friends, neighbors, and families one step closer to Christ through *prayer, care, and share*. Evangelism is a process that usually involves a lot of little steps. This one step could be praying for someone, caring for the needs of others, or verbally sharing one’s faith. The small group series is designed to take people on a journey to be encouraged, challenged, and open to the leading of the Holy Spirit and to discover how God is calling them to be a partner in helping someone become a follower of Jesus. The study does not require a formal leader but simply calls for people to gather in a small group, open their Bibles, and begin to learn together about evangelism and how they can take one step to help friends, family, neighbors, and coworkers take one step closer to Christ.

Website

What’s Your One Step. <http://whatsyouronestep.com>

Additional Resources

Kujawa-Holbrook, Sheryl, and Fredrica Harris Thompsett. *Born of Water, Born of Spirit: Supporting the Ministry of the Baptized in Small Congregations*. Herndon: Alban Institute, 2010.

Osborn, Larry. *Sticky Church*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2008. (<http://stickychurch.com/what-is-sticky-church>)

Interfaith Education and Dialogue

We live in a religiously diverse world and people of diverse religious traditions are interacting with one another on a daily basis. The United States may be the most religious diversity country on the planet. Consequently, there is a tremendous need for interfaith understanding and dialogue—for the good of the society and religious congregations. Rabbi Justus N. Baird, director of the Center for Multifaith Education at Auburn Theological Seminary in New York City, explains that the case for multifaith education stands on three things: the *news*, the *pews*, and *religious views*.

First, the *news*. News headlines are dominated by events that are, at least in part, the result of religious ignorance or misunderstanding. Because news stories like these are the primary source of information about other religious traditions for most Americans, it is not surprising that so many of us are misinformed or have biased opinions about people of different faiths. Religion's high profile in the media puts the responsibility on religious leaders to offer quality instruction about other religious traditions to their flocks. If we don't answer this call for multifaith learning, we will raise another generation of people of faith schooled in misunderstanding, stereotypes, and bias.

News stories are a constant reminder that religion and misunderstanding about religion play a role in conflict around the world. Humanity's ability to resolve conflict is in part predicated on our ability to create better understanding between people of faith; our own security—our physical safety—is directly related to building relations across religious divides.

The news is a daily reminder that the world remains a broken place. People of faith have a responsibility to take part in repairing the world by reaching across religious divides and working together on issues of shared concern. For all these reasons—the misunderstanding and bias created by learning about other faiths from the news, the role of religion in conflict that affects our security, and the reminder of injustices that demand cooperative action—the news is a major part of the case for multifaith education.

The second reason to engage in multifaith education is the *pews*. “Pews” refers to the religious diversity in our neighborhoods and in our congregations. The religious diversity in our neighborhoods spills over into the pews of our congregations. Each time I lead prayers or give a sermon in my own synagogue, I have to think about how the prayers or the sermon will be understood not only by my Jewish congregants but also by the many non-Jewish people in the room. These are not curious visitors—these are the partners and spouses of congregants, many of whom regularly come to the services. And almost half of the people in the pews of American congregations grew up in a different denomination: the 2008 United States Religious Landscape Survey by the Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life reported that 44% of Americans have left the denomination of their childhood for another

denomination, another faith, or no faith at all. Most clergy find a wide variety of backgrounds represented in the pews: lifelong adherents, less affiliated newcomers shopping for a religious community, and people of a different faith altogether. Family members of different faiths turn up during a visit to the hospital, at weddings, and at funerals. Do clergy know enough about other religious traditions to serve non-adherents well? Do lay leaders know how to embrace people from other religious traditions without saying embarrassing things? Can congregations serve families made up of a variety of religious affiliations? To effectively serve our communities—to lead our congregations faithfully—we must have a better working knowledge of other faith traditions.

The news and the pews are the two high-profile reasons for engaging in multifaith continuing education. The third reason, *religious views*, is more subtle and personal: engaging in multifaith education enriches one's own faith. Those who spend time learning about different religious traditions report that they come to understand their own tradition better and that they are stretched to grow spiritually. A familiar maxim teaches that "to know one religion is to know none." Religious traditions did not evolve in a vacuum—they are interrelated, and many aspects of our faith traditions cannot be understood without knowledge of other religions. Learning about other religions helps us make sense of our own. Encountering other faiths also directs our attention to muted theological strands in our own tradition. Religious practices or ideas that are strongly emphasized in one tradition may be more hidden in another. We can experience what theologian Krister Stendahl called "holy envy;" that is, we can appreciate new languages to praise God while being faithful to our own tradition.

No longer can we ignore the religious diversity that influences our world and reaches deep into our communities. Because of a great lack of education about other faiths, stereotypes and misunderstanding continue to proliferate, which fuels conflicts around the world and at home. Religious leaders and laypeople must better understand other faith traditions in order to serve their own communities and engage in righteous acts with others. And as we travel the path toward greater understanding of other religions, we will grow in our own relationship to God.

Faith formation can strengthen the distinctive Christian identity of church members so that they know who they are and what they believe, and are able to honestly encounter religious differences, understand people of other faiths, and explore areas of mutuality. Faith formation can enable people to discern authentic religious life and practices in a broad spiritual marketplace; teach the practices of discernment and theological reflection; and encourage Christians to work together with others in a multi-faith world on projects and activities that advance the common good. Christian churches can engage in ecumenical and interfaith dialogue, worship, and learning experiences that develop understanding of other faiths and traditions, and develop a new understanding and appreciation of one's own tradition and its gifts.

IDEAS

Courses and Field Trips.

Faith formation from adolescence through adulthood can include the study of other religious traditions and encourage direct encounter with these traditions and people. This can include field trips to the synagogue, mosque, or ashram, and study of their traditions. The intent of such interfaith faith formation is not simply to “learn about” other traditions, but more to “learn from” them. This means studying them with appreciation, alert for the resonances and differences, seeking for what can enhance our understanding of other religious traditions and of our faith (Groome).

A local church can teach a course, face-to-face or online or both, using the print and video resources at Patheos.com, an online resource center to engage in the global dialogue about religion and spirituality and to explore and experience the world’s beliefs. Patheos is the website of choice for the millions of people looking for credible and balanced information or resources about religion. Patheos brings together the public, academia, and the faith leaders in a single environment, and is the place where people turn on a regular basis for insight into questions, issues, and discussions. Patheos is designed to serve as a resource for those looking to learn more about different belief systems, as well as participate in productive, moderated discussions on some of today’s most talked about and debated topics.

Art of Spiritual Conversation.

Faith formation can train people in the art of spiritual conversation, including listening with openness to learn from others, and then sharing in ways faithful to Christian teachings and practices. It is important to be honest in recognizing differences. Nothing is achieved by the pretense of being “the same, really” when that simply is not so. People need to listen and talk “between the lines,” looking out for the deeper meanings and values that lie beneath formulas of belief (Groome).

Shared-Values/Service Learning.

The Interfaith Youth Core seeks to nurture the interaction among religiously diverse young people in the direction of strengthening religious identity, encouraging understanding between religious communities, and facilitating cooperative service for the common good. The Interfaith Youth Core uses an interfaith shared-values/service-learning model. They bring together diverse fourteen- to twenty-five-year-olds, mostly through their congregation- or campus-based youth groups, to discuss how their different traditions “speak to” shared values such as hospitality, service, pluralism, and peace; and participate in service projects which put those values in action. Sometimes the discussion comes first, sometimes the projects come first.

The simple genius of the shared values approach is that it highlights things people share universally while creating the space for each community to articulate its unique understanding of the value. In a discussion on the shared value of hospitality, Muslims

might cite what they do for *iftar* and the hadith of the Prophet, Jews might talk about their Shabbat practice and scripture from Exodus, and Christians might discuss their church's tradition on Christmas and the example of Jesus in Matthew 25. By speaking from their own traditions, participants find their faith deepened. This directly addresses the most pressing fear that parents and religious leaders have regarding interfaith youth work—the “you better not turn my Muslim into a Buddhist” problem. It also avoids the pitfall of immediately getting into competing claims—the “it was Isaac, no it was Ishmael” problem. They also find that shared values is a language of faith that is relevant to the world of “inter.” Jews, Muslims, and Christians can all cite how their scriptures and holidays command them to provide hospitality. They discover that their stories can live side by side, even mutually enriching one another, and motivate them towards cooperative service together.

Special Events.

Churches can partner with other religious congregations and communities to sponsor a multifaith speaker series with discussion and interaction; multifaith worship and ritual experiences; artistic programming including music, sacred art, and video; multifaith festivals and holidays, and multifaith service programming.

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Resources

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Websites

- Belief Net: www.beliefnet.com
- Graduate Theological Union—Centers of Distinction: www.gtu.edu/centersandaffiliates
- Interfaith Youth Core: www.ifyc.org
- Interfaithing: www.interfaithing.com
- Patheos: www.patheos.com (world religions)
- Read the Spirit: www.readthespirit.com
- Spirituality and Practice: www.SpiritualityandPractice.com