

# A Guide to 21<sup>st</sup> Century Faith Formation

Designing Connected and Networked  
Faith Formation for All Ages & Generations

John Roberto

*You never change things by fighting the existing  
reality. To change something, build a new model that  
makes the existing model obsolete.*

Buckminster Fuller



LifelongFaith Associates

40 Brighton Road, Naugatuck, CT 06770  
[www.LifelongFaith.com](http://www.LifelongFaith.com) • [jroberto@lifelongfaith.com](mailto:jroberto@lifelongfaith.com)

© 2013 LifelongFaith Associates  
(For individual use only. Request permission to make copies for groups.)

21<sup>st</sup> Century Faith Formation Website:  
[www.21stcenturyfaithformation.com](http://www.21stcenturyfaithformation.com)

# Part 1. The Vision, Principles, and Practices of 21<sup>st</sup> Century Faith Formation

## A Time for a New Approach to Faith Formation

**M**ost Christian churches have similar goals for faith formation. Churches want faith formation that helps people grow in their relationship with God throughout their lives; live as disciples of Jesus Christ at home, in the workplace, in the community and the world; develop an understanding of the Bible and their faith tradition; deepen their spiritual life and practices; engage in service and mission; relate the Christian faith to life today; and participate in the life and ministries of the faith community. Churches want faith formation that informs, forms, and transforms; and immerses people into the practices and way of life of a tradition-bearing community where they can be transformed spiritually. And churches want faith formation that engages all ages and generations in a lifelong process of growing, experiencing, celebrating, and living the Christian faith throughout life.

Churches are finding it more and more difficult to accomplish these goals in the 21<sup>st</sup> century world. First, the religious landscape has changed dramatically over the past two decades and we see this in our congregations and in our families. Consider the following trends and how they impact your congregation:

- A growing *generational* diversity in America and in our church as a result of people living longer. We now have five distinct generational profiles, each with their own religious and spiritual needs, and unique learning preferences and styles: the iGeneration (born since 2000), Millennials (1980-1999), Generation X (1961-1979), Baby Boomers (1946-1960), and Builders (born before 1946).
- An increasing number of people in America who are *no longer affiliated with*

*any religion*. This represents 15% of all Americans and almost 25% of those in their 20s.<sup>1</sup>

- An increasing number of people in America who are *spiritual but not religious*—many with a vibrant relationship with God and living a spiritual life, but not engaged in an established church (denomination). This representing almost 20% of all those in their 20s and 30s.<sup>2</sup>
- A much greater *acceptance and embrace of diversity* among the younger generations (40s and younger)—ethnic-cultural, religious, sexual—that is transforming American society at large, especially the attitudes of the older generations.
- A much greater acceptance in America of the *diversity of family structures* today: married couples with children, married couples with children, single parents with children, unmarried couples with children, same-sex couple with children, same-sex couple without children, and unmarried couple without children.<sup>3</sup>
- A *declining participation* in Sunday worship and sacraments/rites of passage (marriage, baptism) among all generations, but especially those who are 40 and younger.
- A *declining level of family faith practice and socialization at home*—reflecting the increase in parents who are non-affiliated or spiritual but not religious, and the lack of continuous connection to a faith community among young adults, young married couples, and parents with young children.

A second reason it is more difficult to accomplish these goals is that churches continue to use models of faith formation that were developed for the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century world. Most current programming makes assumptions about the world that are no longer true. For example, the Sunday School (weekly classes) and youth group grew up in a very different world than the one we live in today. The 30-40 hours that children and youth are involved in Sunday School (weekly classes) and youth group assume that faith is still being transmitted from generation to generation at home and in the congregation; that families are practicing their faith at home—reading the Bible, praying together, celebrating rituals and traditions (often drawn from their ethnic heritage), etc.; that families are involved in the life of the congregation, especially Sunday worship. The Sunday School and youth group model also rely on the assumption that people are more alike than diverse, so a “one size fits all” model works effectively, i.e., every 3<sup>rd</sup> grader comes from a similar family, with similar formation, and has the same religious and spiritual needs.

What happens when these basic assumptions are no longer true? What happens when we realize that every congregation, large or small, experiences tremendous diversity in their people; when it is not a “given” that families are practicing their faith at home and socializing their children; when parents drop-off their children for Sunday School but don’t attend worship (except at Christmas and Easter and other big church events); when children experience more media in a week than a year of Sunday School or youth group (8-18 year olds experience at least 7 ½ hours of media each day<sup>4</sup>); and when people’s lives have become so complex and time-stressed that belonging to church is no longer at the center of their lives and priorities. You get the picture. The world has changed. Our people have changed. Yet the Sunday School and youth group models persist, but not effectively!

Churches have tried to “fix” the problems of Sunday School, youth group, and the older “church-based” models with new curriculum, new resources, new facilities, and new schedules. Yet most churches are frustrated that no matter what they do, it doesn’t work. Sunday School and the

older models worked in a time when the assumptions upon which the model was developed were true. The world has changed and we need to begin with life today and develop models, practices, and resources for the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

Ronald Heifetz and Martin Linsky, in their work on leadership, are helpful in this regard. They contrast the difference between a technical fix and an adaptive challenge. *Technical problems* (even though they may be complex) can be solved with knowledge and procedures already in hand. For the past thirty years or so leaders have been trying to apply technical fixes to the older models of faith formation, usually with little long-term success. *Adaptive challenges* require new learning, innovation, and new patterns of behavior. Adaptive challenges require experiments, new discoveries, and adjustments. Without learning new ways—changing attitudes, values, and deep-seated behaviors—people cannot make the adaptive leap necessary to thrive in the new environment.

Churches today face a huge adaptive challenge in developing faith formation for the 21<sup>st</sup> century. One way to frame this adaptive challenge is to imagine what faith formation in your church would look like if you “started from scratch” and developed a new approach(s) for a 21<sup>st</sup> century world and its people. What approach(s) would you use? What types of faith formation opportunities would you offer? What resources would you need? What technologies would you use?

I believe we need a more holistic and comprehensive vision for the 21<sup>st</sup> century that is missional, formational, and transformational; that addresses the diversity of people’s spiritual and religious needs; that takes place in a diversity of physical settings (churches, homes, third places) as well as virtual online settings; that utilizes a variety of formats and technologies for learning; that accesses the vast resources of religious content and experiences available today. I am proposing a ***lifelong faith formation network*** as one response to the adaptive challenge facing Christian faith formation.

# A Connected, Networked World

According to Lee Rainie and Barry Wellman, authors of *Networked: The New Social Operating System*, we are in the midst of a “triple revolution”—the rise of social networks, the personalized internet, and always-available mobile connectivity. In the past 10 years we have seen the rise of new information and communication technologies: Google, Facebook, Wikipedia, Google+, Twitter, YouTube, Flickr, and blogging. People today have immediate access to the growing digital content. Consider this:

- 88% of homes have broadband
- over 75% of people 65 and younger use the internet (58% of those 66-74 use the internet)
- over 71% of those 49 and younger are involved in a social network (52% of those 50-64)
- over 50% of those 18-46 have smartphones (and 35% of 47-56 year olds)
- 67 million iPads have been sold since 2010 with an additional 120 million tablets projected to be purchased in 2012.<sup>5</sup>

The best part of these new technologies is that people already own them—computers, smart phones (iPhone), and tablets (iPads)—and they know how to use them!

Together with the growth of information and communication technologies, we are experiencing the growth of new digital resources that utilize these technologies: online resource centers, online courses, digital books, videos, apps, blogs, wikis, to name a few. Universities, such as MIT and Harvard ([www.edxonline.org](http://www.edxonline.org)), are making all of their courses available online for free; the Khan Academy ([www.khanacademy.org](http://www.khanacademy.org)) is providing over 3000 instructional videos for elementary and high school education for free, TED ([www.ted.com](http://www.ted.com)) is making available the videos of all their world-class presenters for free and developing TedEd (<http://ed.ted.com>) as a platform for creating customized lessons around TED Talks and any video presentation.

There has also been a tremendous growth of religious content and experiences in digital form—the Bible and Bible studies, prayer and spiritual practices, daily devotions, online courses, online marriage preparation, online wedding planning, parenting skills and practices, family/household faith forming activities, to name only a few examples.

We are experiencing a *convergence* of new information and communication technologies with digital resources that are beginning to transform contemporary life and learning, and have the potential to transform faith formation. Just as an earlier era adopted the technology of schooling and the printing press to produce instructional educational models using catechisms and textbooks, the 21<sup>st</sup> century has new digital technologies, approaches, and content that can transform faith formation in a congregation.

Imagine the possibilities of the convergence of new technologies and the variety of learning formats with the diversity of religious content and experiences for lifelong faith formation. Today congregations can:

- Create an online faith formation center (website) where people of all ages and generations can find (and link to) high quality religious content and experiences—worship, prayer, spiritual practices, Bible study, Christian beliefs and traditions, rituals and milestones, music, and so much more.
- Offer a wide variety of online Bible and theology courses for individual and small group adult study by selecting the best offerings on iTunes University and from college and seminary continuing education programs, cataloging and linking to them on the church’s faith formation website, connecting adults who want to study a particular course together, and then creating a blog or wiki for people to share their reflections and learning with each other and whole church community.
- Give parents access to the best knowledge for parenting through their church’s website (print, audio, video) and starting a

parenting wiki or blog to share their experiences and insights—and inviting all parents from the congregation (and around the world) to join them.

- Redesign children’s faith formation so that children are doing projects and activities with their parents online (at a secure site, such as Edmodo, [www.edmodo.com](http://www.edmodo.com)), and then refocusing “class time” on presenting projects and demonstrating their learning.
- Offer “versions” of a confirmation program—with online and face-to-face activities—so that young people (with the help of a guide/mentor) can select the content and activities most appropriate to their religious and spiritual needs.
- Provide online Bible study to small groups of young adults who can connect virtually through Skype or Google+ each week, and share their written reflections in their Bible study blog.
- Offer a small group of young people who want to learn more about Christianity by taking an online college-level theology course using a free course from the “catalog” at iTunesU.
- Offer people who love art a way to explore Christian artwork by virtually studying art in the great museums of the world and meeting online and in-person to share their reflections.
- Offer a six-week program for youth or adults on the history, tradition, and practices of world religions with guest speakers from around the country/world presenting live via Skype, Google+, or YouTube video, and using the Patheos world religions website ([www.patheos.com](http://www.patheos.com)) as a “text” for study.
- Develop a justice and service center where people of all ages can learn about pressing social issues, explore Biblical and church teaching on justice, and find ways to act

together through local and global projects and organizations.

- Develop an online prayer/meditation center where people could access daily prayer experiences (e.g., 3-Minute Retreat from Loyola Press), offer prayer intentions, pray for others, learn about spiritual practices, download prayer activities for the home, and so on.

The amazing thing is that all of these resources and technologies exist, *and* that almost all children and their parents, teens, young adults, adults, and increasing numbers of adults 60+ already have the technology tools to make this possible.

It is now possible, like never before, for a congregation to provide faith formation for everyone, anytime, anywhere, 24 x 7 x 365. It is now possible to customize and personalize faith formation for all ages around the life tasks and issues, interests, religious and spiritual needs, and busy lives of people. It is now possible to engage people in a wide diversity of programs, activities, and resources that incorporate a variety of ways to learn—on your own, with a mentor, at home, in small groups, in large groups, in the congregation, and in the community and world—delivered in physical gathered settings and virtual online settings. It is now possible to deliver religious content and experiences to people wherever they are, 24 x 7 x 365. It is now possible to connect people to each other whenever and wherever—in physical places and virtual spaces. *The basic shift means that we have the ability to fashion faith formation around the people; not to get people to “fit” into our programs and activities.*

## Network Thinking

**N**etworks are everywhere. The brain is a network of nerve cells connected by axons, and cells themselves are networks of molecules connected by biochemical reactions. Societies, too, are networks of people linked by friendships, familial relationships and professional ties. On a larger scale, food webs and ecosystems can be represented as networks of species. And

networks pervade technology: the Internet, power grids and transportation systems are but a few examples. Even the language we are using to convey these thoughts to you is a network, made up of words connected by syntactic relationships. (Barabasi and Bonabeau, 52)

We know that life today is being transformed by digital technology and the emerging biological understanding of life as a network. We are all part of networks: our families, our schools, our workplaces, our religious congregations, our social circles. Networks—collections of people (and their resources) connected to each other through relationships—aren't new. They're as old as human society.

Images of networks appear in the Scriptures. Jesus uses the image of the vine and branches to describe his relationships with the disciples (church) and their relationship with him.

I am the true vine and my Father is the vine-grower. . . . Abide in me as I abide in you. Just as the branches cannot bear fruit by itself unless it abides in the vine, neither can you unless you abide in me. I am the vine, you are the branches. Those who abide in me and I in them bear much fruit, because apart from me you can do nothing. (John 15:1, 4-5)

Paul uses the image of the body to describe the early Christian community.

For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. For in the one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and we were all made to drink of one Spirit. (1 Corinthians 12:12-13)

What is new is that in the 21<sup>st</sup> century this understanding of networks has been expanded to include the digital network we call the Internet and world wide web. New tools and technologies are changing the way we communicate and connect. The changes can be seen in the way people are working together to create and disseminate knowledge. The shift is not just in the

new Web 2.0 technologies. It's in the way that increasingly widespread access to these tools is driving a fundamental change in how groups are formed and work gets done. Wikis and other social media are engendering new, networked ways of behaving that are characterized by principles of openness, transparency, decentralized decision-making, and distributed action. These new approaches to connecting people and organizing work are now allowing us to do old things in new ways, and to try completely new things that weren't possible before.

Religious networks provide a rich set of connections each of us can make to people in both our online and offline worlds who can help us with our spiritual development and faith growth pursuits. While we've always had those types of people in our day-to-day lives, the Internet pushes the potential scope and scale of those networks to unprecedented heights. Today we can turn to people, organizations, and resources anywhere in the world to help us answer questions, connect to relevant content and resources, or just share their own experiences with us. Simply put, online networks change the game by allowing us, in a sense, to create our own "global classrooms" and collect teachers and learners around topics we want to learn about. They allow us to self-direct our learning and faith growth in exciting new ways.

Reflecting on the rise of the virtual global classroom, Will Richardson notes,

One thing is certain, although schools may continue to fundamentally look and act as they have for more than one hundred years, the way individuals learn has already been forever changed. Instead of learning from others who have the credentials to "teach" in this new networked world, we learn with others whom we seek (and who seek us) on our own and with whom we often share nothing more than a passion for knowing. In this global community, we are at once all teachers and learners—changing roles as required, contributing, collaborating, and maybe even working together to re-create the world, regardless of where we are at any given moment. (287)

Twenty-first century faith formation will look and feel and operate as a network and an ecosystem. It will no longer resemble the linear, one-size fits all model of the industrial age. As a network it will provide a diversity of religious context and experiences for all ages and generations, for a diversity of religious and spiritual needs, 24 x 7 x 365, in face-to-face and virtual settings. It will incorporate an immense range of faith formation opportunities.

Reflecting on what a fully networked church looks like, media expert Quentin Schultze says,

Human beings are inherently multimedia creatures. So “networking” takes many forms across all media, including in-person, print, electronic, and digital media. A full network employs all of the fitting or appropriate means of communication for the purposes of congregational life, from worship to education and fellowship. The notion of “fitting” use of technology in this networking is crucially important. To be fully networked is not just to be busy, but to be fittingly involved with one another. We constantly have to be asking ourselves not if we are networked per se, but if we are networked appropriately, in tune with the purposes of the church. (Communicating Faithfully, <http://quentinschultze.com/faith-technology-worship>)

## A Vision for 21<sup>st</sup> Century Faith Formation

### Something Old

Churches want faith formation that helps people grow in their relationship with God throughout their lives; live as disciples of Jesus Christ at home, in the workplace, in the community and the world; develop an understanding of the Bible and their particular faith tradition; deepen their spiritual life and practices; engage in service and mission; relate the Christian faith to life today; participate in the life and ministries of the faith community.

Churches want faith formation that informs, forms, and transforms; and immerses people into

the practices and way of life of a tradition-bearing community where they can be transformed spiritually. Churches want faith formation that engages all ages and generations in a lifelong process of growing, experiencing, celebrating, and living the Christian faith throughout life. And all of this has been true for 2000 years!

Faith formation has a long history in Christianity. The baptismal catechumenate of the first 400 years of Christianity was a formational experience of worship, community life, instruction, mentoring, prayer, service, and moral formation—all leading to membership in the Christian community through baptism. The monastic tradition begun by St. Benedict over 1500 years ago utilizes a holistic formation in Benedictine spirituality and the Christian way of life—times of prayer throughout the day, work, meals, study, worship, and the entire community life. Everything is formational. And the longer the Benedictine monks and sisters are immersed in this environment and live the practices each day the more they are being transformed by this way of life.

People today long for this type of formational environment and experience where they can be immersed into the practices and way of life of a tradition-bearing community and be transformed spiritually. Terrence Tilly reinforces the emphasis on being formed in the practices of the Christian faith within a community. In his excellent article, “Communication in Handing on the Faith,” he writes,

Faith can be understood as a set of practices, even a complex virtue, Faith is not something we first believe, then practice. Rather, we practice the faith and in so doing come to understand it. God’s gracious initiative makes this possible. (156)

Communicating the faith is the complex practice of empowering people, disciples, to engage in the practices that constitute the faith tradition, including practices of participating in the sacraments and worship life of the church, and in distinctively Christian social and moral practices that fit the local community in which we live, and of believing. (156)

If we are to pass on the faith as a practice, then, we need to have people who are interested in pursuing the practice of living in and living out the tradition, and we need to coach, not teach, the faith. . . . If faith is a set of practices, then portraying and communicating the faith is *shown* in performance more than *said* in dogma, doctrine, or rules. (157)

. . . . What we need to do, then, is to be a community that attracts people who then want to reach the goals we strive for. That is the only way that “coaching in the faith” becomes possible. The members of a community coach each other in how to live out the faith. Faith is communicated in this (dialectical, not sequential) two step process of desire (to live out the faith) and training (in living out the faith). (170)

In the Roman Catholic tradition, the *General Directory for Catechesis* (GDC) and the *National Directory for Catechesis* (NDC) present a comprehensive formational process through six essential and interdependent tasks for catechesis: “1) knowledge of the faith, 2) knowledge of the meaning of liturgy and the sacraments, 3) moral formation in Jesus Christ, 4) teaching how to pray with Christ, 5) preparing to live in community and participate actively in the life and mission of the Church, and 6) a missionary spirit that prepares the faithful to be present as Christians in society” (See GDC nos. 85-87 and NDC 20, pp. 60-63). “These six tasks constitute a unified whole by which catechesis seeks to achieve its objective: the formation of disciples of Jesus Christ” (NDC 20, p. 63).

This comprehensive formation is rooted in Christ’s method of formation: “Jesus instructed his disciples; he prayed with them; he showed them how to live; and he gave them his mission” (NDC 20, p. 59).

Christ’s method of formation was accomplished by diverse yet interrelated tasks. His example is the most fruitful inspiration for effective catechesis today because it is integral to formation in the Christian faith. Catechesis must attend to each of these different

dimensions of faith; each becomes a distinct yet complementary task. Faith must be known, celebrated, lived, and expressed in faith. So catechesis comprises six fundamental tasks, each of which is related to an aspect of faith in Christ. All efforts in evangelization and catechesis should incorporate these tasks. (NDC 20, p. 59-60)

In the Episcopal tradition, *The Charter for Lifelong Christian Formation*, adopted at the Episcopal Church’s General Convention in July 2009, offers a comprehensive vision of Christian formation as a lifelong journey with Christ, in Christ, and to Christ. Lifelong Christian faith formation is lifelong growth in the knowledge, service and love of God as followers of Christ and is informed by scripture, tradition and reason.

The Charter’s vision of lifelong faith formation incorporates formation in prayer; continuous learning; hearing the Word of God in Scripture; studying Scripture and church teachings; experiencing liturgy and worship; equipping disciples for life in the world; carrying out God’s work of reconciliation, love, forgiveness, healing, justice and peace; and sharing one’s faith through evangelism. (See *Charter for Lifelong Faith Formation* at [www.formationcharter.com](http://www.formationcharter.com).)

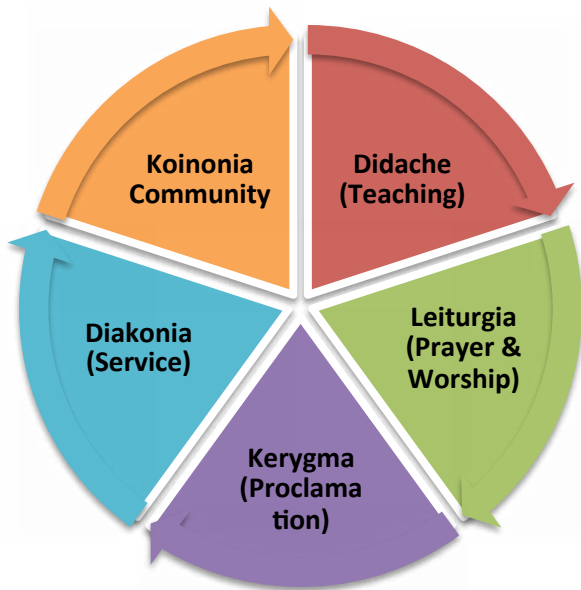
Maria Harris, in her now classic book *Fashion Me a People*, explains how the church’s educational ministry is embodied and lived in five classical forms: *didache*, *koinonia*, *kerygma*, *diakonia*, and *leiturgia*. She says that the church educates *to* all of these five classical forms, as well as *through* all of them:

- to *koinonia* (community and communion) by engaging in the forms of community and communion;
- to *leiturgia* (worship and prayer) by engaging in the forms of prayer and worship and spirituality;
- to *kerygma* (proclaiming the word of God) by attention to and practicing and incarnating the kerygma, “Jesus is risen,” in speech of our own lives, especially the speech of advocacy;
- to *diakonia* (service and outreach) by attention to our own service and reaching



out to others, personally and communally, locally and globally;

- to *didache* (teaching and learning) by attention to the most appropriate forms of teaching and learning (including schooling in our own communities. (43-44)



The whole church community is formational—it is the curriculum in many of the same ways the monastic life is formational *and* transformational for the monks and sisters. “The whole community as agent is, by its way of living together, speaking together, praying together, and worshipping together, causing a shock of recognition in person after person that reveals them to themselves, saying, ‘I am being educated by and in this community to become who I am.’ . . . The whole community is coming to know itself as learner, to know itself as the subject of education, and to know itself as the one whose path is unending. (Harris, 49)

## Something New

In the 21<sup>st</sup> century this comprehensive vision of faith formation can now be viewed as network of faith formation experiences, content, programs, activities, resources, and so on. Maria Harris’ vision of the church as the curriculum can now be expanded to include both physical settings and virtual places, and a variety of formats for learning—on your own, with a mentor, as a

family/household, in small groups, in large groups, in the whole congregation, in the community and world.

The 21<sup>st</sup> century connected and networked world provides new ways to bring this vision of comprehensive formation to life. We can now develop networks of faith formation tailored around the religious, spiritual, and life needs of people across the whole span. We can develop networks of faith formation with a variety of content, experiences, programs, activities, and resources offered in a variety of settings, both virtually and physically.

Faith formation can incorporate both intergenerational experiences within the church community with targeted faith formation around the stages, ages, and generations of individuals and families. We can diversify faith formation in a congregation to address the needs of people across the life span, while at the same time strengthening the intergenerational core of the faith community.

We can finally develop a lifelong and lifewide approach to faith formation and realize our vision for lifelong faith formation that was not possible in the older paradigm/models.



# Principles for 21<sup>st</sup> Century Faith Formation

## 1. Faith formation addresses the diverse life tasks and situations, spiritual and religious needs, and interests of all ages and generations by offering a variety of content, programs, activities, and resources.

Consider for a moment the diversity that churches and faith formation are facing today:

- **Generational Diversity:** iGeneration, Millennials, Generation X, Baby Boomers, and Builders
- **Life Cycle Diversity:** children, adolescents, emerging adults (20s), young adults (30's-mid 40s), mid-life adults (mid 40s-50s), retirement adults (60s-70s), older adults (80s+).
- **Family Diversity:** Married couples with children, married couples without children, single parents, multigenerational families, unmarried couples with children, and more.
- **Ethnic and cultural diversity**

The religious and spiritual needs of people today are just as varied. In the *Faith Formation 2020 Initiative* we identified four groups of people with distinct needs. (See Appendix 1 at the end Part 1 of the Guide.)

- 1) people of vibrant faith and active engagement in the church community
- 2) people who participate occasionally but are not actively engaged in the church or spiritually committed
- 3) people who are spiritual but not religious, and not involved in a Christian denomination
- 4) people who are uninterested in the spiritual life and unaffiliated with religion

To address the diversity in the lives of people today, churches need to offer a wider variety of

faith formation offerings in physical and virtual settings. Today churches have available to them the resources and tools to provide lifelong faith formation for *all* ages and generations and to address the diversity of religious and spiritual needs of people. Churches can utilize the life of their faith community; the variety of excellent print, audio, and visual resources in faith formation; the new digital media and online resources; and the innovations and resources of other Christian churches to develop faith formation that is varied in content, expectations, depth, involvement, and timing.

In the past churches have often chosen the “one size fits all” mentality for programming. The culture of our day is all about personalization and customization. In a network model, faith formation shifts from the “one size fits all” curriculum and programming of an earlier era to a faith formation network of personalized and customized religious content and experiences that connects with people’s spiritual and religious needs. With all of its variety, a network can provide “differentiated faith formation” that is fashioned around the needs of people.

Faith formation is no longer about finding *the* program for a particular age group or generation. Churches can now meet people at the point of their spiritual, religious, and learning needs and offer personalized pathways for faith growth. Today, as never before, church have access to faith formation programming, activities, and resources that can be personalized and customized to address the diversity of people’s religious and spiritual needs. Resources for learning abound in every environment (at home, in the church, in the community, online). A primary task of a faith formation network is to identify these resources and link individuals, families, and communities with them effectively. The new reality of faith formation programming is that churches can offer activities that cater to niches— individuals, families, and small groups with a particular spiritual or religious need, interest, passion, concern, or life issue. They no longer have to worry about reaching a “mass audience” with “one size fits all” programming.

We know from learning sciences research that more effective learning will occur if each person receives a customized learning experience. People

learn best when they are placed in a learning environment that is sensitive to their learning needs and flexible enough to adapt strategies and resources to individual needs.

## 2. Faith formation engages people more deeply in the intergenerational life of the faith community.

Faith formation can incorporate both intergenerational experiences within the church community with targeted faith formation around the stages, ages, and generations of individuals and families. We can diversify faith formation in a congregation to address the needs of people across the life span, while at the same time strengthening the intergenerational core of the faith community.

Congregations can become more intentionally intergenerational in a variety of ways by focusing on:

- Intergenerational community life & events (arts festivals, music and concerts, drama)
- Intergenerational mentoring
- Intergenerational service
- Intergenerational learning
- Intergenerational retreats and camps
- Intergenerational leadership
- “Intergenerationalizing” age-group programs

(For articles with ideas and strategies for intergenerational faith formation go to the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Faith Formation website – Religious and Spiritual Growth across the Life Span: [www.21stcenturyfaithformation.com](http://www.21stcenturyfaithformation.com))

## 3. Faith formation recognizes that learning is a process of active inquiry with the initiative residing within the individual.

The traditional model of schooling has conditioned people to perceive the proper role of learners as being dependent on teachers to make decisions for them as to what should be learned, how it should be learned, when it should be learned, and if it has been learned. Today people

are accustomed to searching out what they want to know, when they want and need to know it. People are becoming more and more self-directed in their learning, and they have almost unlimited access to information through the Internet and the wide variety of print and media learning resources available in our society today.

As learning becomes a process of active inquiry, where the initiative resides within the person, intrinsic motivation becomes a key factor in determining whether or not people will engage in faith formation, and open themselves to learning and faith growth. Extrinsic motivation, such as faith formation participation policies (such as required hours or things that must be done in order to receive a sacrament), rarely motivate people to participate, learn, or grow in faith. In fact, they usually have the opposite effect.

Drawing on decades of scientific research on human motivation, Daniel Pink in his book *Drive: The Surprising Truth about What Motivates Us* exposes the mismatch between what research shows and how we motivate people. While carrots and sticks (policies and requirements) worked somewhat successfully in the twentieth century assembly line model, that’s precisely the wrong way to motivate people today.

He describes three types of motivation. Motivation 1.0 presumed that humans were biological creatures, struggling for survival. Motivation 2.0 presumed that humans also responded to reward and punishments in their environment. Motivation 3.0 presumes that humans also have a third drive—to learn, to create, and to better the world. It is this third type of motivation that drives people to be self-directed and engage in learning as a process of active inquiry.

Motivation 3.0 has three essential elements:

- **Autonomy:** the desire to direct our own lives. People need autonomy over task (what they do), time (when they do it), team (who they do it with), and technique (how they do it).
- **Mastery:** the urge to get better and better at something that matters. Motivation 3.0 demands engagement. Only engagement can produce mastery—becoming better at

something that matters. Mastery demands deliberate practice.

- **Purpose:** the yearning to do what we do in the service of something larger than ourselves. Humans, by their nature, seek purpose—a cause greater and more enduring than themselves.

Daniel Pink writes, “The secret to high performance and satisfaction—at work, at school, and at home—is the deeply human need to direct our own lives, to learn and create new things, and to do better by ourselves and our world.”

As just one example of how autonomy and mastery combine to motivate learners. A recent research study found that students want control of their own learning. When asked why learning through an online class might make school more interesting, 47% of students in grades 9-12, 39% in grade 6-8, and 25% in grades 3-5 responded that they wanted to learn online to control their own learning experience. Students do not expect online courses to be easier. They do, however, expect the online learning environment to facilitate their success because they can review materials when they want and are more comfortable asking teachers for help. And online teachers see great benefits to student online learning: 76% believe that online learning benefits students by putting them in control of their own learning.

### Video Presentation

View Daniel Pink’s two videos on motivation at:

- Ted Talks: [www.ted.com/talks/dan\\_pink\\_on\\_motivation.html](http://www.ted.com/talks/dan_pink_on_motivation.html)
- RSA Animate: <http://youtu.be/u6XAPnuFjJc>

## 4. Faith formation guides individuals and families in discerning their spiritual and religious needs and creating personal learning pathways for faith growth and learning.

Giving power to individuals and families to shape their own learning does not mean abandoning them to their own devices. Rather, it creates a new role and responsibility for faith formation leaders—to serve as guides and facilitators helping

people identify growth needs, finding resources and settings for faith formation, identifying next steps on their journey, and so on.

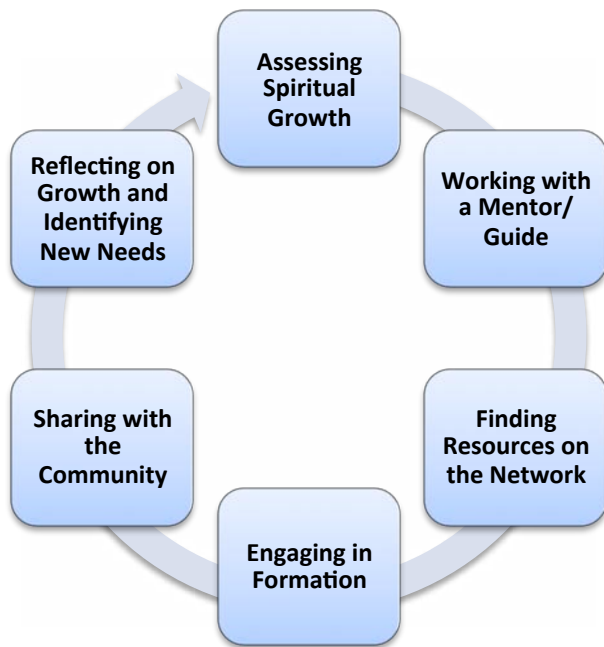
A faith formation network, rich in a diversity of content and a variety of ways to learn, can guide people in creating their own personal learning pathways. Churches can develop processes for helping individuals and families diagnose their religious and spiritual learning needs (online and in-person) and create their own plans for faith growth and learning. A “faith growth learning plan” helps people identify where they are on their spiritual journey, what they need for continuing their growth, who else might share that need, and the resources that could help them meet that need. Churches can 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.

The United Methodist Church of the Resurrection in Leawood, KS has developed a tool to assist adults in their church to assess where they are in their faith journey and their needs of continuing growth and learning.

*We invite you to join us on the greatest journey of your life – The Journey of Knowing, Loving and Serving God – as we strive to become a community of deeply committed Christians. We know that sometimes getting started can be daunting, especially in such a large church, but we want to travel this journey with you. Our Adult Discipleship Ministry offers you a navigation system that provides directions, routes and traveling companions to support and encourage you along the way. We believe that nothing in the world will bring you greater joy, greater challenge and greater meaning than the journey into life as God intended us to live it. To help encourage and equip you for your Journey, we’ve created the Journey assessment tool.*

(Visit their website to see the assessment tool: <http://www.cor.org/ministries/the-journey/welcome-to-your-self-assessment.>)

## A Process for a Developing a Personalized Faith Growth Plan



### 5. Faith formation incorporates *informal* learning, as well as *formal* learning in faith formation.

Informal learning describes a lifelong process whereby individuals acquire attitudes, values, skills and knowledge from daily experience and the educational influences and resources in their environment, from family and neighbors, from work and play, from the marketplace, the library, the mass media, and the Internet. Informal learning can be intentional or not. There might be a teacher, but it's probably a colleague or friend. We might read an article or book, visit a website, listen to a podcast, or watch a video online. We might visit Home Depot or Lowe's for a clinic on home repair or gardening or stop by our local bookstore or library for a reading group or special program. On television many channels are devoted to informal learning. The programs of *The Food Network*, while not formal education, promote learning as shows teach people how to cook, try new recipes, and so on. The variety of home improvement shows, such as the "This Old House" on PBS or the home makeover shows on

the HGTV, promote learning, even though they are not formal educational TV programs.

Formal and informal learning can be *intentional*—when an individual aims to learn something and goes about achieving that objective or *unexpected*—when in the course of everyday activities an individual learns something that he or she had not intended or expected.

Applying the four types of learning to faith formation, we can visualize the relationship among these four types of learning in the following way.

#### Formal Learning

classes speaker series workshops online courses small group Bible study	self-study Bible study social media/networking faith-sharing groups
<b>Intentional</b>	<b>Unexpected</b>
reading mentoring service/mission activity program at the library or local bookstore	internet surfing watching a movie or TV show shopping at a home improvement store

#### Informal Learning

Most of faith formation efforts in churches are *formal* and *intentional* learning through organized programs. Churches can expand their faith formation efforts by promoting all four types of learning. For example, Sunday worship is *informal* and *intentional* learning. A church can help people learn from their participation in worship through a weekly journal or activities booklet (online and in print) with reflection questions on the Scripture readings and the sermon. The readings and sermon can also be available in print or audio for further study on the church's website. The journal or activities booklet could also be used in a weekly faith sharing group or in table discussion after Sunday worship. These are all examples of informal and intentional learning activities. Where are the *informal* learning opportunities for people of all ages and for families in your congregation and community?



## 6. Faith formation utilizes a variety of formats, settings, and methods to address the diverse life tasks and situations, religious and spiritual needs, and interests of people.

With such a wide diversity of people and needs, a faith formation network provides a diversity of content and activities, *and* a variety of ways for people to engage the content and activities. A faith formation network incorporates seven faith formation formats to provide a variety of ways for people to learn and growth in faith that respect their preferred styles of learning, their life situations, and their time constraints. The seven formats also provide a congregation with ways to design faith formation that offers the same “content” in different settings, giving people different ways to learn and grow in faith.

The seven faith formation formats include: 1) on your own, 2) with a mentor, 3) at home, 4) in small groups, 5) in large groups, 6) in the congregation, and 7) in the community and world



Every faith formation network can offer a variety of faith formation formats with differing levels of depth and commitment, in virtual and physical settings, and at a variety of times and locations that are convenient for people. This approach means that people can have a variety of ways to learn and grow in faith, removing many of the more common obstacles to participating in faith formation.

There are a variety of methods that can be used in a faith formation network. Here is small sampling:

- small groups: discipleship or faith sharing groups, Bible study groups, theology study groups, Sunday lectionary-based or sermon-based faith sharing groups, practice-focused groups (prayer, service/faith in action), support groups
- study-action programs, service projects and mission trips
- conferences, workshops, courses, speaker series
- retreats, camps, and extended programs
- online courses and online faith formation resource centers
- audio programs and podcasts
- video programs and podcasts
- webinars and online conferences
- apps and digital media
- spiritual direction and spiritual support groups
- apprenticeships and mentoring
- family and intergenerational programs,
- film festivals
- field trips
- reading programs and book clubs

## 7. Faith formation offers programs and activities in physical settings; in virtual, online settings, and in blended settings that combine both.

Faith formation programs, activities, and experiences can be offered in a variety of settings, integrating physical and online settings.

- They can be offered only in *physical locations*, such as church facilities, homes, retreat centers, camps, and community settings.
- They can be offered only in *virtual settings*, such as an online course, collaborative wiki, and online resource center.
- They can be offered in a *blended approach*, combining a gathering in a physical location with online delivery (activities,

group projects, interaction) and some element of individual control over time, place, path, and/or pace.

These settings can be seen as a continuum: ranging from fully online (Model 1) to online resources as purely supplemental (Model 5).

Blended faith formation usually combines online delivery of religious content and experiences with the best features of gathered programs to personalize learning and differentiate faith formation instruction across a diverse group. Here is a view of the five models on a continuum.

### A Continuum of Blended Faith Formation

Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5
Fully online program or activity with options for face-to-face interaction in physical settings.	Mostly or fully online program or activity with regular interaction and programming in physical settings.	An online platform that delivers most of the program or activities with leaders providing on-site support on a flexible and adaptive as-needed basis through in-person mentoring and small group sessions.	Programs and activities in physical settings guided by a leader with online components that extend beyond the program sessions.	Programs and activities in physical settings that include online resources to supplement the program content.

## 8. Faith formation offers a variety of programs, activities, experiences, and resources to address the diverse ways people learn and grow in faith.

A faith formation network provides a congregation with a means to offer relevant content that addresses the spiritual and religious needs of people *and* the ability for them to engage with that content in ways that reflect how they learn and grow best. A network approach provides more options for people of all ages to find programs, activities, and resources that match well with how they learn and grow in faith.

We know from Howard Gardner’s research that people have different intelligences that affect how they learn and perform best. While it may be difficult to incorporate all eight intelligences in a particular program or activity, a network approach provides a way to offer programs, activities, and resources that emphasize different “intelligences”—one that is word-centered, another musical, another visual, etc.—so as to engage as many people as possible. (Gardner’s multiple intelligences include verbal-linguistic, logical-mathematical, visual-spatial, bodily-

kinesthetic, musical-rhythmic, naturalist, interpersonal, and intrapersonal.)

We know from research that people have preferred learning styles. Some 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. While it is possible to address these four learning styles in one program, a network provides a way to offer programs reflecting the four different learning styles, such as immersion programs, workshops, presentations, small group study, and retreat experiences to name a few.

## 9. Faith formation incorporates communities of practice to connect individuals and groups throughout the congregation.

One way to keep individuals and groups in faith formation connected to each other in the faith formation network is through communities of practice—groups of people who have a shared interest who come together to learn from each

other. Communities of practice have three dimensions: the domain (what it's about); the topic (the issues that they are facing); and the community (the people who are involved). Communities of practice use a variety of approaches to connect, such as face-to-face meetings, teleconferences, video conferencing, social networking, working on projects together. It is a mix of formal and informal methods. Some of them are online; some of them are face-to-face. Some of them happen weekly; some of them happen monthly or yearly.

A congregation is a community of practice. Practices like worship, liturgy, pastoral care, outreach, and social justice are important to the congregation's vitality. What you want are people who are passionate about those practices to develop them so that they are thriving in the congregation. An example would be people in a congregation who are engaged in justice and service projects—in the church and in the world—who could regularly connect, and even meet, to share their reflections and insights, communicate their insights to the whole congregation, and continue to support each other in their efforts. They can also invite new people to join their efforts. A community of practice around social justice could include not only church members, but also people in the wider community who have similar interests.

Another example might be people engaged in reading and studying the Bible. They may do this on their own or in small groups, but they are engaged in a large community of practice focused on reading and studying the book. A faith formation network connects these people, face-to-face or online, to share what they are learning and how they read and apply the Bible to daily life, to explore common issues in reading the Bible, review new resources, and educate new members (apprentices) in reading the Bible. The community of practice around reading and studying the Bible disseminates their learning throughout the congregation, providing a learning opportunity for everyone to grow in their understanding of the Bible.

Most of the skills and expertise we learn, we learn from others in practice. We don't learn it in a course or book. It's helpful to have those, but the way we really learn is in practice with other

practitioners. If you have a community of practice, someone can say, "I'm calling you about what I saw on your website or on Facebook. I heard that you tried this, and I'd love to talk to you about it." Communities of practice can connect people and diffuse learning and Christian practices across the congregation. There are a variety of ways to cultivate and support communities of practices around particular topics or issues or Christian practices.

## **10. Faith formation connects people to the experiences, content, programs, activities, and resources through a faith formation website.**

A website provides the platform for publishing and delivering the experiences, content, programs, activities, and resources of a faith formation network. A network is a dynamic resource that is developed over time with new materials, revisions of current material, deleting material, and so on. A network is in constant development as it addresses the spiritual and religious needs of people, finds new religious content and experiences, and utilizes new technologies to deliver content and experiences.


An easy way to develop a website for a faith formation network is to use a website creator like *Weebly* ([Weebly.com](http://Weebly.com)) or *WordPress* ([wordpress.org](http://wordpress.org)). The pre-designed templates make it simple to create a powerful, professional website without technical skills.

Here is an example of a website for an adult faith formation network:



## Adult Faith Formation

Home
Scripture Enrichment
Faith Enrichment
Spiritual Enrichment
Rediscovering Faith
Sunday Worship
Life Issues
Milestones
Service & Mission
Intergenerational Connections
Peer Connections
Grandparents



### Holy Trinity Adult Faith Formation

Welcome to Holy Trinity's faith formation center designed specifically for active, energetic, empty-nest, working & retiring, grandparent (and almost grandparent), "always young" mature adults in their 50s and 60s who seek a faith community that . . .

- engages them in meaningful spiritual growth and faith enrichment
- provides enriching worship services
- engages them in making a contribution to the church & world
- connects them to each other and the other generations in the faith community

Our faith formation center is rich in experiences, activities, and resources designed to nurture your faith as mature adults. Select from our variety of activities using the menu. You can learn and grow on your own, at home, in small groups, in large group programs, in our church community, and in the world. Invite your friends to join you in an activity.

### 11. Faith formation is guided by curators who find, organize and deliver the most relevant content and experiences to address the specific needs of people.

In a faith formation network the role of the leader is shifting from *providing* religious content and programming (although this will still be happening) to *curating* religious content and experiences for all ages. We are all familiar with curating and curation—museum curators collect art and artifacts and identify the most relevant or important to be displayed in an exhibit for the public. Museum curators are subject-matter experts that guide an organization's overall art collection.

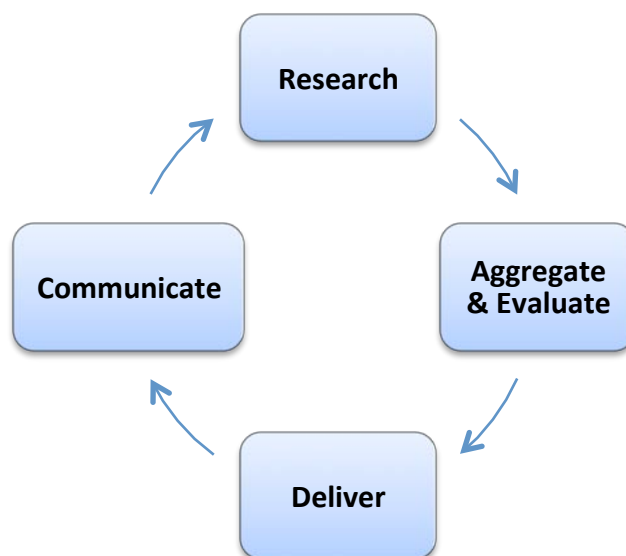
*A faith formation curator is someone who continually finds, groups, organizes, and shares the best and most relevant content on a specific subject to address the needs of a specific group of people.*

The primary task of the faith formation curator is not to create more content and programming, but to make sense of all the content that others are creating (publishers, websites, seminaries and colleges, religious organizations, and so on). Curation is an evolving idea that addresses two parallel trends: the explosive growth in religious content and experiences, especially online, and the need to be

able to find information in coherent, reasonably contextual groupings, such as a faith formation network.

As religious content and experience curators, faith formation leaders will become less focused on providing "one size fits all" curriculum for people, *and* become more focused on addressing people's spiritual and religious growth by offering a wide *variety* of religious content and experiences that they find, group, organize, and share through a faith formation network.

How does faith formation curation work? Each of the following elements of curating religious content are year-round tasks. The process of curating is continual.



#### 1. Research Resources & Stay Up-to-Date

What do you curate for a faith formation network? Consider these categories of resources in your research: 1) congregational programs and activities; 2) community-based programs and activities; 3) people resources in your congregation, community, and region; 4) print resources in all forms from books to articles; 5) audio and video programs; 6) art, drama, and music; 7) websites; 8) online courses and faith formation activities; and 9) apps and other forms of digital content.

The best librarians have access to hundreds, if not thousands, of information resources that deliver ongoing, real-time information on specific topics of interest to information patrons. Faith formation curators

will need to develop sources they can trust for high quality religious content and experiences. They will need to develop ways to stay informed on the latest resources as they become available, for example joining mailing lists (email or RSS feeds) or the Facebook pages and websites of publishers, colleges/seminaries, religious and community organizations, and online resource centers so that they receive regular updates on the publication and dissemination of new resources.

## 2. Aggregate & Evaluate

*Aggregation* is the act of bringing together the most relevant religious content and experiences on a particular topic or religious/spiritual need into a single location—an online Lifelong Faith Formation Network. Religious content and experiences can be aggregated in a variety of ways. One simple model is by “people groupings” (see diagram)—each of which can include content on the Bible, Christian beliefs and practices, theological themes, milestones and life transitions, prayer and spirituality, social justice issues, and so on. There are a variety of ways to aggregate content to address people’s spiritual and religious needs.

Faith formation curators find the best resources to address a target audience or particular spiritual or religious needs. They develop standards for evaluating faith formation activities and resources, such as biblical and theological content, developmental appropriateness, ethnic-cultural responsiveness, ease-of-use, quality of learning experience, and so on.

## 3. Deliver

Faith formation curators deliver the content and experiences through the faith formation network and website.

## 4. Communicate

Faith formation curators promote the resources available on the network via email, e-newsletter, Twitter, Facebook, and other social media, as well as printed formats such as the church bulletin. Faith formation

curators highlight the relationship between the content and the particular spiritual or religious needs, interests, passions, concerns, or life issues of people. They describe the 2-3 benefits of participating in faith formation; and explain how people can access the resources.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Barry A. Kosmin and Ariela Keysar, *American Religious Identification Survey (ARIS 2008)*, March 2009, Program on Public Values. (Hartford: Trinity College, 2009), [www.americanreligionsurvey-aris.org/reports/ARIS\\_Report\\_2008.pdf](http://www.americanreligionsurvey-aris.org/reports/ARIS_Report_2008.pdf); and Pew Research Center, *Faith in Flux: Changes in Religious Affiliation in the U.S.* April 27, 2009, <http://pewresearch.org/pubs/1204/religion-changes-affiliations-survey>.

<sup>2</sup> IBID

<sup>3</sup> Pew Research Center. *The Decline of Marriage and the Rise of New Families*. November 18, 2010. p. 40, [www.pewsocialtrends.org/2010/11/18/the-decline-of-marriage-and-rise-of-new-families](http://www.pewsocialtrends.org/2010/11/18/the-decline-of-marriage-and-rise-of-new-families).

<sup>4</sup> Kaiser Family Foundation. *Generation M<sup>2</sup>: Media in the Lives of 8- to 18-Year-Olds*. (January 2010), [www.kff.org/entmedia/mh012010pkg.cfm](http://www.kff.org/entmedia/mh012010pkg.cfm)

<sup>5</sup> Pew Internet and American Life. *The Rise of Network Information*. May 31, 2012. <http://pewinternet.org/Presentations/2012/May/The-Rise-of-Networked-Information.aspx>

<sup>6</sup> Accessed at: [www.goodreads.com/author/quotes/165737.Richard\\_Buckminster\\_Fuller](http://www.goodreads.com/author/quotes/165737.Richard_Buckminster_Fuller)

## Works Cited

- Barabasi, Albert Laszlo and Eric Bonabeau. “Scale Free Networks.” *Scientific American*. May 2003.
- Congregation for the Clergy. *General Directory for Catechesis*. Washington, DC: USCCB, 1997.
- Harris, Maria. *Fashion Me A People*. Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1989.
- Heifetz, Ronald, Marty Linsky, and Alexander Groshow. *The Practice of Adaptive Leadership*. Cambridge: Harvard Business School, 2009.
- Heifetz, Ronald and Marty. *Leadership on the Line*. Cambridge: Harvard Business, 2002.

- Heifetz, Ronald. *Leadership without Easy Answers*. Cambridge: Harvard Business, 1998.
- Pink, Daniel. *Drive: The Surprising Truth About What Motivates Us*. New York: Riverhead, 2009.
- Raine, Lee, and Barry Wellman. *Networked: The New Social Operating System*. Cambridge: MIT Press, 2012.
- Richardson, Will. "Navigating Social Networks as Learning Tools." *21<sup>st</sup> Century Skills: Rethinking How Students Learn*. Ed. by James Bellanca and Ron Brandt. Bloomington: Solution Tree, 2010.
- Roberto, John. *Faith Formation 2020: Designing the Future of Faith Formation*. Naugatuck: LifelongFaith Associates, 2010 ([www.LifelongFaith.com](http://www.LifelongFaith.com), [www.FaithFormation2020.net](http://www.FaithFormation2020.net))
- Shirky, Clay. *Here Comes Everybody: The Power of Organizing Without Organizations*. New York: Penguin Press, 2008.
- Staker, Heather, et al.. "The Rise of K-12 Blended Learning: Profiles of Emerging Models." Innosight Institute. May 2011. ([www.innosightinstitute.org](http://www.innosightinstitute.org))
- Tilley, Terrence. "Communication in Handing on the Faith." *Handing on the Faith*. Edited by Robert Imbelli. New York: Crossroad Publishing, 2006.
- United States Conference of Catholic Bishops. *National Directory for Catechesis*. Washington, DC: USCCBB Publishing, 2005.
- Watson, John. "Blending Learning: The Convergence of Online and Face-to-Face Education." National American Council for Online Learning. 2008. [www.inacol.org](http://www.inacol.org)

# Faith Formation 2020

(*Faith Formation 2020*. John Roberto. LifelongFaith Associates, 2010)  
([www.FaithFormation2020.net](http://www.FaithFormation2020.net))

## Faith Formation 2020 Scenarios

Relationship with Organized Religion and Christianity

Receptive to Organized Religion

Scenario #4

Participating but Uncommitted

The fourth scenario describes a world in which people attend church activities but are not actively engaged in their church community or spiritually committed. They may participate in significant seasonal celebrations, such as Christmas and Easter, and celebrate sacraments and milestone events, such as marriage and baptism. Some may even attend worship regularly, and send their children to religious education classes. Their spiritual commitment is low and their connection to the church is more social and utilitarian than spiritual. Congregations are challenged to provide faith formation that recognizes that belonging (engagement) leads to believing (spiritual commitment) and a more vibrant faith, and develop approaches for increasing people's engagement with the church community and the Christian tradition.

Scenario #1

Vibrant Faith and Active Engagement

The first scenario describes a world in which people of all ages and generations are actively engaged in a Christian church, are spiritually committed, and are growing in their faith. People have found their spiritual home within an established Christian tradition and a local faith community that provides ways for all ages and generations to grow in faith, worship God, and live their faith in the world. Congregations are challenged to provide lifelong faith formation for all ages and generations, at home and at church, that develops vibrant faith, is continuous throughout life, and engages all people in the life and mission of the church community.

LOW

Hunger for God and the Spiritual Life

HIGH

Scenario #3

Unaffiliated and Uninterested

The third scenario describes a world in which people experience little need for God and the spiritual life and are not affiliated with organized religion and established Christian churches. The Unaffiliated and Uninterested reject all forms of organized religion and reflect a steadily increasing percentage of the American population, especially among the 18-29-year-olds. Congregations are challenged to find ways to "plant" themselves in the midst of the cultures and worlds of the Unaffiliated and Uninterested, build relationships, and be witnesses to the Christian faith in the world today.

Scenario #2

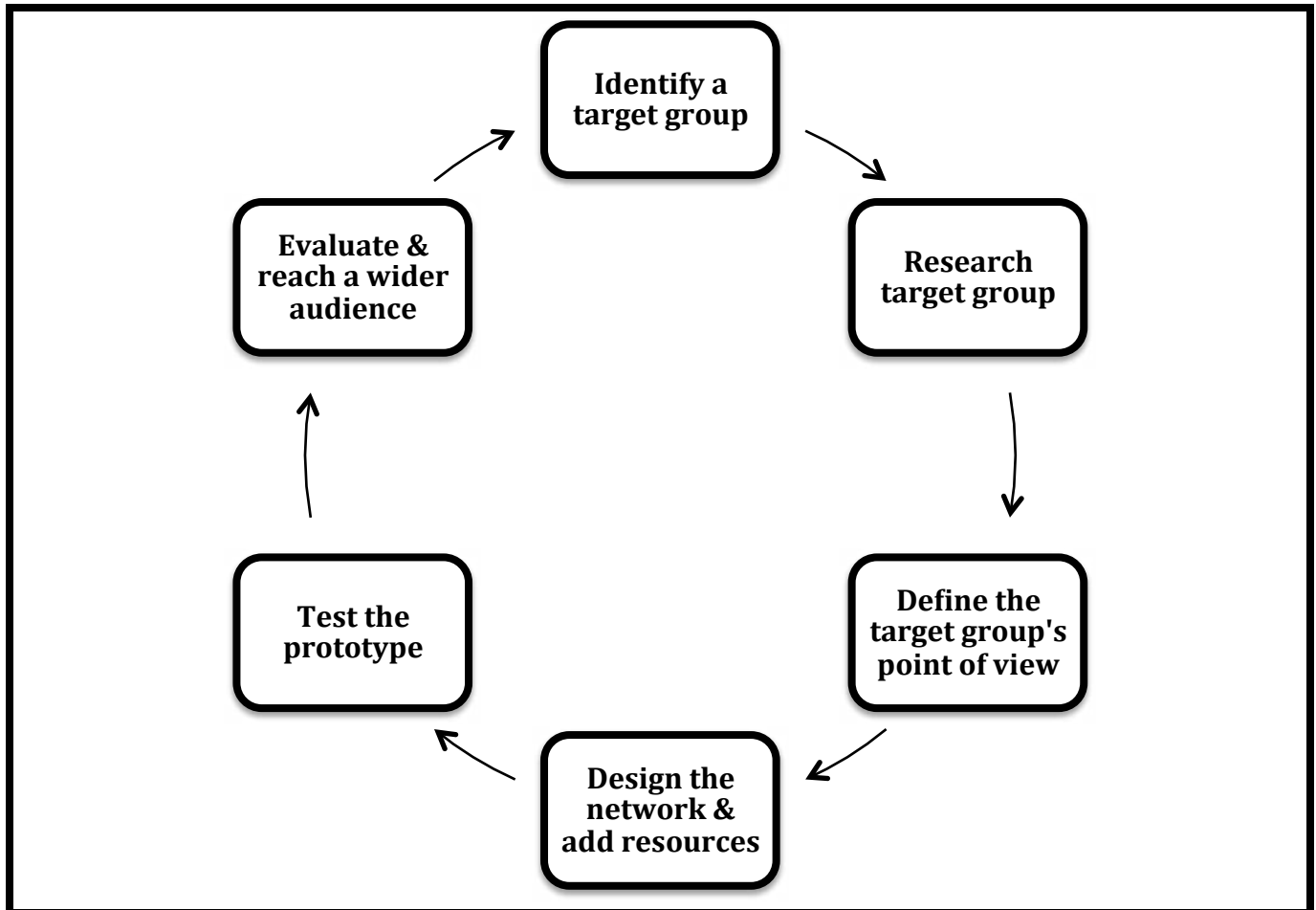
Spiritual but Not Religious

The second scenario describes a world in which people are spiritually hungry and searching for God and the spiritual life, but mostly likely not affiliated with organized religion and an established Christian tradition. Some may join a non-denominational Christian church focused on their spiritual needs, while others may find an outlet for their spiritual hunger in small communities of like-minded spiritual seekers, in local or global acts of service—or in online spiritual resources and communities. The Spiritual but Not Religious reflect a growing minority of the American population, especially among the 18-39-year-olds. Congregations are challenged to engage people where their live (physical and virtual communities), build relationships, engage in spiritual conversations, and offer programs and activities that nourish their spiritual growth.

Resistant to Organized Religion

# Part 2. Designing a 21<sup>st</sup> Century Faith Formation Network

## Network Design Process



### Task #1. Identify a Target Audience or Event.

Select a target audience you will fashion a faith formation network around. For example:

1. Children & families
2. Teens & families
3. 20s-early 30s (Millennials)
4. Mid 30s – early 50s (Generation X)
5. Mid 50s – early 70s (Baby Boomers)
6. 70s+ (Older Adults)
7. Families-as-whole
8. Multigenerational
9. Specialized groups

## Task #2. Research Your Target Audience.

By consulting research findings and listening carefully to people in your community, you can determine foundational spiritual and religious needs, interests, and life tasks that faith formation still needs to address. Using this knowledge, you can develop a faith formation network with programs, activities, and resources to reach the diverse spiritual and religious needs, life tasks, and/or interests of your target audience.

### ***Review the relevant research and effective faith formation practices for your target audience.***

Review existing research studies on the spiritual and religious needs, interests, and life tasks of your target audience to identify important themes you want to address. Also review research and case studies of effective practices with your target audience to determine what's working. Consult the following two websites for selected studies to review:

- 21<sup>st</sup> Century Faith Formation – Religious & Spiritual Growth across the Life Span:  
[www.21stcenturyfaithformation.com](http://www.21stcenturyfaithformation.com)
- Faith Formation Learning Exchange – select your target audience (children, adolescents, young adults, adults, families and parents, multigenerational):  
[www.faithformationlearningexchange.net](http://www.faithformationlearningexchange.net).

### ***Conduct focus groups.***

An excellent way to gather information about people in your community is through focus groups. Organize focus groups of 8-12 people, reflecting a diversity of people in your target audience— ethnic/cultural, socioeconomic, single, married, families, divorced, and so on. Use the following questions, also found on a worksheet, as a guide for developing your own focus group interviews.

1. How would you describe your age group in key words or phrases?
2. What are some of the key life tasks that your age group is experiencing?
3. What are some of the important life issues that your age group is experiencing today?
4. What are the most meaningful experiences you have in life? What makes these experiences meaningful to you?
5. How important is your relationship with God? Why?
6. Where do you experience God most?
7. What are the significant spiritual issues that your age group is experiencing today?
8. What is most important to you about being a Christian (or a member of a particular denomination or faith tradition) today?
9. How do you live your Christian faith? Name some of the ways you put your faith into practice.
10. How can the church help you to continue growing as a Christian? Be specific. Name some of the things you would like to see your church offer for your age group?

When you have completed the focus groups, compile the results by identifying patterns or recurring themes in the life tasks and spiritual and religious needs of your target audience. Also pay attention to information that may be unique to one focus group. Sometimes you will uncover important insights that are only identified in one group.

### ***Conduct research out in the community.***

Engage your team in becoming anthropologists by observing the people in your community. Develop an observation checklist and ask team members to spend a week simply observing people at work, at school, at play, at stores, and so on. Watch for things like:

- What are some of the most popular activities for your target audience in the community?
- Where does your target audience gather outside of work and school—coffee shop, gym, mall, park, community center, YMCA/YWCA, and so on.? What are they doing there?
- Where do people work? Do most people work in your community or do they commute to another area? What types of jobs do people have?
- What are the most popular or well attended churches in your community?
- Where are your target audience on Sunday morning, if they are not at worship?

***Use an Empathy Map to name your insights from the research.***

An Empathy Map, developed by the Stanford School of Design, is one tool to help you synthesize your observations and draw out unexpected insights from your research. The **Empathy Map** activity is described in the worksheets section.

<b>SAY</b> What do you hear your target group saying?	<b>DO</b> What actions and behaviors do you notice in your target group?
<b>THINK</b> What might your target group be thinking? What does this tell you about their beliefs/ convictions?	<b>FEEL</b> What emotions might your target group be feeling?

***Identify important themes for your Network.***

Based on your analysis of the research, identify *the most important* life issues and spiritual/religious needs of your target groups that your church needs to address in the coming years. Answer the question: *What would people like to see the church offer them through faith formation?*

### **Task #3. Define the “Point of View” of Your Target Audience.**

The define mode is when you unpack and synthesize your research findings into compelling needs and insights, and scope a specific and meaningful challenge. Your task is to come up with an actionable problem statement: the **point of view** of your target audience. Your point of view should be a guiding statement that focuses on your target audience, and insights and needs that you uncovered during the research phase. A point of view (POV) is your reframing of a design challenge into an actionable problem statement that will launch you into generating ideas.

A good point of view (POV) is one that:

1. Provides focus and frames the problem.
2. Inspires your team.
3. Provides a reference for evaluating competing ideas.
4. Fuels brainstorms by suggesting “how might we” statements.
5. Captures the hearts and minds of people you meet.
6. Saves you from the impossible task of developing concepts that are all things to all people.
7. Is something you revisit and reformulate as you learn by doing.
8. Guides your innovation efforts.

## Format for a Point of View Want Ad

Descriptive characterization of a user. . . .

followed by “seeks” an ambiguous method to meet an implied need . . . .

plus additional flavor to capture your findings. . . .

### **Example: Mature Adults / Baby Boomers**

*Active, energetic, empty-nest, working & retiring, grandparent (and almost grandparent), “always young” Baby Boomer adults seek a faith community that engages them in meaningful spiritual growth and faith enrichment, provides enriching worship services, engages them in making a contribution to the church & world, and connects them to each other and the other generations in the faith community. Must be a faith community that sees us as an experience-rich generation ready to make a difference in our mature adult years. Just don’t call us OLD or offer us “old people” trips to the casino!*

### **Example: Families with Children**

*Time crunched, stressed and pressured families seek connections, support and guidance to develop a strong, healthy, value-centered family life where faith can be applied to daily needs. Must deal with contradiction that we want to feel welcome and involved, but don't bug me or take my time.*

### **Examples : Young Adults**

*#1 - A single energetic young adult seeks a social network. Desires a connection with others to get together and serve our community, hang out & have fun. Passionate about making a difference and doesn't want to be left on the sidelines.*

*#2 - Highly motivated single young adults seek engaging faith-based social network that will help them navigate fast paced living in a hook-up town.*

The Point of View activity is described in the worksheets section.

## **#4. Design Your Network.**

[There are examples of networks created by churches on the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Faith Formation website under the Faith Formation Networks and Digital Media menu: [www.21stcenturyfaithformation.com](http://www.21stcenturyfaithformation.com).]

### **Step 1. Identify the needs (life tasks and issues, religious and spiritual needs) or themes or content areas your network will address.**

Translate *the most important* life issues and spiritual/religious needs of your target groups into the major content areas of your faith formation network. The responses to the question: *What would people like to see the church offer them through faith formation?* can provide the key content areas for your network.

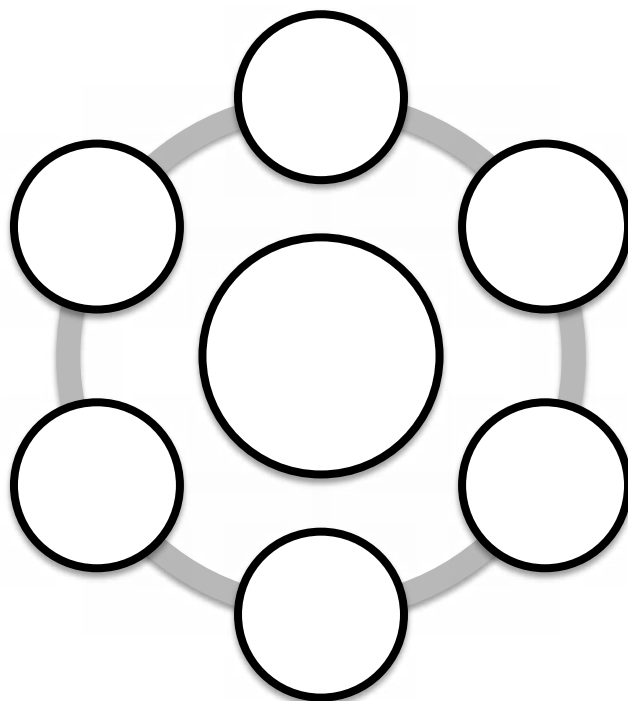
**Example:** For an adult faith formation network several significant life issues and spiritual/religious needs in the lives of Baby Boomer adults could be the focus of a network: 1) religious enrichment, 2) spiritual enrichment, 3) justice and service engagement, 4) adult life issues and transitions, 5) intergenerational relationships, and 6) grandparenting and family.



# Baby Boomer Adults Formation Network



Use a large sheet of newsprint to identify the themes or elements that you want to focus on.



# MULTIGENERATIONAL

**Share It**  
Blog/Forum  
After Mass  
In Programs  
Family Conversation Activity

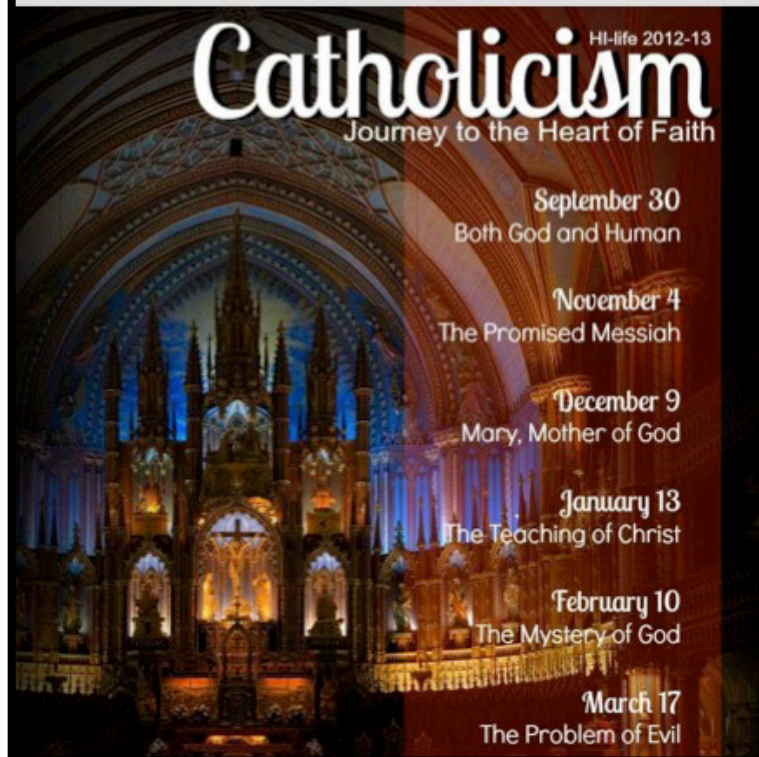
**Study It**  
Taking Faith Home Insert  
Homily Video + Study Guide  
Daily Readings  
Scripture Commentaries  
Online Bible Study

Sunday  
Worship

**Live It**  
Living the Message Daily  
Living Christian Practices  
Service Ideas for the Week

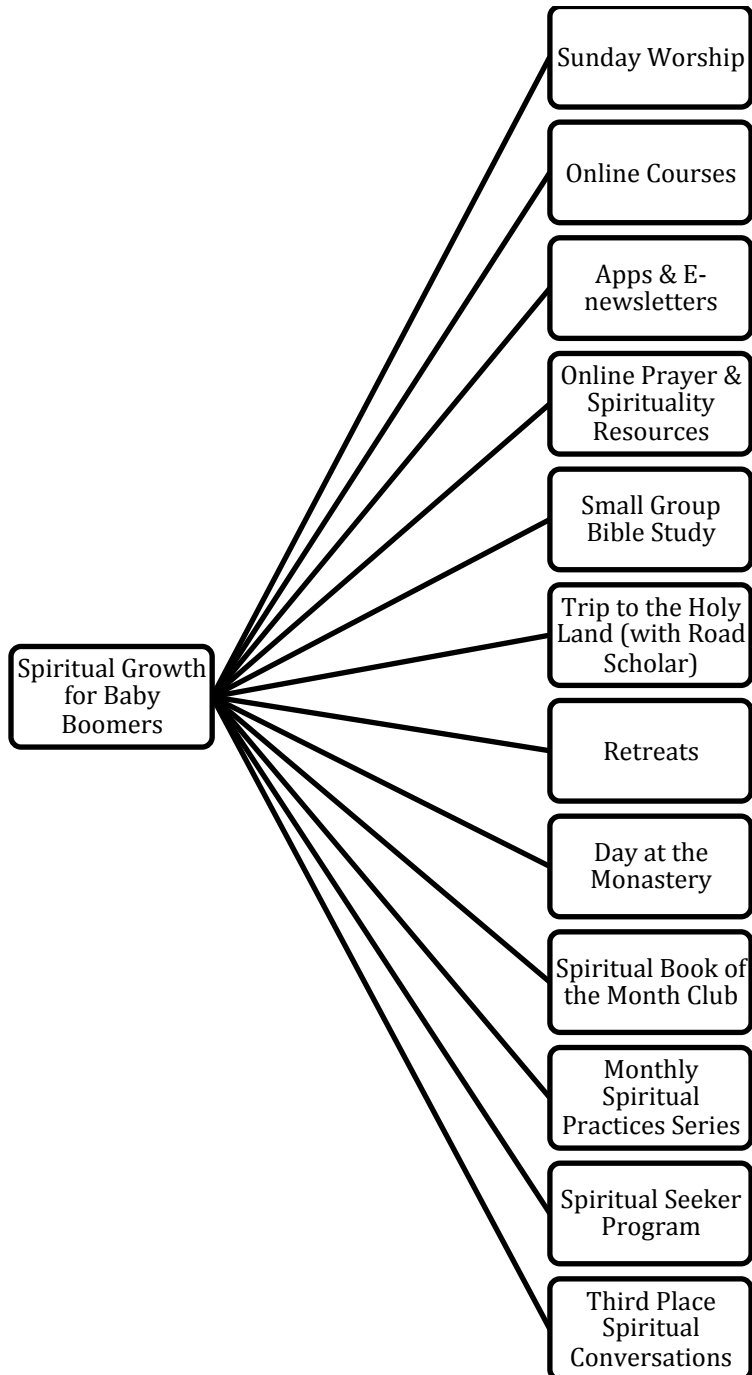
**Pray It**  
Weekly Table Prayer  
Praying with the Saints  
AM & PM Prayer

# MULTIGENERATIONAL

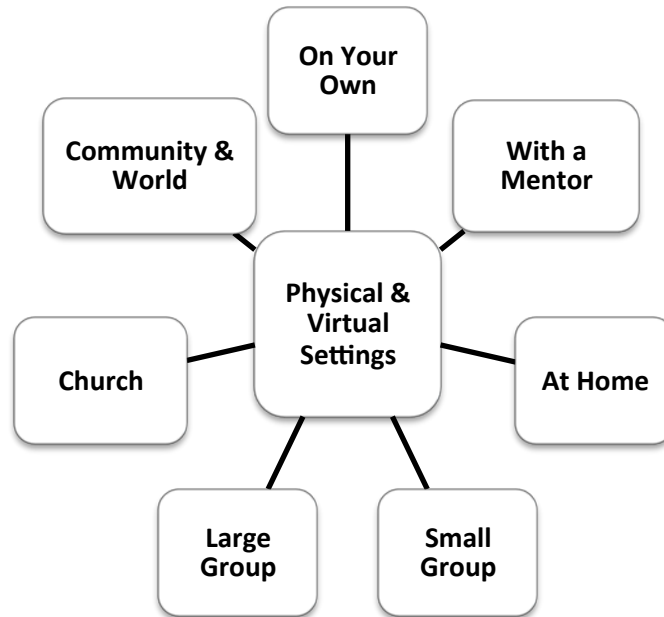


**Step 2. Generate creative ideas to “program” each of the elements or themes or content areas of your faith formation network. Add programs, activities, etc. that your congregation is currently offering for your target audience.**

Generate programs, activities, strategies, resources, etc. to “program” each element or theme or content area. You can use the Mind Mapping method to generate ideas (see worksheet). Take each theme, element, or content area—one-by-one—and have team members generate ideas on Post-It Notes and then attach them to a newsprint sheet. Then cluster similar ideas, generating a chart similar to adult faith formation network example on the theme of “Spiritual Growth for Baby Boomers”—from the adult faith formation example. Use the same procedure for each theme on your network.



Use a variety of formats, settings, and methods to address each theme, element, or content area. Use the seven faith formation formats:



Faith formation programs, activities, and experiences can be offered in a variety of settings, integrating physical and online settings.

- They can be offered only in *physical locations*, such as church facilities, homes, retreat centers, camps, and community settings.
- They can be offered only in *virtual settings*, such as an online course, collaborative wiki, and online resource center.
- They can be offered in a *blended approach*, combining a gathering in a physical location with online delivery (activities, group projects, interaction) and some element of individual control over time, place, path, and/or pace.

Blended faith formation usually combines online delivery of religious content and experiences with the best features of gathered programs to personalize learning and differentiate faith formation instruction across a diverse group. Here is a view of the five models on a continuum.

### A Continuum of Blended Faith Formation

Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5
Fully online program or activity with options for face-to-face interaction in physical settings.	Mostly or fully online program or activity with regular interaction and programming in physical settings.	An online platform that delivers most of the program or activities with leaders providing on-site support on a flexible and adaptive as-needed basis through in-person mentoring and small group sessions.	Programs and activities in physical settings guided by a leader with online components that extend beyond the program sessions.	Programs and activities in physical settings that include online resources to supplement the program content.

**Step 5. Select the programs, activities, resources, etc. that you want to include in the initial launch of your faith formation network. Remember that you can always add new content to our network over time.**

**Step 4. Research people, programs, activities, and resources for the ideas generated for each theme, element, or content area of your faith formation network.**

Today, as never before, a local church has access to an abundance of faith formation programming, activities, resources—online and in the community—that can address the elements, themes, or content areas in your network. A primary task of fashioning a faith formation network is to identify these resources and connect and engage people with them. Using the ideas you have generated, research the available resources. Use the worksheet to help you in your research. Consider the following categories:

- People resources in your congregation and wider community
- Programs and activities in your congregation and wider community
- Print and multi-media resources
- Online programs, activities, resources, courses, and website resource centers

**Step 5. Design new initiatives to address priority spiritual and religious for which there are no existing programs, activities, or resources.**

You may find that an idea is so important that you want to create a new initiative for which there are not resources. Use the Mind Mapping method to generate ideas for our new initiative. For ideas and resources to assist you in designing new initiatives consult the Faith Formation 2020, 21<sup>st</sup> Century Faith Formation, and Faith Formation Learning Exchange websites.

- Faith Formation 2020 – Strategies and Resources: [www.faithformation2020.net](http://www.faithformation2020.net).
- 21<sup>st</sup> Century Faith Formation – Religious & Spiritual Growth across the Life Span: [www.21stcenturyfaithformation.com](http://www.21stcenturyfaithformation.com)
- Faith Formation Learning Exchange – select your target audience (children, adolescents, young adults, adults, families and parents, multigenerational): [www.faithformationlearningexchange.net](http://www.faithformationlearningexchange.net).

For new initiatives design an implementation plan that develops the actions that you will need to take to move from idea to implementation.

- What are the dates and times?
- What is the location: physical/facility and/or online/website?
- What are the implementation steps and target dates (timeline) for completing each step.
- What resources will you need to implement the initiative.
- How much will the initiative cost?
- How many leaders will you need to implement the initiative, how you will find them, and how you will prepare them?

**Step 6. Create the website platform for your faith formation network that connects people to the network’s experiences, content, programs, activities, and resources.**

A website provides the platform for publishing and delivering the experiences, content, programs, activities, and resources of a faith formation network. A network is a dynamic resource that is developed over time with new materials, revisions of current material, deleting material, and so on. A network is in



constant development as it addresses the spiritual and religious needs of people, finds new religious content and experiences, and utilizes new technologies to deliver content and experiences.

An easy way to develop a website for a faith formation network is to use a website creator like *Weebly* (Weebly.com) or *WordPress* (wordpress.org). The pre-designed templates make it simple to create a powerful, professional website without technical skills.


Here are two examples: an adult faith formation network website and a families with children faith formation network website.

## Family Faith Formation Network



- Home
- Community Life & Events
- Bringing Sunday Worship Home
- Whole Family Experiences
- Faith Practices
- Milestones
- Parent Faith Formation
- Parenting & Support Groups
- Getting Started In Faith
- Children's Programs

### September Morning Prayer



"Smile at each other, smile at your wife, smile at your husband, smile at your children, smile at each other—it doesn't matter who it is—and that will help you to grow in greater love for each other."  
(Mother Teresa)


### September Nighttime Prayer



Dear Lord, may all of us in this home serve the Lord, May all we have done and said this day serve you. May we come as night falls and offer praises to you. As we prepare for sleep, May we lift our hands in prayer And praise the Lord. The Lord is the Creator of heaven and earth, We pray that you will bless us this night. Amen.  
(Adapted from Psalm 134)

## Adult Faith Formation

- Home
- Scripture Enrichment
- Faith Enrichment
- Spiritual Enrichment
- Rediscovering Faith
- Sunday Worship
- Life Issues
- Milestones
- Service & Mission
- Intergenerational Connections
- Peer Connections
- Grandparents



### Holy Trinity Adult Faith Formation

Welcome to Holy Trinity's faith formation center designed specifically for active, energetic, empty-nest, working & retiring, grandparent (and almost grandparent), "always young" mature adults in their 50s and 60s who seek a faith community that . . .

- engages them in meaningful spiritual growth and faith enrichment
- provides enriching worship services
- engages them in making a contribution to the church & world
- connects them to each other and the other generations in the faith community

Our faith formation center is rich in experiences, activities, and resources designed to nurture your faith as mature adults. Select from our variety of activities using the menu. You can learn and grow on your own, at home, in small groups, in large group programs, in our church community, and in the world. Invite your friends to join you in an activity.

## 5. Create and Test a Prototype of Your Network.

### Implement the faith formation network through small scale prototyping with a small group of your target audience.

Prototyping is getting ideas and explorations out of your head and into the physical world. In early explorations keep your prototypes rough and rapid to allow yourself to learn quickly and investigate a lot of different possibilities. Prototypes are most successful when people (the design team, the user, and others) can experience and interact with them. What you learn from those interactions can help drive deeper empathy, as well as shape successful solutions.

We prototype to:

- **Learn:** If a picture is worth a thousand words, a prototype is worth a thousand pictures.
- **Solve disagreements:** Can eliminate ambiguity, assist in ideation, and reduce miscommunication.
- **Start a conversation:** Can be a great way to have a different kind of conversation with users.
- **Fail quickly and cheaply:** Allows you to test a number of ideas without investing a lot of time and money up front.
- **Manage the solution-building process:** Encourages you to break a large problem down into smaller, testable chunks.

Consider a version 1.0 pilot effort (prototyping) of your network offerings with a small group of your target audience before scaling-up the initiative to reach a wider audience. Through prototyping, you can test the initiative and the implementation plan, get feedback from your target audience, improve the initiative, and then develop plans to reach a wide audience.

**Testing** is the chance to refine the network and website and make them better. Prototype as if you know you're right, but test as if you know you're wrong. Testing allows you to refine your prototypes and solutions. It allows you to learn more about your user. It is another opportunity to build empathy with your target audience through observation and engagement.

Use a deliberate procedure when you test. Create a "testing process" so that you can gain important feedback. Here are four suggestions:

1. Let your user experience the prototype. Show don't tell. Put your prototype in the user's hands and give just the minimum context so they understand what to do.
2. Have them talk through their experience. For example, when appropriate, as the host, ask "Tell me what you are thinking as you are doing this."
3. Actively observe. Watch how they use (and misuse!) what you have given them. Don't immediately "correct" what your user tester is doing.
4. Follow up with questions. This is important; often this is the most valuable part of testing. "Show me why this would [not] work for you." "Can you tell me more about how this made you feel?" "Why?"

Use a **Feedback Capture Grid** to facilitate real-time capture, or after-the-test unpacking, of feedback on your network and website. This can be used either to give feedback on progress within the design team or to capture a user's feedback about a prototype. You use the grid because it helps you be systematic about feedback, and more intentional about capturing thoughts in the four different areas.

1. Section off a blank page or whiteboard into quadrants.

2. Draw a plus in the upper left quadrant, a delta in the upper right quadrant, a question mark in the lower left quadrant, and a light bulb in the lower right quadrant.

Fill the four quadrants with your or a user's feedback. Things one likes or finds notable, place in the upper left; constructive criticism goes in the upper right; questions that the experience raised go in the lower left; ideas that the experience or presentation spurred go in the lower right. If you are giving feedback yourself, strive to give input in each quadrant (especially the upper two: both "likes" and "wishes"). The **Feedback Capture Grid** activity is described in the worksheets section.

## **6. Evaluate, Make Improvements, and Implement the Network with a Wider Audience. Continue Evaluation and Improvements.**

After making adjustments based on the pilot, develop version 2.0 and implement the plan with wider audience. Use the marketing suggestions below to assist you in promoting the initiative to a wider audience. Continue to improve the initiative. Communicate the stories and examples of the benefits and blessings that are coming to individuals, groups, families and to your whole church community. Continue to reach new audiences.

### **Promote Your Faith Formation Network.**

Generate ideas for promoting and introducing the faith formation network and website to members of the target audience—those active in the congregation church and those not participating in the congregational. Develop church-wide strategies and targeted strategies for particular groups. Be sure to pay careful attention to the titles and descriptions so that they capture people's interests. Develop descriptions that are positive in tone, indicate clearly the content or focus of an activity.

- Describe how your offerings respond to something within the lives of people. Highlight the relationship between the content and the particular spiritual or religious needs, interests, passions, concerns, or life issues of people.
- Describe the 2-3 benefits of participating or engaging in faith formation.
- Explain to people how to use the Network and how to access the activities and resources.

Use as many promotional methods as you can. Consider the following ideas:

1. Ask those who participated in the pilot and other members of the target audience who are actively engaged in the congregation to invite their friends and colleagues to connect with the network.
2. Connect to (or extend from) a gathered event, program, ministry.
3. Use personalized invitations.
4. Establish a Facebook page for faith formation for network announcements, updates, stories and photos from people engaged in faith formation, etc.
5. Use Twitter to announce updates, events, and invite reflections from people on their experiences in the Network.
6. Send email or regular e-newsletters to targeted groups (use a service like Constant Contact).
7. Provide ways to share experiences using blogs, Twitter, Facebook: videos, reports, photos, etc.
8. Have the pastor share the benefits and information about the network at Sunday worship.
9. Host information sessions after Sunday worship and other gathered programs to describe the network and how to use it.
10. Include information about the network in new member packets. Send a personalized invitation to new members.
11. Promote the network at all gathered programs and events in the church.

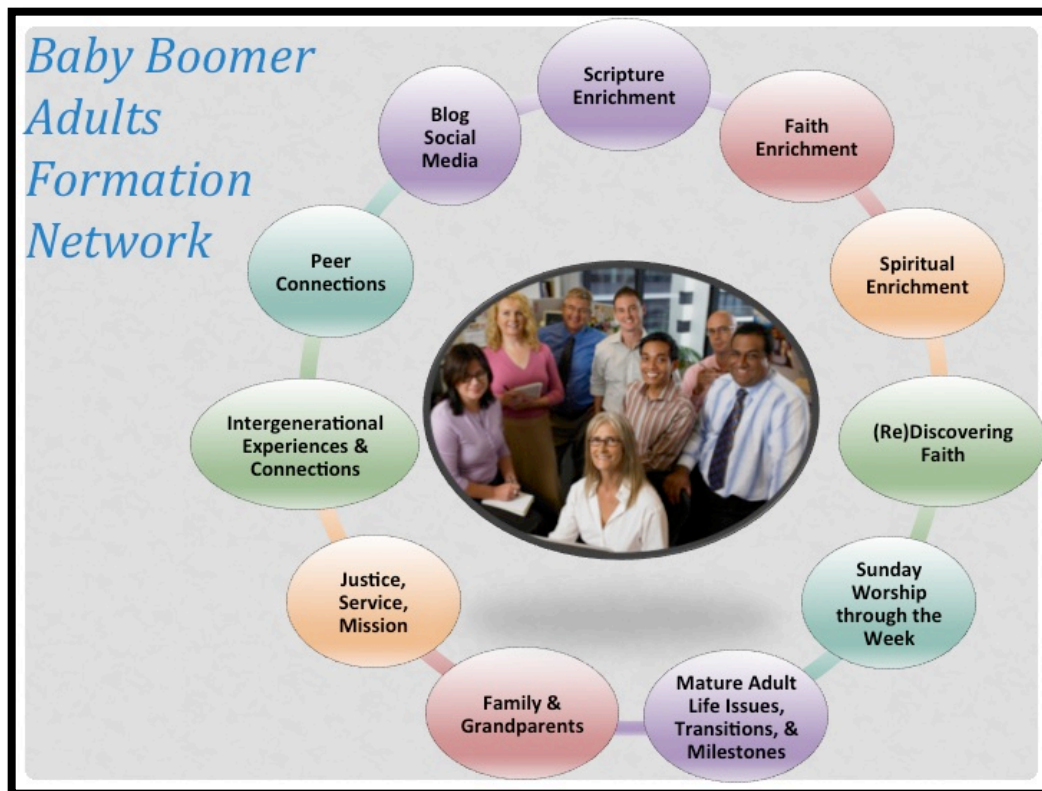


# Examples of Faith Formation Networks

Congregations can develop faith formation networks in at least two different ways: 1) fashioning networks around **age groups, generations, and the whole family**: children, adolescents, emerging adults, young adults, midlife adults, mature adults, and older adults; and 2) fashioning networks around **events, ministries** and **activities**: Sunday worship, service and mission projects, and programming (children's faith formation, youth ministry, vacation Bible school).

## 1. A Faith Formation Network for Baby Boomer Adults

Congregations can create an adult faith formation network for mature adults that is designed around several significant life issues and spiritual/religious needs in the lives of Baby Boomer adults: 1) religious enrichment, 2) spiritual enrichment, 3) justice and service engagement, 4) life issues and transitions, 5) intergenerational relationships and community, 6) family and grandparenting, to name a few.



### 1. Faith Enrichment Ideas

- Online theology courses for individual study using offerings at colleges/seminaries and on iTunes
- Small group theology courses or Bible study using an online course, digital resource, and/or video program as the primary resource delivered to wherever people want to gather
- Bible and Bible study apps for individual use
- Trip to the Holy Land organized by the experts at Road Scholar ([www.road scholar.org](http://www.road scholar.org))
- Book of the month club (or video of the month)
- Sunday Worship reflection activities: after-Mass reflection, Lectio Divina

- Discovering faith programs for those who are returning to the Christian faith

## 2. Spiritual Enrichment Ideas

- Retreat experiences including online retreats and programs at retreat centers
- Spiritual book of the month club (e.g., Richard Rohr's *Falling Upward: A Spirituality for the Two Halves of Life*)
- Spiritual practices course such as Mindy Caliguire's *Soul Care* books and videos (on YouTube), or online courses at SpiritualityandPractice.com
- Spiritual practices series with guest presenters
- Monastery trip
- Online daily prayer, devotions, and liturgy of the hours; daily Bible readings; *Praying with the Saints* app; liturgy of the hours app, and so much more

## 3. Justice and Service Engagement Ideas

- Mission and service opportunities, already organized by justice and service organizations, that provide a range of options for service: local mission projects for a day, short-term mission trips of 2-5 days, weeklong mission trips (US or international), global expedition trips of 10-14 days that provide the opportunity to be immersed in a community and culture, and personalized small group mission trips, organized around the interests and time of the group
- Links to websites to learn about pressing social issues, explore Biblical and church teaching on justice, and find ways to act together through local and global projects and organizations.
- Connection to national service opportunities focused on engaging Baby Boomers
- Faith and action programs such as *Just Faith* and *Engaging Spirituality* from Just Faith Ministries
- Intergenerational service and mission trips that bring mature adults together with teens and young adults

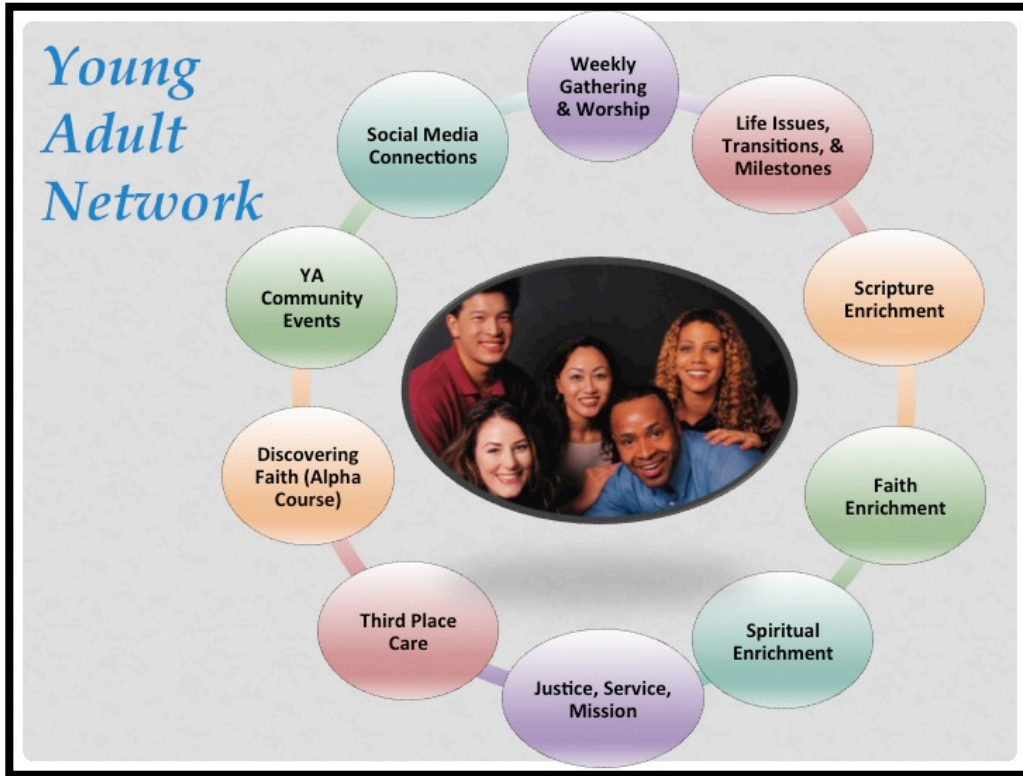
## 4. Life Tasks and Transitions Ideas

- Adult milestones and life transitions (such as retirement, becoming a grandparent): celebrating rituals and blessings at home and parish; a blog for sharing stories and ideas, and online information about adult transitions
- Life tasks and issues (such as children getting married, grandparenting, retirement, finances in later life, caring for an aging parent, dealing with illness): online programs and resources that address adult life tasks and issues, such as AARP.org; programs sponsored by churches or community organizations on adult life issues

## 5. Intergenerational Relationships and Community Ideas

- Opportunities for Baby Boomers and the younger generations to get to know each other: social events, service projects, or educational experiences
- Connecting different ages, such as Boomers helping young adults and new parents with money management and household management, or young people helping Boomers navigate the online world
- Intergenerational learning programs that involve all generations in learning, relationships building, faith sharing, prayer and celebrating.
- Mentoring relationships between youth and Baby Boomers, such as prayer partners, learning-to-pray spiritual direction, service involvement, and Confirmation mentors
- Intergenerational service programs

## 2. A Faith Formation Network for Young Adults



## 3. A Faith Formation Network for Families with Children



## Family Faith Formation Network



- Home
- Community Life & Events
- Bringing Sunday Worship Home
- Whole Family Experiences
- Faith Practices
- Milestones
- Parent Faith Formation
- Parenting & Support Groups
- Getting Started in Faith
- Children's Programs

### September Morning Prayer



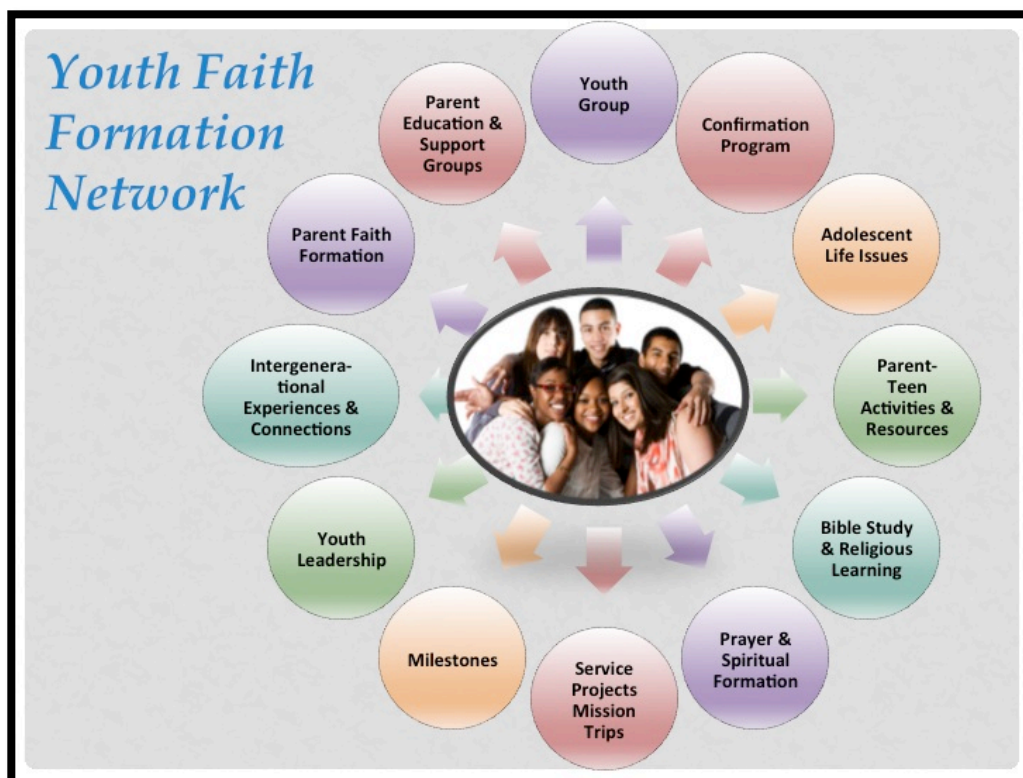
"Smile at each other, smile at your wife, smile at your husband, smile at your children, smile at each other—it doesn't matter who it is—and that will help you to grow in greater love for each other."  
(Mother Teresa)

### September Nighttime Prayer



Dear Lord, may all of us in this home serve the Lord,  
May all we have done and said this day serve you.  
May we come as night falls and offer praises to you.  
As we prepare for sleep,  
May we lift our hands in prayer  
And praise the Lord.  
The Lord is the Creator of heaven and earth,  
We pray that you will bless us this night. Amen.  
(Adapted from Psalm 134)

## 4. A Faith Formation Network for Adolescents



## Worksheet: Diversity of Spiritual & Religious Needs

Target Audience: \_\_\_\_\_

**People with Variable Spiritual  
Commitment & Participate  
Occasionally**

**People with a Vibrant Faith &  
Active Engagement**

**People Who Are Not Religious  
Affiliated**

**People Who Are Spiritual But Not  
Religious**



# Worksheet: Research Your Target Audience

Target Group (life cycle stage, generation, families, etc.): \_\_\_\_\_

## 1. Research

### Life Issues

- What are some of the issues your group is experiencing today? Consider the following: family, work, leisure, relationships, sexuality, suffering and grief, social and political issues, community issues.

### Life Cycle Tasks and Generational Characteristics

- What are the developmental life tasks facing people in your group? (For example: children, adolescents, emerging adults in their 20s, young adults in their 30s-mid 40s, midlife adults in their mid 40s-50s, retirement adults in their 60s-70s, and older adults 80+)
- What are the unique generational characteristics of your group? (For example: the iGeneration (2000 and later), the Millennial Generation (1980-1999), Generation X (1964-1979), Baby Boom Generation (1946-1964), and the Builder Generation (1945 and earlier)

### Milestones and Transitions

- What are the significant milestones/transitions your group is experiencing? (For example: marriages, births, graduations, geographic relocations, family formation and re-formation, career changes, empty nests, retirement, unanticipated illness, divorce, and the loss of loved ones.)

### Spiritual Needs

- What are the significant spiritual needs of people in your group? (For example: growing in their relationship with God; living as disciples of Jesus Christ in their daily life at home, in the workplace, in the community and the world; spiritual disciplines and traditions; prayer, etc.)

### Religious Needs

- What are the significant religious needs of people in your group? (For example: understanding the Bible and relating it to today, understanding the faith tradition and beliefs and how to live them today, making Christian moral decisions, etc.)

### Ethnic/Cultural Needs

- What are the unique lived experiences, needs, and aspirations of people from each ethnic/cultural community in your group?

## 2. Interview/Focus Group Questions

1. How would you describe your age group in key words or phrases?
2. What are some of the important life issues that your age group is experiencing today?
3. What are the most meaningful experiences you have in life? What makes these experiences meaningful to you?
4. How important is your relationship with God? Why?
5. Where do you experience God most?
6. What are the significant spiritual issues that your age group is experiencing today?
7. What is most important to you about being a Christian (or your particular faith tradition) today?
8. How do you live your Christian faith? Name some of the ways you put your faith into practice.
9. How can the church help you to continue growing as a Christian? Be specific. Name some of the things you would like to see your church offer for adults?

# Focus Group Process

## Conduct focus groups with target audience.

Organize focus groups of 8-12 people for your target audiences. Select a diversity of people in each focus group, reflecting the four scenarios, the ethnic/cultural and socioeconomic character of your church, and the various lifestyles (single, married, families, divorced, and so on). Have two people lead each focus group – one to record (computer) and one to ask the questions. The recorder can also follow-up questions as appropriate. Use the following questions as a guide for developing your own focus group interviews. Be sure every focus group asks the same questions.

1. How would you describe your age group in key words or phrases?
2. What are some of the key life tasks that your age group is experiencing?
3. What are some of the important life issues that your age group is experiencing today?
4. What are the most meaningful experiences you have in life? What makes these experiences meaningful to you?
5. How important is your relationship with God? Why?
6. Where do you experience God most?
7. What are the significant spiritual issues that your age group is experiencing today?
8. What is most important to you about being a Christian (or a member of a particular denomination or faith tradition) today?
9. How do you live your Christian faith? Name some of the ways you put your faith into practice.
10. How can the church help you to continue growing as a Christian? Be specific. Name some of the things you would like to see your church offer for your age group?

## Conduct research in the community.

Engage your team in becoming anthropologists by observing the people in your community. Develop an observation checklist and ask team members to spend a week simply observing people at work, at school, at play, at stores, and so on. Consider questions such as:

1. What are some of the most popular activities for (your group) in the community?
2. Where does (your group) gather outside of work and school—coffee shop, gym, mall, park, community center, YMCA/YWCA, and so on.? What are they doing there?
3. Where do people work? Do most people work in your community or do they commute to another area? What types of jobs do people have?
4. What are the most popular or well attended churches in your community?
5. Where are (your group) on Sunday morning, if they are not at worship?

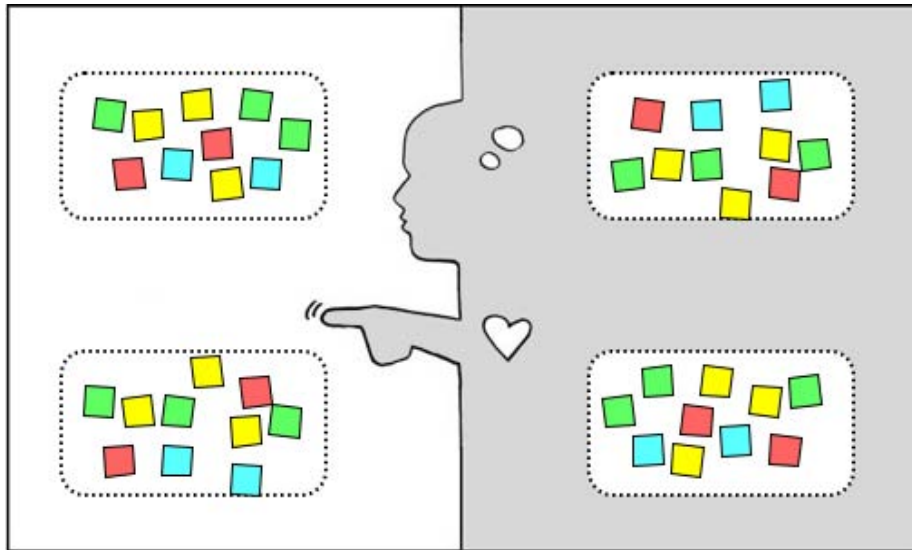
## Compile the Results.

Compile the results of the focus groups for each target group by identifying common themes that surface across all of focus groups. These point to important or significant religious and spiritual needs that you can address in your design work. Also pay attention to information that may be unique to one focus group. Sometimes you will uncover important insights that are only identified in one group.

Based on your analysis of the research, identify *the most important* life issues and spiritual/religious needs of your target groups that your church needs to address in the coming years. Answer the question: *What would people like to see the church offer them through faith formation?*

# METHOD

## EMPATHY MAP



### WHY use an empathy map

Good design is grounded in a deep understanding of the person for whom you are designing. Designers have many techniques for developing this sort of empathy. An Empathy Map is one tool to help you synthesize your observations and draw out unexpected insights.

### HOW to use an empathy map

**UNPACK:** Create a four quadrant layout on paper or a whiteboard. Populate the map by taking note of the following four traits of your user as you review your notes, audio, and video from your fieldwork:

- SAY: What are some quotes and defining words your user said?
- DO: What actions and behaviors did you notice?
- THINK: What might your user be thinking? What does this tell you about his or her beliefs?
- FEEL: What emotions might your subject be feeling?

Note that thoughts/beliefs and feelings/emotions cannot be observed directly. They must be inferred by paying careful attention to various clues. Pay attention to body language, tone, and choice of words.

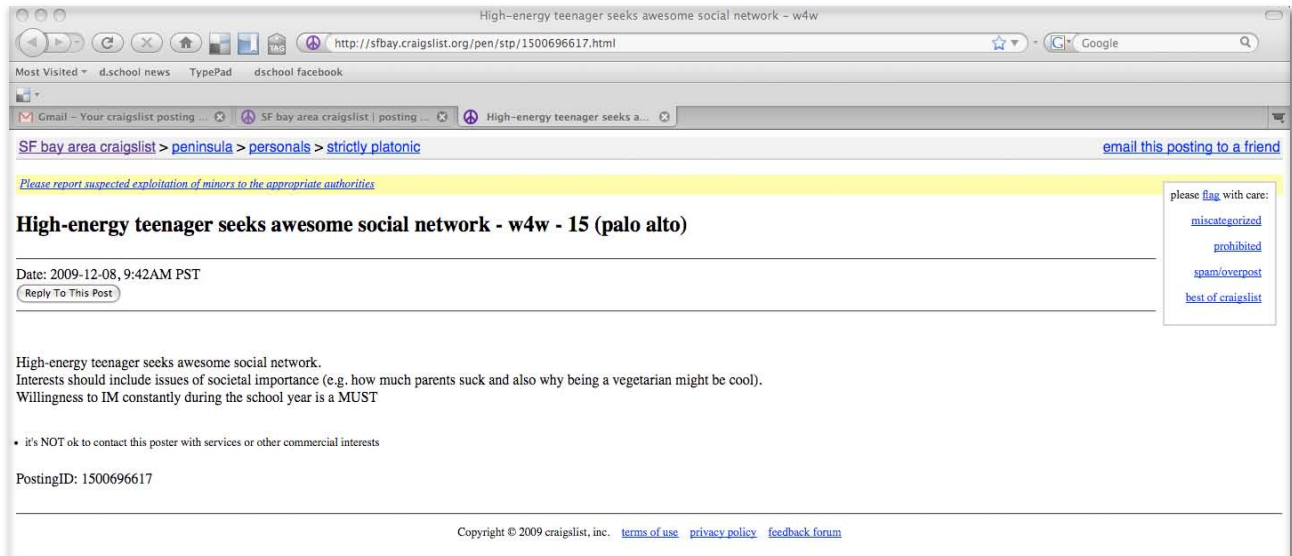
**IDENTIFY NEEDS:** “Needs” are human emotional or physical necessities. Needs help define your design challenge. Remember: Needs are *verbs* (activities and desires with which your user could use help), not *nouns* (solutions). Identify needs directly out of the user traits you noted, or from contradictions between two traits – such as a disconnect between what she says and what she does. Write down needs on the side of your Empathy Map.

**IDENTIFY INSIGHTS:** An “Insight” is a remarkable realization that you could leverage to better respond to a design challenge. Insights often grow from contradictions between two user attributes (either within a quadrant or from two different quadrants) or from asking yourself “Why?” when you notice strange behavior. Write down potential insights on the side of your Empathy Map. One way to identify the seeds of insights is to capture “tensions” and “contradictions” as you work.



# METHOD

## POINT-OF-VIEW WANT AD



## WHY use a POV want ad

A point-of-view (POV) is your reframing of a design challenge into an actionable problem statement that will launch you into generative ideation. A POV Want Ad can be a good way to express your distilled findings in an intriguing format. The want ad format tends to accentuate a specific user, and her important character traits.

## HOW to use a POV want ad

Embed your user, his or her need, and your insights within the format of a want ad. This way of expressing a POV is often more playful and nuanced than the simple USER+NEED+INSIGHT madlib, but should still have a clarity about how you have reframed the problem.

Try this format:

Descriptive characterization of a user,  
followed by “seeks” an ambiguous method to meet an implied need,  
plus additional flavor to capture your findings.

For example: “High-energy teenager seeks awesome social network. Interests should include issues of societal importance (e.g. how much parents suck and also why being a vegetarian might be cool). Willingness to IM constantly during the school year is a MUST!”

# Worksheet: How to Create a Mind Map

(ThinkBuzan, [www.thinkbuzan.com/us/articles/view/articlename/how-to-create-a-mind-map](http://www.thinkbuzan.com/us/articles/view/articlename/how-to-create-a-mind-map))

## Begin your Mind Map!

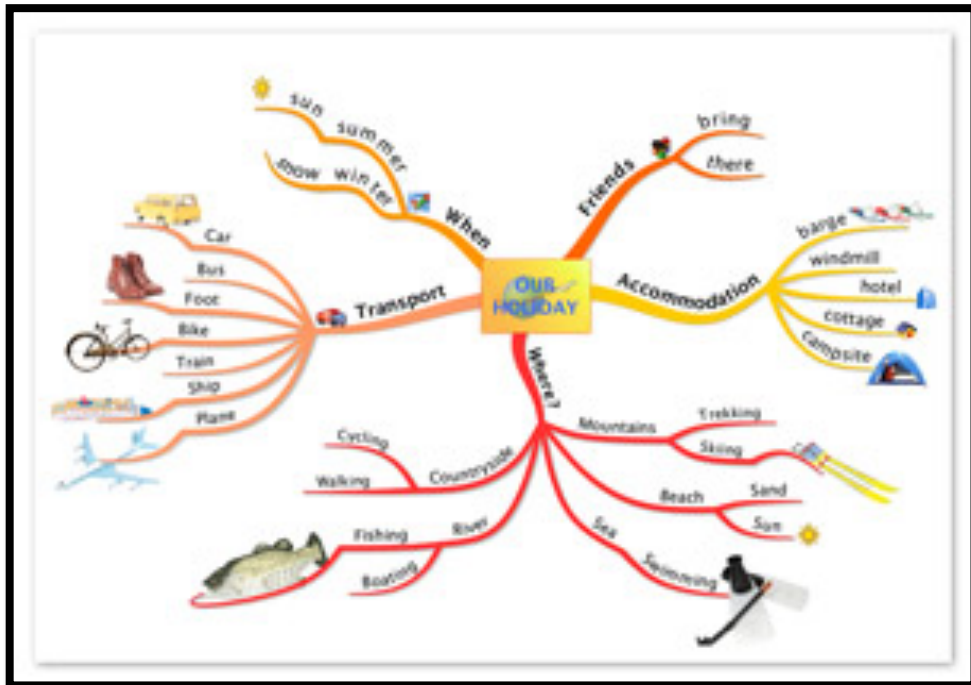
1. Decide on the topic of your Mind Map - this can be anything at all. You just need a topic to form your central idea. I'm going to plan my holiday.
2. Take a sheet of plain paper and some colored pens, and turn the sheet so it's in a landscape position.
3. In the center of this page, draw an image that really represents your topic. For my holiday Mind Map, I'm going to draw the beach.
4. Now label this image for your Mind Map. I'm labeling mine, 'Our Holiday'.
5. By starting your Mind Map in the middle of the page, you have given your thoughts the freedom to spread out and go in different directions - this is the way you think naturally and it will increase inspiration and creativity!

## Branch out your Mind Map ideas.

Now this is where Mind Mapping gets really interesting, as your Mind Map stimulates your brain to create new ideas, each one connecting to another thought - see how your ideas flow onto the page!

1. Make thick, colorful branches spanning out from your Mind Map. Make these curvy, as your brain will be more excited by these than straight, monochrome lines.
2. Add your main ideas as you add branches to your Mind Map. To my Mind Map, I'm adding the location of my holiday, how I'm going to get there and where I want to stay. Aim to add 5 or 6 branches.
3. Write these Mind Map ideas in bold colorful capitals and add your ideas as single keywords. By using only one word per branch, you multiply the number of possibilities these thoughts can spark!

## Get creative when you Mind Map.



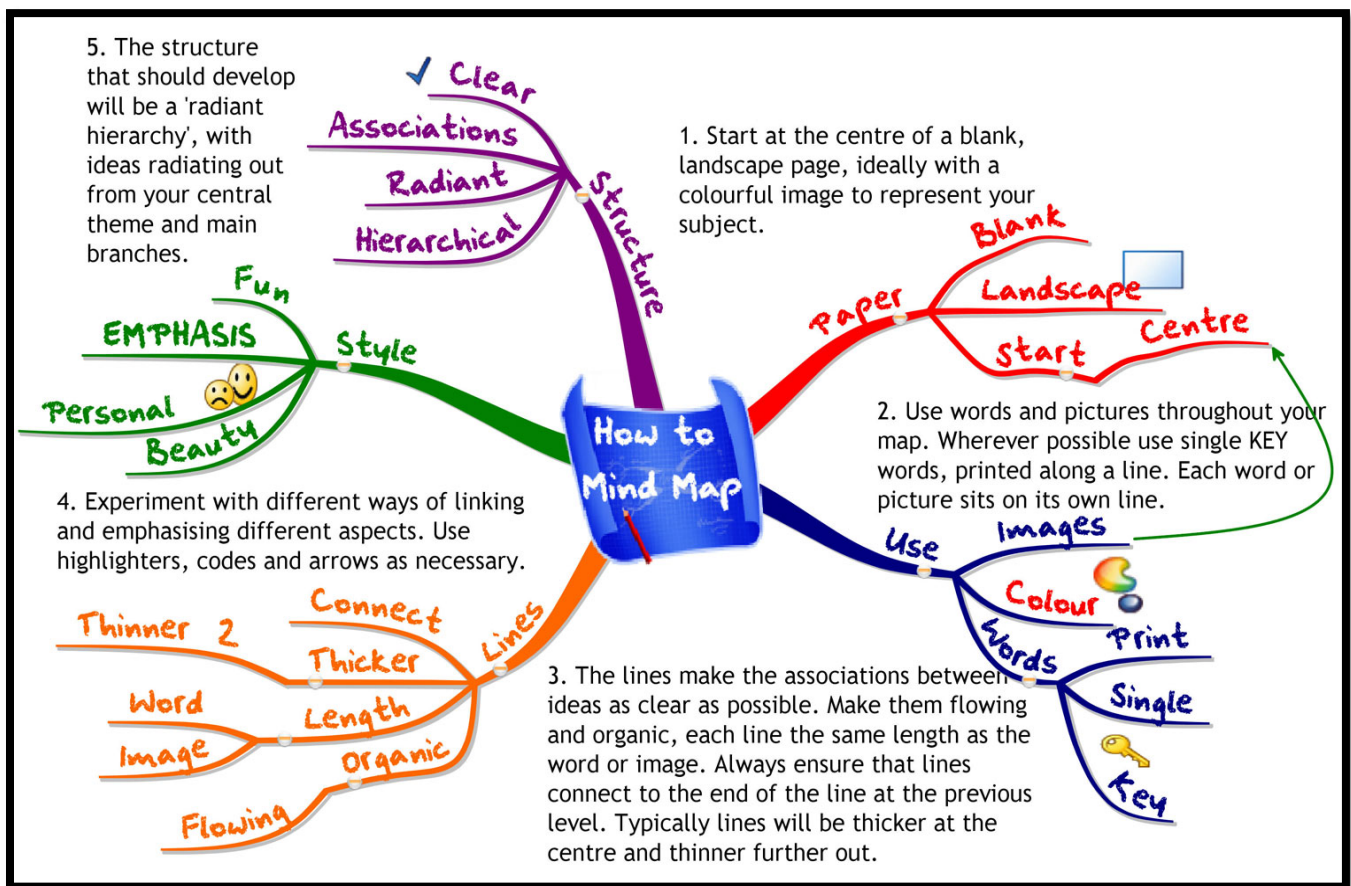
To get the most out of Mind Mapping, release your creativity! The more imaginative your Mind Map is, the better, as you will engage all of your senses. Try adding color, wherever you can! Your Mind Map will have colored branches and keywords, which will stimulate your brain. Also add images and sketches related to your Mind Map ideas, as this will strengthen your memory of your notes. I'm adding pictures of things I will see on holiday to my Mind Map.

### Make Mind Map connections.

Use your Mind Map main ideas as inspiration to make associations and connections:

1. Draw smaller branches stemming from your Mind Map keywords. These will be associated ideas, for example, on my holiday Mind Map, I'm adding 'Summer' as a child branch to my 'Where' branch.
2. There is no limit to the number of child branches you can make. Your child branches will generate further ideas, and many more levels of child branches. Continue this Mind Mapping process until you have exhausted all of your ideas!

Here is a Mind Map of how to create a Mind Map.



# Worksheet: Finding Resources for Your Network

Target Group (e.g., age group, families, interest group): \_\_\_\_\_

## 1. People Resources

Identify the gifts/skills/knowledge of the people resources in your church, the community, colleges and seminaries, and church-related organizations who can be invited to take a leadership role in the Network plan. Consider people who teach courses or specialized programs, guest presenters on specialized topics, leaders for small groups and Bible studies, prayer guides/spiritual directors, leaders for service/mission programs, and so on.

Person	Particular Gifts/Talents/Skills/Knowledge

## 2. Programs and Activities

There are a variety of options: (1) programs that your church is already sponsoring, (2) an opportunity that you are not utilizing (e.g., design reflection activities around Sunday worship), (3) a new program that your church can design or adopt, and (4) a program sponsored by another organization that you can integrate as part of your plan. Consider programs in your church, the community, retreat and conference centers, colleges and universities, and religious organizations.

Program	Type of Program	Location	Date/Timing	Cost

## 3. Print and Multi-Media Resources

Identify print and media resources from publishers, organizations, and online sources that you can use.

Resource	Source	Cost

## 4. Online and Digital Faith Formation Programs, Activities and Resources

Identify websites with faith formation content (programs, activities, resources), online courses and small group programs, webinars, digital books and Bibles, apps, social networks, audio podcasts, video programs, and so on. Research the online resources of your own denomination or religious tradition, religious organizations, and colleges, and seminaries

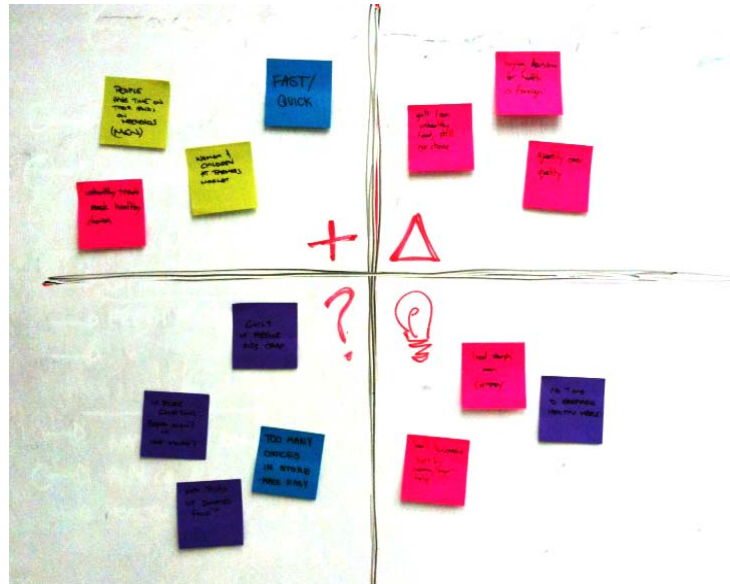
Program, Activity, Resource	Website Address & Source	Cost

## A Continuum of Blended Faith Formation

<b>Model 1</b> <b>Fully Online with</b> <b>Options for Gathering</b>	<b>Model 2</b> <b>Online with Regular</b> <b>Gathered Interaction</b>	<b>Model 3</b> <b>Online Learning</b> <b>Platform with</b> <b>Mentoring and Small</b> <b>Group Sessions</b>	<b>Model 4</b> <b>Gathered Programs</b> <b>Extended with Online</b> <b>Content</b>	<b>Model 5</b> <b>Gathered Programs</b> <b>Utilizing Online</b> <b>Content</b>
<p>Fully online program or activity with options for face-to-face interaction in physical settings.</p>	<p>Mostly or fully online program or activity with regular interaction and programming in physical settings.</p>	<p>An online platform that delivers most of the program or activities with leaders providing on-site support on a flexible and adaptive as-needed basis through in-person mentoring and small group sessions.</p>	<p>Programs and activities in physical settings guided by a leader with online components that extend beyond the program sessions.</p>	<p>Programs and activities in physical settings that include online resources to supplement the program content.</p>

# METHOD

## FEEDBACK CAPTURE GRID



### WHY use a feedback capture grid

Use a feedback capture grid to facilitate real-time capture, or post-mortem unpacking, of feedback on presentations and prototypes – times when presenter-critiquer interaction is anticipated. This can be used either to give feedback on progress within the design team or to capture a user’s feedback about a prototype. You use the grid because it helps you be systematic about feedback, and more intentional about capturing thoughts in the four different areas.

### HOW to use a feedback capture grid

1. Section off a blank page or whiteboard into quadrants.
2. Draw a plus in the upper left quadrant, a delta in the upper right quadrant, a question mark in the lower left quadrant, and a light bulb in the lower right quadrant.

It’s pretty simple, really. Fill the four quadrants with your or a user’s feedback. Things one likes or finds notable, place in the upper left; constructive criticism goes in the upper right; questions that the experience raised go in the lower left; ideas that the experience or presentation spurred go in the lower right. If you are giving feedback yourself, strive to give input in each quadrant (especially the upper two: both “likes” and “wishes”).