



A Guide to the Principles & Practices of Lifelong Faith Formation

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In 2010 I wrote *Faith Formation 2020* as a guide for churches to envision and design dynamic, engaging, and inspiring faith formation in the second decade of the twenty-first century. *Faith Formation 2020* addressed three key questions: “What could faith formation in Christian churches look like in 2020?” “How can Christian congregations provide vibrant faith formation to address the spiritual and religious needs of all ages and generations over the next ten years?” “How can churches envision the shape of faith formation in the year 2020 and design initiatives to respond proactively to the challenges and opportunities in the second decade of the twenty-first century?”

The new decade of the 2020s is upon us and these three questions still challenge us. The future of faith formation in congregations will, in large part, be determined by how well churches provide comprehensive, lifelong faith formation that is inclusive of all ages and generations and responsive to the diverse life situations, and spiritual and religious needs of people.

Since 2010 we have advanced in our understanding and practice of lifelong faith formation in congregations. This essay builds on the developments since 2010 and presents ten principles and practices that can inform congregations as they create, sustain, and expand lifelong faith formation. The ten principles include the following:

1. Lifelong faith formation is a lifetime journey with Christ, in Christ, and to Christ.
2. Lifelong faith formation promotes maturity in faith through the ages and stages of life.
3. Lifelong faith formation addresses the diverse spiritual and religious lives, engagements, and practices of children, adolescents, adults, and families.
4. Lifelong faith formation thrives in a vital and vibrant faith forming Christian community.
5. Lifelong formation is holistic—integrating three primary faith forming environments: the church community, the family, and life stages
6. Lifelong faith formation creates networks that address the life tasks, spiritual and religious needs, and interests of families and all ages by offering a variety of content, programs, activities, and resources in multiple settings, aided by the use of digital platforms, media, and methods.
7. Lifelong faith formation guides individuals and families in discerning their spiritual and religious journeys and life stage needs, and giving people an active role in shaping their own personal trajectories of faith growth.



8. Lifelong faith formation includes missional outreach to the spiritual-religious needs and journeys of the “spiritual but not religious” and the “unaffiliated,” and creating pathways to experience the Christian faith, encounter Jesus Christ, and embrace the Good News.
9. Lifelong faith formation incorporates digital methods and media to enhance and expand the ways people of all ages grow in faith.
10. Lifelong faith formation involves new leadership roles including learning architect, digital designer, and curator.

Ten Principles & Practices for Lifelong Faith Formation

1. Lifelong faith formation is a lifetime journey with Christ, in Christ, and to Christ.

You were saved by faith in God, who treats us much better than we deserve. This is God’s gift to you, and not anything you have done on your own. It isn’t something you have earned, so there is nothing you can brag about. God planned for us to do good things and to live as he has always wanted us to live. That’s why he sent Christ to make us what we are. (Ephesians 3:8-10, CEV)

Faith is a gift from God guided by the Holy Spirit and formed over time in our families, relationships, and church communities. Faith grows and matures over a lifetime as people come to know, love, and serve God.

The Christian faith is above all a personal encounter with Jesus Christ and a commitment to follow his way of life. Christian faith is living the holistic faith that Jesus taught, modelled, and made possible. Learning how to live as a disciple of Jesus Christ is a lifelong process. “Christian faith formation is 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 for Lifelong Christian Formation*, The Episcopal Church).

Lifelong Christian faith formation guides people of all ages in developing a loving relationship with Jesus, embracing his Good News, and following him in their daily lives—becoming witnesses of God’s reign in the world. This type of faith formation is a way of the head, the heart, and the hands: ‘*You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.*’ This is the greatest and first commandment. And a second is like it: ‘*You shall love your neighbor as yourself.*’ (Mt 22:37-39, NRSV). Jesus presented faith as a whole way of life.

A robust, vital, and life-giving Christian faith is holistic: a way of the **head**, the **heart**, and the **hands**—informing, forming, and transforming people in Christian faith and identity.

A way of the head demands a discipleship of faith seeking understanding and belief with personal conviction, sustained by study, reflecting, discerning and deciding, all toward spiritual wisdom

for life. This requires that we educate people to know, understand, and embrace with personal conviction Christianity's core belief and values (*inform*).

A way of the heart demands a discipleship of right relationships and right desires, community building, hospitality and inclusion, trust in God's love, and prayer and worship. This requires that we foster growth in people's identity through a formative pedagogy and the intentional socialization of Christian family and community (*form*).

A way of the hands demands a discipleship of love, justice, peace-making, simplicity, integrity, healing, and repentance. This requires that we foster in people an openness to a lifelong journey of conversion toward holiness and fullness of life for themselves and for the life of the world (John 6:51) (*transform*) (See Thomas Groome, 111–119).

Lifelong Christian faith formation informs, forms, and transforms—it immerses people into the practices and way of life of a tradition-bearing community where they can be transformed spiritually; it engages all ages and generations in a lifelong process of growing, experiencing, celebrating, and living the Christian; and it equips people to follow the way of Jesus in daily life.

“Faith formation is at the heart of what the Christian life is all about. In many ways, we engage in the practices of our daily lives and the rituals of our faith communities—through worship, mission, working for justice and peace, evangelism, and education—so that our faith may be nurtured, enlivened, sustained, and formed. In this regard, the imagery offered by the prophet Isaiah of Potter God forming humanity, God's created own, is an appropriate vision for how we might view the ministry of faith formation: *Yet, O Lord, you are our Father; we are the clay, and you are our potter; we are all the work of your hand* (Isaiah 64:8, NRSV) faith formation is "an engaged process of learning and practice integrated throughout all aspects of congregational and daily life." (United Church of Christ, <http://www.ucc.org/education>.)

2. Lifelong faith formation promotes maturity in faith through the ages and stages of life.

Lifelong faith formation promotes the maturing of faith over a lifetime—from the faith of young children (an experiencing style of faith), to the faith of children and adolescents (an affiliative, community-centered style of faith), to the faith of adolescents through adults (a searching, inquiry style of faith), toward the faith of adulthood (a maturing, personal style of faith).

To promote lifelong growth in Christian faith and discipleship congregations focus on the most important characteristics of faith maturing. The following ten characteristics of faith maturing incorporate knowing and believing, relating and belonging, practicing and living. They are drawn from the Christian faith tradition and from research on what makes a difference in forming faith in people's lives across they life span. When taken together, these characteristics describe a person maturing in faith and describe the focus or goals of lifelong faith formation. They form the basis of

helping people discern their faith journey and needs, and help the congregation accompany people through relationships, programs, activities, and resources.

These ten characteristics are a starting point. They need to be contextualized within a specific Christian tradition, the identity and mission of a church, and the unique social, cultural, and ethnic make-up of the community.

Ten Characteristics of Maturing in Faith

1. Developing and sustaining a personal relationship and commitment to Jesus Christ.
2. Living as a disciple of Jesus Christ and making the Christian faith a way of life.
3. Reading and studying the Bible, and its message, meaning, and application to life today.
4. Learning the Christian story and foundational teachings of one's particular Christian faith tradition and integrating its meaning into one's life.
5. Praying—together and by ourselves—and seeking spiritual growth through spiritual practices and disciplines.
6. Living with moral integrity guided by Christian ethics and values.
7. Living the Christian mission in the world—serving those in need, caring for God's creation, and acting and advocating for justice and peace—locally and globally.
8. Worshipping God with the community at Sunday worship and ritual celebrations, and through the seasons of the church year.
9. Being actively engaged in the life, ministries, and activities of the faith community.
10. Using one's gifts and talents in the Christian community and in the world.

With a lifelong vision of maturing faith a congregation can address each characteristic in developmentally-appropriate ways at each stage of life. The characteristics provide a way to direct energy and attention to specific goals or outcomes in faith maturing. They provide a way to develop a seamless process of fostering faith growth from birth through older adulthood.

In this approach, congregations build faith formation experiences (programs, activities, resources) around the faith maturing characteristics and the spiritual-religious needs of people. For each characteristic we ask how we can guide people in. . . .

- Knowing and understanding more fully the Christian faith (informing)
- Developing and deepening their relationship with Jesus and the Christian community (forming)
- Living the Christian faith in every aspect of their lives (transforming)

This change of emphasis toward promoting faith maturing using the characteristics reflects a significant shift from a provider-centered, program- and content-driven approach to a *person-centered* approach to faith formation. Faith formation focuses on the characteristics of faith maturing, at each stage of life, and selects the content, experiences, programs, and methods that will promote growth in faith. The emphasis is on the person experiencing growth through the faith maturing characteristics. Everything is in service to people growing in faith and discipleship.

While this approach may sound self-evident, it is not. Too much faith formation is developed from a provider-centered, program-driven model where denominations, publishers, and churches determine and deliver the content and programming irrespective of a vision of a person maturing in faith and the religious-spiritual needs and journeys of people.

We need to focus on people growing in faith and ask how can we accompany people relationally and programmatically. Instead of asking what program or resources we need or what content we need to teach, we focus on the person growing in faith.

3. Lifelong faith formation addresses the diverse spiritual and religious lives, engagements, and practices of children, adolescents, adults, and families.

Congregations live in an era of increasing diversity in the religious practices, participation, and needs of children, adolescents, adults, and families. We know from research and experience that children, adolescents, adults, and their families represent at least four religious-spiritual identities:

1. People with a vibrant faith and relationship with God who are engaged in the faith community
2. People who participate occasionally in the faith community and whose faith is less central to their daily lives
3. People who are uninvolved in a church but are spiritual
4. People who unaffiliated and have left involvement in organized religion

We can see three and even four of these identities reflected in people's participation in church life and faith formation programming. Parents who bring their children for baptism can reflect the whole spectrum from parents with a vibrant faith to parents who are unaffiliated but whose parents and grandparents are active in a faith community. Children participating in vacation Bible school come from families who reflect several of these religious-spiritual identities. Adolescents participating in a confirmation program often reflect three or four of these identities.

We know that our current one-size-fits-all approach to curriculum and programming does not address the diverse spiritual-religious identities and needs of people. No one program, class, or resource can address the diverse spiritual-religious needs of people today. Churches can create personalized approaches that use the ten faith maturing characteristics to guide people in discerning their faith growth needs, and providing content, experiences, and activities that help them to grow from where they are. (See Principle #7 for more on personalizing faith formation.)

Briefly described, the four identities are:

1. ***People with a vibrant faith and relationship with God who are engaged in the faith community.*** For these people religious faith is central to their lives. These are people of all ages who are spiritually committed and growing in their faith within a church community. These are people who have found their spiritual home within an established Christian tradition and a local faith community that provides ways for them to grow in faith, worship God, and live their faith in the world. They are living their faith in daily life, at home, and 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
2. ***People who participate occasionally in the faith community and whose faith is less central to their daily lives.*** These are people who participate occasionally in church life—Sunday worship, seasonal celebrations, community events, and age-group programs. 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 church programs. For parents transmitting a religious faith often means bringing their children to educational programs at church, and participating because of their children. For “Occasionals” their spiritual commitment is not central to the way they live their lives and their connection to the church is more social and utilitarian than spiritual. While receptive to an established church, they do not have a faith commitment that would make their relationship with God and participation in a faith community a priority in their lives. Their occasional engagement in church life does not lead them toward spiritual commitment. Congregations are challenged to develop faith formation that begins with the spiritual life and level of engagement of “Occasionals.”
3. ***People who are uninvolved in a church but are spiritual.*** These are people who are often called “spiritual but not religious.” Many of these people are “Dones” who have left church after decades of participation and often leadership roles within the church. Many believe in God and have a relationship with God, and are growing spiritually. Many practice their Christian faith unattached to a faith community or tradition. Many are spiritually hungry and searching for God and a life of meaning and purpose. Some may join a nondenominational 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. Parents, though not involved in a church, may send their children to church programs; and the parents may participate at times with their children. Congregations are challenged to become more missional—reaching people where they live (in-person and online), building relationships, engaging in spiritual conversations, offering programs and activities that nurture their spiritual growth in home or community settings, and inviting them to consider participation in a church community.
4. ***People who unaffiliated and have left involvement in organized religion.*** These are the “Nones.” They no longer believe religion is important in their lives. They experience little need for God and the spiritual life and are not affiliated with organized religion and established Christian churches.

The unaffiliated reflect a steadily increasing percentage of the American population, especially young adults in their 20s and 30s. Many parents today are “first generation Nones” and are raising their children in religiously uninvolved and unaffiliated homes creating a “second generation of Nones.” Many leave organized religion because they stopped believing in the religion’s teachings (usually a top reason), or because their family was never that religious when they were growing up, or because of their experience of negative religious teaching about or treatment of LGBTQ people (*Exodus*, 2016). Congregations are challenged to find ways to move out into the world and cultures of the unaffiliated, build relationships, and be witnesses to the Christian faith in the world today. Congregations are challenged to develop strategies and approaches for moving faith formation from the church into the community and online.

Barna Research has identified three types of young adults who are uninvolved and unaffiliated—nomads, prodigals, and exiles . While the research is focused on young adults, these three descriptions can be easily extended to adults beyond the young adult years.

- **Nomads.** The most common spiritual journey is that of the nomads. This group is comprised of eighteen to twenty-nine-year-olds with a Christian background who walk away from church engagement, but still consider themselves Christians. A person in this group typically has trouble identifying with a church or a particular “brand” of Christianity but would consider themselves, broadly, a Christian. They say faith and religion just aren’t that important to them. Many used to be very involved in their church, but they just don’t fit in anymore. These are young adults who see themselves as personally interested in God and religion, but not really in a formal or institutional expression of that faith. This is the group most likely to say they love Jesus but not the church—or that they are “spiritual but not religious.” They might appear to be wandering, but they would never claim to have lost their faith.
- **Prodigals.** Prodigals are those who have lost their faith. This group is made up of young adults who used to claim a personal faith, but no longer claim any Christian belief. They describe themselves as fairly certain they won’t ever return to the Christian faith. Christian beliefs no longer make sense to them. Many admit to having had a negative experience in church or with Christians. They don’t believe their spiritual needs can be met by Christianity. This is the group that most often gets lumped in with the “Nones,” even though they might not be totally opposed to faith and spirituality. Rather, they have often had some kind of experience or realization that has made it impossible to reconcile their life with the Christian faith. Often this is either tied to some kind of intellectual change or emotional injury, leading to a long-term dismissal of the Christian faith.
- **Exiles.** This group has a tough time finding a place in a church setting, but has chosen to remain within an institutional church context. They feel “lost” somewhere between their commitments to church and their desire to stay connected with the world around them. These young adults with a Christian background struggle to connect their faith or church with their everyday lives, and yet they continue in their Christian faith despite these headwinds. They remain Christian and continue to attend a church, but they find that church to be a difficult place for them to live

out their faith. This group is defined by wanting to figure out how to follow Jesus in the day-to-day aspects of their lives. They say God is more at work outside the church than inside the church, and they want to be a part of that. (“Three Spiritual Journeys of Millennials,” Barna Research)

4. Lifelong faith formation thrives in a vital and vibrant faith forming Christian community.

The local faith community is where the Church lives. The local church is where the gospel is proclaimed and celebrated, where believers are formed and sent to renew the earth. The local church is where God's people meet Jesus in word and sacrament and come in touch with the source of the Church's life.

John W. Stewart in *Envisioning the Congregation, Practicing the Gospel* writes “the gospel revealed in Jesus Christ requires Christian congregations to develop particular, biblically-mandated, time-honored, Spirit-infused practices.” Five practices are essential markers of faithful Christian communities. They celebrate and testify to the ongoing presence of God in human history in a particular locality. Through each and all of these practices, a Christian community seeks to reflect the lifestyle of the risen Lord. These practices include: *koinonia* (community, belonging, hospitality), *mathetes* (discipling, faith formation), *martyria* (witnessing, testimony), *diakonia* (serving, compassion, justice), and *leiturgia* (worship, sacraments, prayer).

Maria Harris, in her classic book *Fashion Me a People*, presents a “whole church” vision of formation by explaining 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))

We see similar processes reflected in John Westerhoff’s vision of a community of faith-enculturation paradigm in which Christian education uses every aspect of the church’s life for education (see *Will Our Children Have Faith*). “A viable paradigm or model for religious education needs to focus upon the radical nature of a Christian community where the tradition is faithfully transmitted through ritual

and life, where persons as actors— thinking, feeling, willing, corporate selves—are nurtured and converted to radical faith, and where they are prepared and motivated for individual and corporate action in society on behalf of God’s coming community” (45). Westerhoff identifies three aspects of community life around which we need to develop educational programs: “the rituals of the people; the experiences persons have within the community, and the actions members of the community perform, individually and corporately, in the world” (45).

Vital and vibrant congregations create a culture where lifelong faith formation can thrive. The Exemplary Youth Ministry study (see the *Spirit and Culture of Youth Ministry* book) found that congregational culture, a “culture of the Spirit,” was crucial for developing a vital faith in youth (and parents and adults). The study found congregations with a sense of the living, active presence of God at work among the people of the whole congregation, its ministries with youth, its parents, the ministries of the larger congregation, and its congregational leaders provided the most powerful, pervasive influence on young people long-term. It was the communal awareness of participation in God’s presence and action permeating the values, relationships, and activities of these congregations that gave rise to a “culture of the Spirit” focused on mission and the transformation of life that made these congregations so influential in the lives and faith of young people.

In *Teaching and Learning in American Congregations*, an analysis of the 2015 *Faith Communities Today* survey, Joseph V. Crockett found that many of the characteristics of vital congregations from the research positively related to the priorities of faith formation in a congregation, and most likely to the effectiveness of faith formation. Among the most significant characteristics are:

- **mission clarity and effectiveness:** having a clear sense of the mission and living the mission
- **adaptability and willingness to change:** willing to change or adapt to meet new challenges and trying new things to live the mission
- **incorporating new members:** seeking out and incorporating new people into the faith community and providing ways for new or returning people to learn about the Christian faith and join the faith community
- **spiritual vitality:** being spiritually vital and alive, helping people grow in their faith, and preparing people to live the gospel in their daily lives
- **working for social justice:** engaging in outreach and service to those in need, locally and globally; working for social justice to make the community and world a better place; being a positive force in the community
- **thriving now and into the future**

(See *Teaching and Learning in American Congregations* at www.FaithCommunitiesToday.org)

The formative power of the whole Christian community, as demonstrated by vital and vibrant congregations, is essential for lifelong faith formation. In the words of Joyce Mercer,

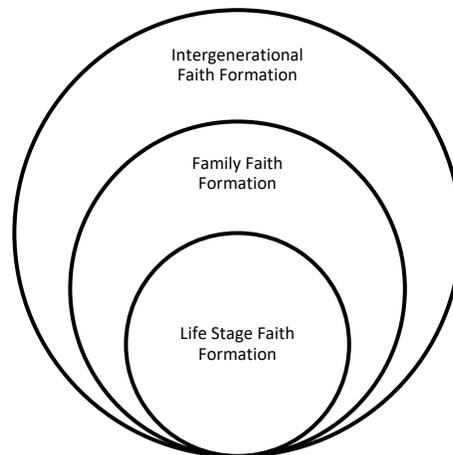
We invite people into the way of life that embodies God’s love, justice, compassion, and reconciliation, by being, doing, and thinking about it together. The best curriculum for forming children, youth, and anyone else in Christian faith is guided participation in a community of

practice where people are vibrantly, passionately risking themselves together in lives of faith in a world crying out for the love of Christ.

Guided participation in a community of practice puts a premium on both participation and practice. Watch children in play imitating the adults around them to see how even the youngest among us hunger to participate in the way of life they see enacted before them. That’s a good instinct to follow, because people—children or otherwise!—don’t become Christian by learning about what Christians do, say, or think (although at some point, particularly in adolescence and beyond, doing so can be an important part of deepening one’s faith identity). We become Christian, taking on the identity of one who is a disciple of Jesus, by acting the way Christians act, and by talking the way Christians talk. Over time through practice, even our hearts and minds are formed in this way of life.

5. Lifelong formation is holistic—integrating three primary faith forming environments: the church community, the family, and life stages.

Lifelong faith formation integrates three primary environments—the church community, the family, and the life stage/peer group—to promote maturing in faith by engaging all ages in *intergenerational* relationships, activities, and church life and events (including Sunday worship), equipping and supporting *parents* and the whole *family* in sharing and practicing their faith at home, and engaging *each life stage* in activities and experiences designed to address their religious and spiritual journeys, life stage needs, and the ways they learn and grow.



Children, adolescents, and adults need to experience the faith forming influence of all three environments each year. Faith formation at each stage of life blends intergenerational, family, and age group settings into a holistic approach to faith formation. This reflects a significant shift from the age-segregated or siloed approach where faith formation with children, adolescents, and adults is primarily age-group-only without significant intergenerational and family faith forming experiences. This shift situates people within a broader “ecology” of faith formation and a more holistic approach to faith formation.

Intergenerational Faith Formation

Intergenerational community, relationships, and faith formation are essential for promoting lifelong faith growth. Bringing the generations together provides benefits and blessings for all ages. Insights from research and pastoral experience tell us that being intentionally intergenerational:

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

Congregations strengthen the intergenerational faith forming environment by:

1. Building caring relationships among the generations in the church through worship, learning, service, and community events and activities.
2. Creating intentional opportunities for bringing the generations together to build relationships and engage in shared activities.
3. Engaging all generations together, including children and youth, in Sunday/weekend worship; and engaging all generations in leadership roles in Sunday worship (music, reading, praying, etc.)
4. Engaging all generations together in learning experiences that teach the Bible and the Christian tradition, and form disciples of all ages in Christian identity.
5. Bringing together the generations to learn from each other, share their faith stories, and find support for practicing their faith in daily life.

6. Nurturing the spiritual life of all generations together through the community's prayer life, rituals, and blessings; and bringing together all generations to nurture their spiritual life through prayer and spiritual practices and disciplines.
7. Engaging all generations together in service to the poor and vulnerable, in the works of justice and advocacy, and in care for creation.

Many churches make intergenerational learning and faith formation central to lifelong faith formation. They do this in one of two ways: as their core faith formation program for all ages, supplemented by age-specific and affinity group faith formation models, or as one element in a lifelong approach with age-specific and affinity group learning.

In the first approach churches make intergenerational learning their core faith formation experience for all ages conducting monthly, bi-weekly, or weekly intergenerational programs, and then offering a variety of age-group or affinity-group programs throughout the month or year to address specific age-appropriate needs. These churches replace or modify their age group programming to place the emphasis on all ages learning together. They develop a multi-year curriculum for the whole community built around themes from the Bible, the cycle of Sunday lectionary readings, church year feasts and seasons, Christian practices, service and social justice, prayer and spiritual disciplines, core Christian beliefs, and moral teachings.

In the second approach churches implement intergenerational learning in targeted ways, such as offering whole-community Bible studies, adding an all-ages activity after Sunday worship, integrating an intergenerational component into vacation Bible school, preparing for a sacramental or milestone celebration, learning about an upcoming church year feast or season (Advent-Christmas, Lent, Holy Week, Easter, Pentecost), or a church-wide events, such as a stewardship Sunday.

(For intergenerational ideas and strategies see **Design Tool #8. Ideas for Intergenerational Programming** in the resource *Tools for Developing Lifelong Faith Formation*.)

Family Faith Formation

The primary mechanisms by which Christian identity becomes rooted in the lives of young people are the day-to-day religious practices of the family and the ways parents model their faith and share it in conversation, collaboration, and exposure to outside religious opportunities. Through the processes of religious socialization young people with seriously religious parents come to think, feel, believe, and act as serious religious believers, and that that training “sticks” with them even when they leave home and enter emerging adulthood.

Parents and the whole family (including grandparents) are central to faith formation. Research studies over the past twenty years continue to affirm this truth. We know many of the factors that make a significant difference in promoting faith in children and adolescents:

- parents' personal faith and practice
- a close and warm parent-child relationship
- parents' modeling and teaching a religious faith
- parents' involvement in church life and Sunday worship
- grandparents' religious influence and relationship
- eating together as a family.
- family conversations about faith, religious issues, and questions and doubts
- providing moral instruction.
- family faith religious practices including praying, reading the Bible, serving others, celebrating holidays and rituals, ritualizing important family moments and milestone experiences.

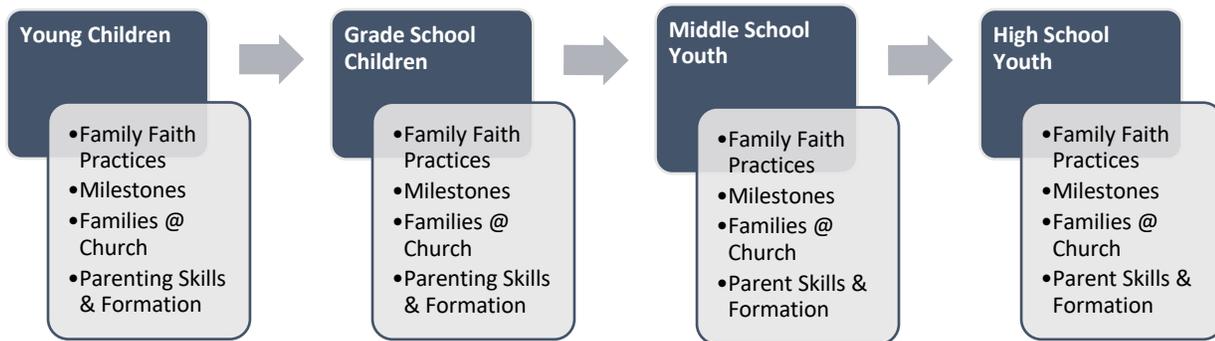
The research is also quite clear: *the single most powerful force in a child's religious formation is the spiritual personality of the parent.* There are three primary roles parents play in transmitting religion. First, parents are *sponsors of the faith.* They are the point of access between the church and their children. If children are not initially exposed to the Christian faith by their parents, they usually will not be exposed to it at all. Second, parents are the *gatekeepers of the faith.* They control how much and what sorts of religious content their children encounter. Third, parents are *interpreters of the faith.* They are definitive role models, mentors, who embody a specific manner of being Christian. They teach children how to apprehend the world, how to understand what is good and what is evil, how one ought to affectively, intellectually and practically engage with the world, and so on. They are the meaningful embodiment of that faith in the lives of children.

Congregations strengthen the family faith forming environment by focusing on family faith practice at home, family-involving church activities, and parent/grandparent formation.

1. Helping parents (or caregivers) and grandparents grow in faith and discipleship, and practice a vital and informed Christian faith.
2. Teaching parents and grandparents the practices for forming faith at home (celebrating rituals and milestones, praying, serving, learning the Christian faith, reading the Bible).
3. Equipping parents with the knowledge and skills for parenting today.
4. Providing experiences at church for the whole family that promote growth in faith and discipleship: learning, worship, service, and more.
5. Providing families with resources to nurture growth in Christian faith and practice at home.
6. Connecting with families at home with content and activities for family faith practices and parent formation.

Congregations strengthen the family faith forming environment by developing a "faith practices curriculum for the family" around the specific life stage needs of families with young children, older (grade school) children, young adolescents, and older adolescents. Christian faith practices that make a significant difference in nurturing the faith of young people include: reading the Bible as a family; praying together as a family; participating regularly in Sunday worship; being involved in the life of a faith community; serving people in need as a family and supporting young people in service; celebrating holidays, rituals, and church year seasons at home; having family conversations; talking

about faith, religious issues, and questions and doubts; ritualizing milestone experiences; and providing moral instruction.



An important element of family faith forming is preparing today's parents and grandparents to teach and live the faith practices at home. Every congregation can create a parent plan with a progression of workshops, webinars, courses, activities, support groups, and resources from infancy through the end of the adolescent years that provides parent faith formation, equips parents to be faith formers of their children, and develops the knowledge and skills for effective parenting.

With new digital tools and media we have the ability to reach today's parents and families anywhere and anytime with engaging and interactive faith forming content.

(For family ideas and strategies see **Design Tool #9. Ideas for Family Programming** in the resource *Tools for Developing Lifelong Faith Formation*.)

Life Stage Faith Formation

Life stage faith formation addresses the unique life tasks, needs, interests, and spiritual-religious journeys of people across the lifespan: children, adolescents, young adults, midlife adults, mature adults, and older adults.

With a clear purpose and goals for lifelong faith formation a congregation can provide developmentally-appropriate faith formation at each stage of life, leading toward deeper maturity of faith and a seamless process of faith growth from birth through older adulthood. The ten goals or priorities for faith formation proposed below and based on the ten characteristics of maturing faith can guide the development of faith formation at each stage of life.

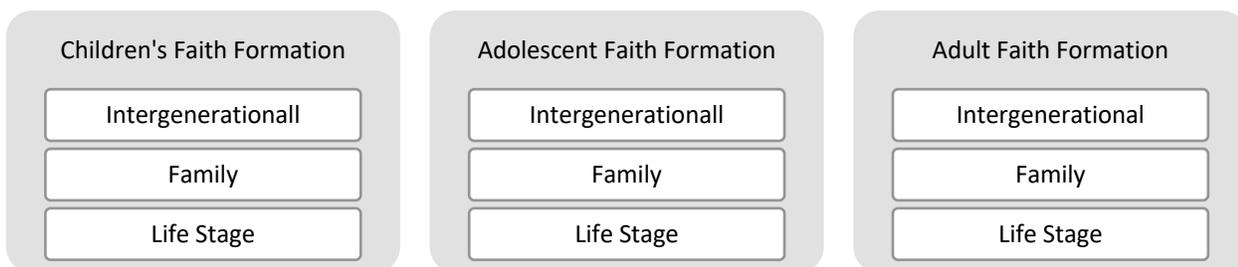
1. To guide people in developing and sustaining a personal relationship and commitment to Jesus Christ.
2. To equip people to live as disciples of Jesus Christ and make the Christian faith a way of life.
3. To teach people to read and study the Bible, and its message, meaning, and application to life today.

4. To teach the Christian story and the foundational beliefs of one's particular Christian faith tradition and guide people in integrating its meaning into their lives.
5. To teach people how to pray and to nurture their spiritual growth through practices and disciplines.
6. To guide people in living with moral integrity guided by Christian ethics and values.
7. To equip people to live the Christian mission in the world—serving those in need, caring for God's creation, and acting and advocating for justice and peace—locally and globally.
8. To prepare people for worshipping God with the community at Sunday worship and ritual celebrations, and throughout the seasons of the church year.
9. To engage people in the life, ministries, and activities of the faith community.
10. To equip people to use their gifts and talents in the Christian community and in the world.

In this approach, congregations build life stage faith formation experiences (programs, activities, resources) around the ten goals or priorities and the spiritual-religious needs of people. For each characteristic we develop activities to guide people in. . . .

- Knowing and understanding more fully the Christian faith (informing)
- Developing and deepening their relationship with Jesus and the Christian community (forming)
- Living the Christian faith in every aspect of their lives (transforming)

At each stage of life people experience faith forming experiences with the whole community (intergenerational), with the whole family, and with their life stage (peer) groups, Faith formation at each stage of life blends intergenerational, family, and age group settings into a holistic approach to faith formation, centered around the ten characteristics of maturing in faith. This reflects a significant shift from the age-segregated or siloed approach where faith formation with children, adolescents, and adults is primarily age-group-only without significant intergenerational and family faith forming experiences.



Learning Today

New research into how we understand learning and the most effective processes and methods to foster learning provide congregations with new approaches and tools to use in fostering faith formation at each stage of life.

First, learning is a process of active inquiry with the initiative residing within the individual. Motivation for learning is intrinsic to the person and is driven by a need for autonomy (self-directedness), mastery, and purpose and meaning.

The traditional model of schooling 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 in faith formation, such as requirement policies for programs, rarely motivates people to participate, learn, or grow in faith. Sometimes they 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.

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.”

Second, the ways people learn today are changing. Among today's most promising educational innovations are blended learning, micro-learning, immersive learning, project-based learning, and collaborative learning. All of these new approaches and methods are enhanced by the use of digital technologies, methods, and media.

Blended Learning integrates learning in physical and online settings where a person has some control over time, place, path, and/or pace of the learning experience. One form of blended learning is *Flipped Learning* in which the content moves from the group learning space to the individual learning space (usually online), and the group space is transformed into an interactive learning environment for discussion and application. Congregations are already flipping confirmation preparation (learning online plus interactive group activities in gathered settings), extending gathered events with online content for continued learning, and providing online faith formation or live webinars for individuals or groups.

Micro-learning experiences are short-form—5, 10, 15 minute—learning experiences designed for anywhere, anytime learning that be combined into multi-part learning programs. Micro-learning experiences are one response to short attention spans and mobile learning. Congregational can curate a series of micro-learning experiences (on a digital platform) to engage people in all types of faith formation content.

With the rise of anytime, anywhere faith formation content we need to ask what is the role of gathering people for faith formation. Today people can access online most of the content that we teach at church. One response to this new situation is to focus gathered activities on creating **Immersive Learning**—faith-forming experiences that are interactive, participatory, experiential, visual, and multi-sensory. Congregations have already been offering these types of experiences—vacation Bible school, retreats, mission trips, and more. Congregations can design or re-design gathered programming into immersive faith formation using extended settings (half-day, full day, weekend, weeklong) offered throughout the year (but not weekly).

Project-based learning involves completing complex tasks that typically result in a realistic product, event, or presentation. Project-based learning is 1) organized around driving questions that lead young people to encounter central concepts or principles; 2) focused on a constructive investigation that involves inquiry and knowledge building; 3) learner-driven, in that the young people are responsible for making choices and for designing and managing their work; and 4) authentic, by posing problems that occur in the real world and that people care about.

Collaborative learning involves young people in small, non-competitive groups where they can discuss and process together what they are learning, work together on projects and activities, and practice and present what they are learning. Learning spaces are organized for learners' participation in a "learning community"—recognizing that learning takes place in a social context and relies on communication and interaction with others. Gen Z learns best in an environment where they can share with and co-create their education with their peers. Collaborative learning requires creating an

environment that is safe, caring, accepting, and trustworthy so that young people feel free to share, discuss, question, and apply.

Generational Learning

Every generation has preferred ways of learning. We know today's younger generations learn best in environments that are interactive, participatory, experiential, visual, and multi-sensory. While, older adults often learn best in a setting where is a lecture or expert presentations. Life stage faith formation designs faith forming experiences using methods and approaches appropriate to each generation. For example:

Builders (older adults)

- lecture and expert presentations
- activities that take into account their age-related abilities to hear, see, and move
- connect their experience to the topic
- structure and predictability (no surprises); low-risk learning environment
- independent skill practice time
- still like printed resources and books for study

Boomers (mature adults)

- group interactions and discussions
- storytelling
- chances to try new skills independently
- stable, risk-free environment but want to interact with others
- experiential, practical, and fun activities that allow for team exercises
- use technology as means for learning
- blend of people who prefer printed books and those who learn online

Gen Xers (midlife adults)

- learn by doing
- experiential with lots of direct experience activities
- shorter, episodic learning experiences
- visual learning (images, videos)
- practical and relevant (What will I do with this learning?)
- discretion to complete tasks their own way
- prefer independent self-directed learning, including individual projects
- use technology where possible, including online learning, video, etc.
- will turn to digital resources over the printed resources

Millennials (young adults)

- microlearning and episodic learning experiences
- lots of activity-based group work
- fast-moving, interactive activities

- visual learning (images, videos)
- technology enabled learning using their own devices for learning
- collaborative learning environments with peer interaction
- entertainment and learning at the same time

Gen Z (children and adolescents)

- authentic and meaningful experiences
- more independent in how they learn; self-reliant; self-directed learners
- adept at using the new digital tools and methods to learn
- value face-to-face interaction and collaboration, sharing and co-creating with peers
- project-based learning, active learning, and activities that utilize their creativity, such as artwork, video presentation, and more
- videos and YouTube, especially short pieces that run from sixty to ninety seconds

6. Lifelong faith formation creates networks that address the life tasks, spiritual and religious needs, and interests of families and all ages by offering a variety of content, programs, activities, and resources in multiple settings, aided by the use of digital platforms, media, and methods.

We live in the age of networks. 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 are as old as human society. Over the past two decades, facilitated by digital technology and tools, societies have become more connected. Network thinking and design now permeates social life. Increasingly education is being viewed and designed as a network of learning resources—people, experiences, content, activities, and more—fashioned around the learning needs of people.

Congregations can now design networks of formation for children, adolescents, adults, and families. Networks of faith formation move us from a provider-centered, program-driven model to a learner-centered model where the content and experiences are designed around the people and where they have control over their learning. In a network model, faith formation shifts from “one size fits all” curriculum and programming to a variety of religious content and experiences that connect with people’s spiritual and religious needs.

Individuals and families have an active role in shaping their own learning and moving along personal trajectories of faith growth. 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.

A network approach address the whole person and how they learn best by offering programs, activities, and resources that emphasize different ways to learn (“intelligences”): word-centered, verbal-linguistic, logical, musical, visual, intrapersonal, interpersonal, naturalist, and bodily-kinesthetic (see the work of Howard Gardner). It also offers different styles of learning: direct, hands-on, concrete experiences; reflective observation; exploration and analysis of knowledge, theories, and concepts; and active experimentation with new knowledge and practices. A network approach can provide multiple activities and resources for a topic or them that reflect different ways to learn and different styles of learning.

A network approach personalizes faith formation around the life tasks and issues, interests, and religious and spiritual needs of families and individuals at all stages of life. Churches can offer 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 online settings. Faith formation becomes personal, portable, and participatory—the key characteristics of learning in the network age.

A network approach utilizes the abundance of church community resources (people, ministries, events, and activities) and religious content in print and digital formats—audio, video, apps, e-books, websites, social media. Faith formation as a network benefits from the rise of online resource centers with freely accessible, high quality religious content and experiences that congregations, families, and individuals can access.

A network approach enables congregations to become centers of lifelong learning and faith growth for all people by utilizing the best of the new digital technologies to bring an abundance of meaningful and engaging faith-forming experiences in a variety of environments and media to people of all ages.

In summary a network approach to lifelong faith formation has several distinct features:

1. It provides a *variety* of content, programs, activities, and resources to address the diverse life tasks and situations, needs and interests, and spiritual and faith journeys of families, children, adolescents, young adults, midlife adults, mature adults, and older adults.
2. It is developed in *multiple settings*: self-directed, mentored, at home, in small groups, in large groups, church-wide, in the community and world, and online—to provide a variety of ways for people to learn and grow in faith that respects their preferred styles of learning, their life situations, and their time constraints.
3. It addresses the *whole person* and how people learn best by offering programs, activities, and resources that emphasize different ways to learn (multiple intelligences: word-centered, verbal-linguistic, logical, musical, visual, intrapersonal, interpersonal, naturalist, and bodily-kinesthetic); and different styles of learning (direct hands-on experiences, reflective observation, exploration and analysis, and active experimentation).
4. It *personalizes* faith formation by giving people an active role in shaping their own learning and moving along their own personal trajectories of faith growth.

5. It utilizes the *abundance* of spiritual-religious content that is available in print, audio, video, digital, and online formats.
6. It is built on a *digital platform* that integrates all of the content (programs, activities, resources), connects people to the content and to each other, provides continuity for people across different learning experiences, and is available anytime, anywhere. The digital platform provides for seamless learning across a variety of experiences, resources, locations, times, or settings; and provides continuity between faith formation in the congregation, at home, in daily life, and online.

7. Lifelong faith formation guides individuals and families in discerning their spiritual and religious journeys and life stage needs, and giving people an active role in shaping their own personal trajectories of faith growth.

Lifelong faith formation provides *personalized and customized* learning and faith growth, giving children (and their parents), adolescents, adults, and families an active role in shaping their own growth in faith and moving along their own personal trajectories of faith growth. Personalizing faith formation means tailoring faith formation around people’s spiritual-religious journeys and life stage needs and interests. 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.

Personalized learning means tailoring the educational environment—the what, when, how and where people learn—to address the individual needs and interests of each person. Giving power to individuals and families to shape their own learning does not mean abandoning them to their own devices. Congregations provide mentors or guides to assist people in developing their growth plan, accessing the programs and resources that fit their plan, and evaluating their learning. A faith formation network, rich in a diversity of content and a variety of ways to learn, provides the resources necessary for helping people of all ages create their own faith growth plans.

Personalizing faith formation is a way to address the increasingly diverse spiritual-religious identifies of people today by providing variety and choice in faith formation programming, activities, and resources around the lives of people.

One way to personalize faith formation utilizes a *Pathways Guide* to help people discern their faith growth needs, using the characteristics of faith maturing, and then provides *Playlists* of content, experiences, and activities to address those needs. The *Pathways Guide* incorporates a rating scale for discerning faith growth needs, for example: Getting Started, Growing, Going Deeper. *Playlists* of content and experiences are developed for each faith maturing characteristic with activities targeted to each rating on the discernment continuum (getting started, growing, going deeper). There are *Playlists* for each “level” on the continuum. *Playlists* incorporate a variety of programming including

gathered programs at church, small groups, online learning and resources, mentoring, and more. The *Playlists* are published on a digital platform to make it easy for people to access them.

A second approach to personalizing faith formation, when you cannot use a *Pathways Guide* with people, is to offer a variety of content, experiences, and activities developed around the ten characteristics of faith maturing or the content; and then invite people to select the activities that best address their spiritual and religious needs (getting started, growing, going deeper). In this approach the *Playlists* provide the way to personalize faith formation. For example, to help people read and study the Bible, there are three different types of Bible content and experiences for those who are getting started, growing, and going deeper. These activities can be online, gathered, small group, family-centered, and more. All of the content and experiences are published on a digital platform for people to access.

8. Lifelong faith formation includes missional outreach to the spiritual-religious needs and journeys of the “spiritual but not religious” and the “unaffiliated” and creating pathways to experience the Christian faith, encounter Jesus Christ, and embrace the Good News.

Missional faith formation involves expanding and extending the church’s presence through outreach, connection, relationship building, and engagement with people where they live. It involves developing targeted approaches and strategies designed around the particular needs and life situations of the spiritual but not religious and the unaffiliated. The setting for these new initiatives often moves from the church to the community, homes, coffee shops, online communities, and more. Congregations utilize a variety of strategies for missional faith formation, including:

- Using community settings for new initiatives such as celebrating worship in a community center, offering courses, workshops, and gatherings in a school, community center, or coffee shop.
- Creating a vibrant and inviting website and an active Facebook page, Instagram, Twitter and other social media platforms to connect with people.
- Offering life-oriented programming such as career mentoring, job referrals, parenting courses, life-skills courses, financial planning, and more.
- Offering small groups and support groups on a variety of themes and interests hosted in a variety of locations (homes, coffee shops, community centers), such as affinity groups (moms, dads, single young adults) or interest/activity groups or support groups (recovery, grief, divorce).
- Connecting with people during transitions and milestone moments, such as marriage, birth of a baby, start of school, graduations, and funerals as “reentry” opportunities.
- Sponsoring social events, movie nights, concerts, and children and family activities designed to draw people from the wider community into relationships with people from the church community.
- Offering online programs to reach a wider audience, e.g., a parenting or retirement webinar.

- Sponsoring community-wide service days, service projects, and mission trips that are open to everyone so that people from the wider community can participate, interact with church members, and come into contact with the Christian faith in action.
- Developing a third-place settings (such as pub settings like “God on Tap”) to build relationships, host spiritual conversations, provide programs and activities, and nourish the spiritual life of people.

Missional faith formation involves providing pathways for people to consider or reconsider the Christian faith, to encounter Jesus Christ, embrace the Good News, and make the Christian faith a way of life in a supportive faith community. This involves developing intentional approaches that move people from discovery to exploration to commitment. One example of this process is an “Introduction to the Christian Faith” program—an opportunity for people to investigate the claims of the Christian faith in an informal, no pressure, nonjudgmental, and friendly environment (such as the Alpha Course). The emphasis is upon exploration and discovery in a relaxed and informal setting and does not assume any background knowledge or belief in Christianity. It can offered in a variety of settings, formats, and times.

The Catechumenate of the early church, now restored for the contemporary church, provides a guided process moving from evangelization (inquiry) to catechesis (formation) to spiritual discernment (during Lent) to a ritual celebration of commitment (Baptism-Eucharist-Confirmation at the Easter Vigil) to post-baptismal faith formation (mystagogy). The formation component provides a holistic learning process: formation through participation in the life of the faith community, education in Scripture and the Christian tradition, apprenticeship in the Christian life, intimate connection with the liturgy and rituals of the church, moral formation, development of a life of prayer, and engagement in actions of justice and service. The journey from inquiry through formation to commitment and a life of discipleship within a faith community is a process that can be applied to all types of situations and settings for people of all ages.

9. Lifelong faith formation incorporates digital methods and media to enhance and expand the ways people of all ages grow in faith.

The digital transformation is making possible new approaches for developing lifelong faith formation, such as the network approach, and enhancing existing faith formation activities. The digital possibilities are almost endless:

1. Learning and faith formation are now mobile—anytime, anyplace, 24x7. People have the digital devices to stay connected and to access learning and faith formation on the go. We can “program” faith formation experiences around people’s interests and time.
2. There is abundance of high quality digital content for faith formation—audio, video, print, websites, apps, online learning platforms, and more.
3. New digital media and learning methods provide multiple ways to learn and grow—activities and experiences that reflect different learning styles and multiple intelligences.

4. Digital media and online activities, especially videos, mean that we can develop content in smaller units (micro-learning) that better suit today’s learners who have shorter attention spans.
5. A faith formation website can serve as a hub for faith formation—an online learning center, a portal to activities and resources, and a connecting point for people.
6. Online classrooms, like Edmodo, Schoology, and Google Classroom, provide safe spaces for people to engage in faith forming experiences and interaction.
7. The abundance of content and digital methods, media, and platforms provide the tools necessary to personalize the faith formation experience for children, adolescents, adults, and families.
8. Faith formation programming can be *digitally-enabled* by blending gathered events, experiences, and programming with online learning environments and utilizing the abundance of digital media and tools for learning and faith formation

Lifelong faith formation uses blended models of faith formation to connect physical settings and online settings. The new digital tools, digital media, and online platforms connect people’s participation in church life, events, and programs with their daily and home—and can reach people of all ages at home, at work, and in daily life with personalized and customized faith formation content and experiences. Faith formation today can integrate online and face-to-face learning, blending them in a variety of ways from online programs with minimal interaction in physical settings to programs in physical settings that utilize online content or extend the program using online content. Here are several examples of digitally enabled strategies for faith formation.

1. ***Extend Programming:*** We can extend gathered events and programs into people’s daily lives by providing online content that helps people to go deeper. For example, we can extend Sunday worship into the home and daily life with daily Bible readings, prayer activities, learning activities, faith conversations, and more. We can extend an age group program with online activities that deepen knowledge and provide application activities or projects. We can extend intensive programs like VBS or camp or retreats with regular online content and activities.
2. ***Flip Programming:*** We can “flip the classroom or program” by creating a digital platform to provide the content that people would learn in the gathered setting in an online learning space using print, audio, video, and more. And then transform the gathered program using interactive activities, discussion, project-based learning, and practice and demonstration.

We can redesign children’s faith formation so that children and their parents are learning online at home and doing activities together, and then refocusing “class time” to engage children in creating projects and activities that demonstrate their learning.

We can design a high school confirmation program that provides the content that used to be taught in the weekly sessions in an online platform for individual learning—watching videos, reading short materials, and writing a reflection journals; engages the young people in small

groups during the month to discuss their online learning; and then meets monthly in a large group gathered session for discussion, interactive activities, and application of the content to living as a Christian today. During the year retreats, worship, and service projects offer additional gathered sessions.

3. **Online Programming:** We can develop a complete online faith formation experience with faith forming content and experiences. For example we can build an online “forty-day Lenten curriculum” that connects the Lent events at church with online content for experiencing and practicing Lent in daily and home life. We can include prayer activities, daily Bible readings, daily devotions, Lent study resources, videos, service activities, and more.

We can use video conferencing with services like Zoom to create webinar programming, such as a monthly one-hour parent formation webinar program delivered to parents at home. We can build the program around the knowledge, skills, and practices for effective parenting and for parent as faith formers. Invite a guest presenter and invite parents to participate online. Sponsor two or three parent dinners during the year (with babysitting) for parents to gather in-person to meet each other, discuss the webinars, etc.

We can also set up online faith formation centers with resources for people to access 24x7. For example, we can providing an online prayer and spirituality center where people can access daily prayer reflections and devotions, offer prayer intentions, pray for others, learn about spiritual practices, download prayer activities for the home, and more.

4. **Multiple-format Programming:** We can develop multiple formats for gathered programs by recording programs (audio and video) and then developing small group and independent programming using the video or audio content. Produce a webpage with the video or audio content and the programming for small groups and independent learning. Use social media (like a Facebook group) or an online classroom to facilitate online interaction and discussion. This provides a great way to offer other ways for people who cannot participate in the fixed time program to access the content and engage in learning at a time that works best for them.
5. **Prepare and Follow-Up Programming:** We can utilize online formats to prepare people for an event or program, such as the celebration of a sacrament or milestone, or participation in a mission trip. This is an especially helpful process when it is difficult to gather people for the preparation and/or follow-up. Use the online platform to *prepare* people for the event with the appropriate content (experiences, activities, video/audio, and resources). *Engage* people in the event or program. Use the online platform to *sustain and apply* the learning and growth with appropriate content (experiences, activities, video/audio, and resources). Use social media (like a Facebook group) or an online classroom (like Edmodo or Google Classroom) to facilitate online interaction and discussion.

10. Lifelong faith formation involves new leadership roles including learning architect, digital designer, and curator.

Lifelong faith formation today requires new leadership roles to match with the new approaches to faith formation in the twenty-first century. Faith formation leaders are blending traditional roles like developing religious content, designing programming, managing programming, and teaching/facilitating programming with three new roles: *Architect*, *Curator*, and *Digital Designer*. Faith formation leaders will still engage in teaching, helping people reflect theologically on their lives and faith experiences, and guiding them in living as Christian disciples today. These roles will merge with the three new roles which are designed for twenty-first century lifelong faith formation.

- **Learning architects** design and/or identify environments which can become settings for faith formation, e.g., homes, workplaces, coffee shops, online communities, and more. They design content and experiences to “deliver” programming to that setting.
- **Designers of digital platforms** (websites, social media) create online environments where people can connect with each other, access content, engage in learning activities, and more. These platforms provide 24x7 faith formation.
- **Curators** of religious content and experiences continually find, group, organize, and share the best and most relevant content on a specific subject to address the religious and spiritual needs of individuals, groups, and families. With the abundance of content in all forms, the role of the faith formation leader shifts from creator to curator, from providing religious content and programming to curating religious content and experiences for all ages. Curators are engaged in finding and identifying high quality content in all formats, matching it with the needs of people, providing the content on a digital platform (and in gathered settings), and engaging people with the content.

The four traditional roles will continue into the future but in a much more limited way. Faith formation leaders will still need to design programs and activities—when they cannot curate them from other sources. There is still the need to manage programs and activities in gathered settings, but increasingly time and energy will be spent designing learning environments, increasing the number of environments for faith formation, designing and managing digital platforms, and curating content and experiences.

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Planning Resource: *Guide to Designing Lifelong Faith Formation*

The *Guide for Developing Lifelong Faith Formation* assists a church in creating a lifelong faith formation plan with intergenerational, family, and life stage programming, guided by the ten principles of lifelong faith formation. The *Guide for Developing Lifelong Faith Formation* includes the following planning steps:

1. Form a lifelong faith formation team or task force to create and implement the plan for lifelong faith formation.
2. Create a statement of the purpose and goals of lifelong faith formation.
3. Develop a profile of lifelong faith formation from children through older adults.
4. Assess how effectively the church is forming faith through church life, life stage faith formation, family faith formation, and intergenerational faith formation.
5. Analyze the profile and assessment to identify strengths and areas for development in lifelong faith formation.
6. Develop a model of lifelong faith formation as a way to structure lifelong faith formation—integrating all of the elements of faith formation: intergenerational, family, life stage, and missional—into a whole.
7. Listen to the life situations, needs, and spiritual-religious journeys of people in your community, especially target audiences for new initiatives.
8. Design faith formation programming using a network approach.
9. Develop a plan to personalize faith formation.
10. Build an infrastructure to support lifelong faith formation.

A companion document *Tools for Developing Lifelong Faith Formation* provides all of the reproducible materials (handouts, assessment tools, worksheets) for using the design process in the *Guide for Developing Lifelong Faith Formation*.

- Design Tool #1. Purposes and Goals for Lifelong Faith Formation
- Design Tool #2. Lifelong Faith Formation Profile
- Design Tool #3. Lifelong Faith Formation Assessment Tool
- Design Tool #4. Models of Lifelong Faith Formation
- Design Tool #5. Research Guide and Surveys: Adult, Youth, and Family
- Design Tool #6. Designing Faith Formation Programming
- Design Tool #7. Generating Program Ideas
- Design Tool #8. Ideas for Intergenerational Programming
- Design Tool #9. Ideas for Family Programming
- Design Tool #10. Ideas for Life Stage Faith Formation
- Design Tool #11. Personalizing Faith Formation
- Design Tool #12. Curating Resources Faith Formation
- Design Tool #13. Evaluating Faith Formation