

PRESENTER
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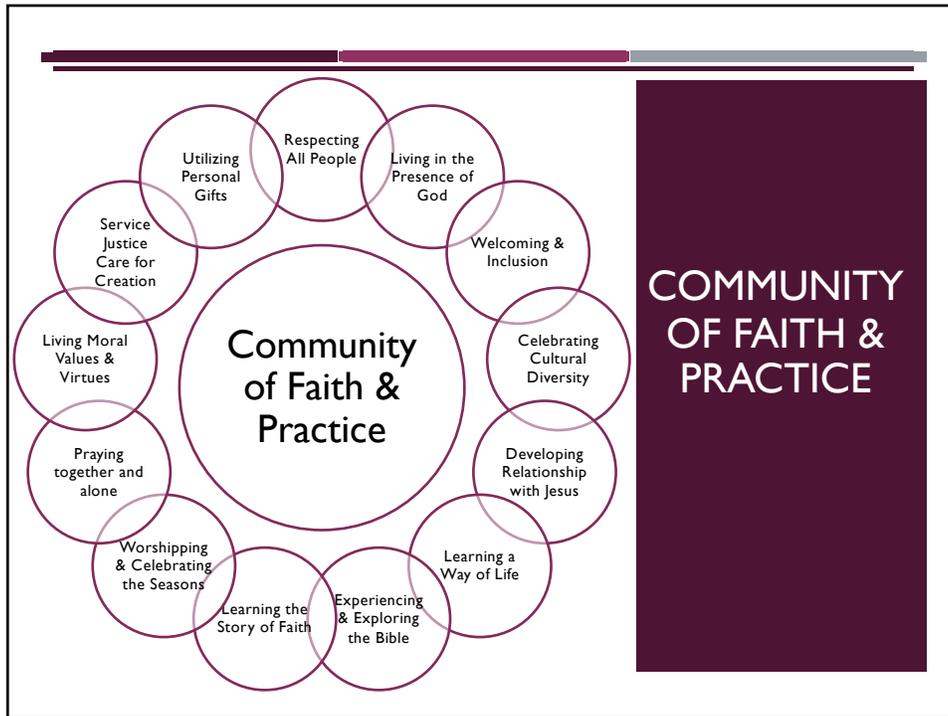
**NURTURING A RELIGIOUS
IDENTITY IN A DIVERSE
COMMUNITY**

**KENORA CATHOLIC
SCHOOLS**

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THE CHALLENGE OF SPIRITUAL & RELIGIOUS DIVERSITY

1. Declining numbers of people (children, teens, adults) participating in religious communities
2. Increasing age (and deaths) of the Christians most engaged in a religious community
3. Rising numbers of disaffiliation among younger generations (40s and younger)
4. Rising number of children growing up in second generation religiously unaffiliated home, i.e., their parents disaffiliated and not transmitting a religious faith and practice at home

Inactive Nonbelievers	Inactive Believers	Spiritual but not Religious	Involved Believer	Active Believer
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FAITH UNBUNDLING

(THE STATE OF RELIGION AND YOUNG PEOPLE 2021, SPRINGTIDE RESEARCH INSTITUTE)

Our data are clear: young people are not turning to religious leaders, communities, practices, or beliefs in times of uncertainty or difficulty, though the majority of young people nonetheless identify as religious or spiritual.

Young people who identify as “religious” don’t necessarily participate in religion in the traditional sense. The majority are not accepting the whole “bundle” of rituals, practices, and beliefs that religious institutions offer.

Faith, or “being religious,” among the youngest generations is more “unbundled and worth a close look, especially because our data show that young people who identify as “religious” also report that in almost every facet of their lives they are flourishing more than young people who identify as “not religious.”

When we describe faith as unbundled, we mean that religious young people are not relying on a single religious tradition or organization to form and inform their beliefs and practices. Instead they mix together things from various traditions, religious and otherwise.

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FAITH UNBUNDLING

(THE STATE OF RELIGION AND YOUNG PEOPLE 2021, SPRINGTIDE RESEARCH INSTITUTE)

***Faith Unbundled** is a term that describes the way young people increasingly construct their faith by combining elements such as beliefs, identity, practices, and community from a variety of religious and non-religious sources, rather than receiving all these things from a single, intact system, or tradition.*

Young people with unbundled faith will partake in religion, including practices, beliefs, and communities to the degree that suits them, with no formal or permanent commitment.

- young people who identify with a particular religion but adopt few of none of its practices
- young people who attend religious services regularly but consider themselves agnostic, atheist, or nothing in particular
- young people who are more than twice as likely to practice the arts as a “religious or spiritual practice” than attend weekly faith groups

Young people are turning to a wide range of traditions, practices, and belief when asking and answering important questions about their faith: What do I believe? Who am I? What is my purpose in the world? What practices have value?

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HALLMARKS OF FAITH UNBUNDLED

(THE STATE OF RELIGION AND YOUNG PEOPLE 2021, SPRINGTIDE RESEARCH INSTITUTE)

Young people turn to many or various sources when making meaning and discerning what to believe about right and wrong, purpose and calling, salvation and suffering, and more. It looks like **curiosity**.

Young people are unwilling to shed parts of themselves to fit into a prescribed narrative about who and how to be in the world. It looks like a commitment to **wholeness**.

Young people show up where trusted personal relationships exist or new ones seem possible, young people who are willing to forgo participation in communities lacking these qualities, even if they have had long associations with these communities. It looks like **connection**.

Young people blend and adapt various rituals and behaviors to suit and make sense of the current questions they're facing. It looks like **flexibility**.

We see hallmarks of **curiosity**, **wholeness**, **connection**, and **flexibility** in our data and in our conversations with young people, practitioners, and experts.

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NURTURING GROWTH

For children: The emphasis is on ***experiencing*** faith and ***belonging*** to a faith community. Schools provide an immersion into the Catholic faith through faith forming practices embodied in the life of the school community.

For adolescents: Building on experiencing and belonging in childhood, the emphasis moves to the young person building or constructing a spiritual/religious life by ***exploring***, ***discerning***, and ***integrating*** beliefs and practices into one's life.

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NURTURING GROWTH

1. **Holistic:** engaging the head (inform), heart (form), and hands (transform) of students
2. **Experiential:** creating a community rich in spiritual & religious experiences for all
3. **Practices:** teaching how to live as a Catholic, a Christian, a spiritual person; not just what to believe
4. **Personalization:** tailoring the spiritual and religious experiences to the religiosity of students; moving from one-size-fits-all faith formation to a more personalized one-size-fits one (or a small group) faith formation

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NURTURING GROWTH

5. **Experimentation:** engaging students in creating and mixing their own spiritual-religious experiences
6. **Safe Spaces:** creating safe and sacred places for faith conversations, constructing an identity, etc.
7. **Mentoring & small groups:** offering 1-1 and small group settings for faith forming
8. **Accompaniment:** journeying with young people first, then teaching young people
9. **Identity:** guidance, safe space, mentoring, and resources to develop a meaningful religious identity

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REFLECTION

What are some of the ways your school is responding to the spiritual and religious diversity of students and their families?

How can your school improve its response to the spiritual and religious diversity of students and their families?