REIMAGINING FAITH FORMATION FOR THE 21ST CENTURY

Presenter: John Roberto

Resources

Website
www.ReimagingFaithFormation.com

Book
4 Big Adaptive Challenges

1. Increasing diversity throughout American society in the length of the lifespan, in generational identities, in family structures and marriage patterns, and in the ethnic makeup of America
2. Dramatic changes and increasing diversity in the religious beliefs, practices, and affiliation of Americans
3. Decline in religious transmission from generation to generation
4. Rise of new digital technologies that are reshaping society, and the emergence of a connected, networked society
Religious Diversity

- Not Religiously Affiliated
- Spiritual but Not Religious
- Minimal Engagement with Faith and Community
- Vibrant Faith & Active Engagement

Changing U.S. Religious Landscape

Between 2007 and 2014, the Christian share of the population fell from 78.4% to 70.6%, driven mainly by declines among mainline Protestants and Catholics. The unaffiliated experienced the most growth, and the share of Americans who belong to non-Christian faiths also increased.

Source: 2014 Religious Landscape Study, conducted June 4-Sept. 30, 2014
PEW RESEARCH CENTER

2007 2014
26.9% 25.4% Evangelical Protestant -0.9
22.8% Unaffiliated +6.7
20.8% Catholic -3.1
18.1% 16.1% Mainline Protestant -3.4
14.7% 4.7% Non-Christian faiths +1.2
Youth & Young Adult Religiosity

### Youth (teens)
- Abiders: 20%
- Adapters: 20%
- Assenters: 31%
- Avoiders: 24%
- Atheists: 5%

### Emerging Adults (20s)
- Committed Traditionalists: 15%
- Selected Adherents: 30%
- Spiritually Open: 15%
- Religiously Indifferent: 25%
- Religiously Disconnected: 5%
- Irreligious: 10%

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**Unaffiliated Make Up Growing Share Across Generations**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Generation</th>
<th>2007</th>
<th>2014</th>
<th>Change</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Silent generation (b. 1928-1945)</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>+2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baby Boomers (b.1946-1964)</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>+3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Generation X (b. 1965-1980)</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>+4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Older Millennials (b. 1981-1989)</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>+9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Younger Millennials (b.1990-1996)</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2014 Religious Landscape Study, conducted June 4-Sept. 30, 2014. All changes are statistically significant.

PEW RESEARCH CENTER
SBNR Types

1. Dissenters
2. Casuals
   - “religious practice makes me feel better”
3. Explorers
   - spiritual tourists
4. Seekers
   - searching for a spiritual home
5. Immigrants
   - moved to a new spiritual “land”

Impact of Changes
(CARA Catholic Family Study, 2015)

Do any of your children currently attend...

1. A Catholic elementary or middle school: 8%
2. A Catholic high school: 3%
3. A parish-based Catholic religious education program: 21%
4. A youth ministry program: 5%
5. None of the above: 68%
Rise of the Dones

![Graph showing the rise of the Dones: Dechurched U.S. adults, distribution of left church affiliation, and gender and age demographics.](image-url)
How involved in church

- 3.2%: I attended services but nothing more.
- 33.7%: I attended services and some events or a small group.
- 44.3%: I volunteered my time to serve in the church’s ministries.
- 17.8%: I was heavily involved as a leader in the congregation.
- 1.1%: I was on paid staff.

Dones and Spiritual Growth

Since leaving organized religion, have you been able to find other outlets for spiritual growth?

- 71.8%: Yes
- 28.2%: No
### Dones’ Reasons for Leaving Church

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reason</th>
<th>Strongly Contributed</th>
<th>Somewhat Contributed</th>
<th>Did Not Contribute</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The church was too judgmental</td>
<td>64%</td>
<td>27.4%</td>
<td>8.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The church hierarchy was out of order</td>
<td>78%</td>
<td>18.4%</td>
<td>3.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I didn’t like the lecture style of preaching</td>
<td>82%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The church wasn’t ‘real’</td>
<td>75%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The church isn’t where I encounter God</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The church took the social and political stance I disagreed with</td>
<td>75%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The church wasn’t a friend community</td>
<td>75%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Church teachings weren’t relevant for my life</td>
<td>75%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I couldn’t find a church that was welcoming</td>
<td>75%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I wanted to be more involved in living out God’s calling more in my life</td>
<td>75%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My church leaders cited immorally</td>
<td>75%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The church isn’t active enough in the local community</td>
<td>75%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Dones and Future Church Involvement

What is the likelihood that you will ever become involved in an organized church again?

- **Very likely**: 63.3%
- **Somewhat likely**: 27.8%
- **Not likely**: 8.8%
Analysis

- Younger generations are more unaffiliated and less involved in faith communities.
- Older generations are more affiliated and more involved and supportive.
- As younger generations replace the older generations there will be fewer engaged and more unaffiliated individuals and families.

Analysis

- 40% of the “no religion in particular” say religion is “very” or “somewhat” important in their lives.
- The overwhelming majority of religiously unaffiliated believe in God.
- People “leaving” is less about people “losing their religion” than dissatisfaction with available institutional options.
- Young generations seem allergic to large-scale institutions that demand not only spiritual allegiance but financial commitment. None of these things are “religion” for these people.
Analysis

Religion is not going away anytime soon, regardless of how people may identify themselves. But business as usual among existing religious institutions will not stem the losses we are seeing.

(Richard Flory, USC)
(http://religiondispatches.org/u-s-christianity-is-dead-long-live-u-s-christianity)

Religious Transmission
Analysis

- Religious transmission is a family affair.
- Families can transmit a particular religious faith tradition or not.
- Declining levels of family religious transmission and faith practice at home are a result of non-affiliation—1st generation and 2nd generation non-affiliated families.
- If the pattern continues, expect higher levels of non-affiliation and lower levels of church involvement in younger families.

Concluding Thought

The world is now changing at a rate at which the basic systems, structures, and cultures built over the past century cannot keep up with the demands being placed on them. Incremental adjustments to how you manage and strategize, not matter how clever, are not up to the job. You need something very new to stay ahead in a age of tumultuous change and growing uncertainties.

(John Kotter, Accelerate: Building Strategic Agility for a Faster-Moving World)
Ecosystem

A system, or group of interconnected elements, formed by the interaction of a community of organisms with their environment.

Science defines an ecosystem as being a community where organisms interact with one another and with their physical environment.

Every organism has a role to fulfill and there must be a harmonious balance between all aspects of the ecosystem in order for the organisms to flourish and evolve.
The “Old” Faith Forming Ecosystem

- Church
- Religious School or Sunday School
- Family
- Community
- Ethnic Traditions

A New Faith Forming Ecosystem

- Intergenerational Faith Community
- Online & Digitally-Enabled Faith Formation
- Age Group/Generational Faith Formation
- Missional Faith Formation
- Family Faith Formation
Faith formation is a lifelong journey of discipleship—a process of experiencing, learning, and practicing the Christian faith as we seek to follow Jesus and his Way in today’s world.

- **Way of the Head** – *a discipleship of faith seeking understanding*
- **Way of the Heart** – *a discipleship of relationships and community*
- **Way of the Hands** – *a discipleship of transforming the world*

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**Holistic Faith & Lifelong Formation**

- *A way of the head* (inform) 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.
- *A way of the heart* (form) demands a discipleship of right relationships and right desires, community building, hospitality and inclusion, trust in God’s love, and prayer and worship.
- *A way of the hands* (transform) demands a discipleship of love, justice, peace-making, simplicity, integrity, healing, and repentance.

(Thomas Groome)
Intergenerational Faith Formation

Intergenerational faith formation and whole community faith experiences are at the center of faith formation – engaging all ages and generations in the life and events of church life and the Christian faith and participation in intergenerational faith experiences.

*How to become intentionally intergenerational in church life & faith formation as the foundation for lifelong faith formation and discipleship?*
Throughout Scripture there is a pervasive sense that all generations were typically present when faith communities gathered for worship, for celebration, for feasting, for praise, for encouragement, for reading of Scripture, in times of danger, and for support and service. . . . To experience authentic Christian community and reap the unique blessings of intergenerationality, the generations must be together regularly and often—infants to octogenarians. (Allen and Ross, Intergenerational Christian Formation)

### Intergenerational Faith Formation

- **Caring**: Community building activities, storytelling, mentoring, social events
- **Celebrating**: Sunday Worship, whole community sacramental celebrations, milestones celebrations, church yearfeasts and seasons
- **Learning**: Intergenerational learning programs (weekly, monthly, small group); incorporating intergenerational learning into age group programming
- **Praying**: Community prayer experiences, intergenerational prayer groups, spiritual guides/mentors
- **Serving**: Intergenerational service projects and mission trips, church-wide service days
Family Faith Formation

Congregations equip and strengthen families to become faith forming centers:
1. Transmitting faith from generation to generation
2. Nurturing family faith at home through the eight faith forming processes
3. Building strong families
4. Parent (and grandparent) formation

*How to equip, resources, and support families as the center of faith formation through faith formation and church ministries?*

Families at the Center

- Church Life & Ministries
- Family
  - Faith Transmission
  - Faith Forming Practices
  - Family Development
  - Parent Formation
Life-Stage Faith Formation

Age group and generational faith formation addresses the unique life tasks, needs, interests, and spiritual journeys of people at each stage of life.
Curriculum: 8 Faith Forming Processes

- Church Year Seasons
- Learning the Tradition
- Praying Spiritual Formation
- Reading the Bible
- Rituals & Milestones
- Serving Working for Justice Caring for Creation
- Caring Relationships
- Worshipping

GROWTH IN FAITH

Faith Formation Networks

A network of relationships, content, experiences, & resources. . .

- Offering a variety of content, methods, formats, and delivery systems (online & physical settings) to address the diverse life tasks and situations, needs and interests, and spiritual and faith journeys of people.
- Offering content and experiences that is responsive to the diverse religious and spiritual needs of people today—from the spiritually committed and engaged to the spiritual but not religious and the unaffiliated.
- Offering multiple environments to address people’s busy lives and providing more ways to participate: self-directed, mentored, at home, in small groups, in large groups, church-wide, in the community, and in the world.
Life-Stage Faith Formation

**Digitally-Enabled**
Blending gathered community settings with online learning environments and utilizing the abundance of digital media and tools for learning and faith formation.

![Diagram showing different levels of digital integration in faith formation]

Missional Faith Formation

Missional faith formation expands and extends the church’s presence through outreach, connection, relationship building, and engagement with people where they live—moving faith formation out into the community. For example:

- Moving worship & faith formation into the community
- Opening programs to everyone
- Life skills: parenting, careers, training, mentoring
- Small group programs on a variety of topics
- Community-wide service
- Community events: arts, music, theater
A Third Place
gathering space in
the community,
offers hospitality,
builds
relationships,
hosts spiritual
conversations,
provides
programs and
activities, and
nourishes the
spiritual life of
people.

Missional faith formation provides *pathways* for
people to consider or reconsider the Christian faith, to
encounter Jesus and the Good News, and to live as
disciples in a supportive faith community.
PROGRAMMING 21ST CENTURY FAITH FORMATION

Presenter: John Roberto

Resources

Website
www.ReimaginingFaithFormation.com

Book
A shift from education to learning anywhere, anytime.
A shift from consumption of information to participatory learning.
A shift from institutions to networks.
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Digitally-Enabled

Blending gathered community settings with online learning environments and utilizing the abundance of digital media and tools for learning and faith formation
Individual Faith Formation Network

1. Caring Relationships
2. Celebrating the Seasons
3. Celebrating Rituals & Milestones
4. Learning the Christian Tradition
5. Praying & Spiritual Formation
6. Reading the Bible
7. Serving, Working for Justice, & Caring for Creation
8. Worshipping God
9. Life Stage Issues
10. Missional
Sample Themes – Adults

1. Dealing with retirement
2. Making life plans, finances, health
3. Becoming a grandparent
4. Making a difference in the community and world
5. Incorporating family changes and transitions
6. New ways of living and relating as a married couple
7. Caring for aging parents
8. Taking time to read the Bible and learn more about my faith
9. Growing spiritually and exploring spirituality for the 2nd half of life
10. Connecting with people my age; talking about things that matter to us
11. Dealing with loss

Adult Faith Formation Website
Faith Formation Playlists

1. **Variety of Environments**: Self-directed, mentored, at home, in small groups, in large groups, church-wide, in the community, and in the world.
2. **Variety of Ways to Learn**
3. Digitally-Enabled: Blending gathered community settings with online learning environments and utilizing the abundance of digital media and tools for learning and faith formation.

**Faith Formation Playlists**

- **Fully Online Faith Formation**
- **Mostly Online with Regular Interaction in Gathered Sessions**
- **Online Faith Formation & Gathered Sessions (Flipped Classroom)**
- **Gathered Program with Online Components beyond the Program**
- **Gathered Program with Supportive Online Content**

**Adult Faith Formation Playlist**

- **Spiritual Enrichment**
  - Online Courses
  - Apps & E-newsletters
  - Online Prayer & Spirituality
  - Small Group Bible Study
  - Retreats
  - Day at the Monastery
  - Spiritual Book of the Month
  - Spiritual Practices Series
  - Resource
  - Resource
  - Resources
  - Resources
  - Resource
  - Resource
  - Resource
  - Resource
Playlists are thematic learning plans that integrate a variety of ways to learn, multiple learning environments, and online and physical spaces—from which people can create their own faith formation plan.

Example: Spiritual Enrichment for Adults  
Theme: “Spiritual Practices”
1. Spiritual Practices Course (5 sessions at church in one month)
2. Spirituality Over 50 Book Group (variety of times & places)
3. Online Daily Devotion Resources
4. Online Prayer Practices Resources
5. Online Course or Retreat with a Spiritual Master
6. Online Retreat  
Website: http://holotrinityadults.weebly.com
Adolescent Faith Formation Playlist

- Weekly Devotion
- Spiritual Mentoring
- Prayer Group
- Spiritual Practices Course
- Retreat
- Day at the Monastery
- Online Prayer Intentions

3 Seasons of Programming

- Fall Season: Sept 1 – Jan 1
- Winter/Spring Season: Jan 1 – May 1
- Summer Season: May 1 – Sept 1
### Seasonal Plan & Calendar

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Content Area (examples)</th>
<th>Programming &amp; Dates</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Month 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scripture Enrichment</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faith Enrichment</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spiritual Enrichment</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Service &amp; Mission</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Life Issues</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Digitally-Enabled Strategies

- Fully Online Faith Formation
- Mostly Online with Regular Interaction in Gathered Sessions
- Online Faith Formation & Gathered Sessions (Flipped Classroom)
- Gathered Program with Online Components beyond the Program
- Gathered Program with Supportive Online Content
Gathered **using** Online Content

A gathered program using online content from websites, videos from YouTube or other video sites, and blogs and other social media. With an abundance of high quality digital content, this first option is the easiest way to bring the digital world into a gathered program.

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Gathered **with** Online Content

Connecting church programs or events with online content that extends and deepens the experience through learning, prayer, ritual, action, etc.

- Sunday worship & church year feasts and seasons
- Intergenerational & family programs
- Children, youth, and adult classes & programs
- Extended programs: mission trips, retreat experiences, and vacation Bible school, summer camp
Gathered with Online Content

Church Event or Program

At Home & Daily Life

Gathered with Online Content

Event or Program

TALK
Conversation Activities

SHARE
Blog
Facebook
Video Projects

LEARN
Read
Listen
Watch

PRAY
Devotions
Bible
Reading
Daily Prayer

ACT
Practices
Service
Projects
Example: Sunday Worship

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Church Life</th>
<th>Daily &amp; Home Life</th>
<th>Online Life</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Experience of Worship in the Congregation  
• Sunday worship and lectionary  
• Church year feasts and seasons  
• Church rituals: baptism, communion, funerals, etc. | Experience of Sunday worship, rituals, and church year seasons in daily life  
• Reflecting on the sermon and readings at home  
• Practices: Lectio, etc.  
• Application to daily living | Online worship, church year, and lectionary resources on the church’s faith formation website  
• Lectionary commentaries online  
• Video reflections and commentary  
• Online activities and projects |

Online and Gathered

“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.

➤ Flip children’s programming: At home learning with parents (print, video, online); in-class application with activities, project-centered learning
➤ Flip confirmation programming
➤ Develop a online justice and service center
Online and Gathered
Online and Gathered

- Parent webinar programs delivered to parents at home in four-month semesters: three webinars + a parent gathering; three more webinars + a parent gathering.
- Online learning resources for self-study or small group study, and gathering at the conclusion to share their insights.
- Online Bible study where groups can meet regularly in a physical setting or virtually on Skype or Google+ Hangout.
- Selected online courses and activities from colleges, seminaries, and religious organization for individualized learning with the option for a mentor or small group.

Mostly Online

Utilizing the digital platform as the primary learning setting and providing opportunities for interaction in gathered settings.

- Parent webinar programs delivered to parents at home in four-month semesters: three webinars + a parent gathering; three more webinars + a parent gathering.
- Online learning resources for self-study or small group study, and gathering at the conclusion to share their insights.
- Online Bible study where groups can meet regularly in a physical setting or virtually on Skype or Google+ Hangout.
- Selected online courses and activities from colleges, seminaries, and religious organization for individualized learning with the option for a mentor or small group.
Fully Online

The rise of high quality and easily accessible online religious content—courses, activities, print and e-books, audio and video programs, and content-rich websites—has made designing online faith formation feasible.

- Online Bible and theology courses, video programs, webinars for individual study
- Online prayer & spirituality center where people can access daily prayer reflections and devotions, offer prayer intentions, pray for others, learn about spiritual practices, download prayer activities, etc.
- Online parent resource center
- Online retreat experience

Example: 40-Day Lent Curriculum

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Church Life</th>
<th>Daily &amp; Home Life</th>
<th>Online Life</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Ash Wednesday</td>
<td>• Fasting</td>
<td>• Lenten learning resources</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Lenten Sunday</td>
<td>• Praying</td>
<td>• Lenten calendar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>liturgies</td>
<td>• Service/Almsgiving</td>
<td>• Daily Lenten prayer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Stations of the</td>
<td>• Lectionary reflection</td>
<td>• Weekly table prayer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cross</td>
<td>• Family activities</td>
<td>• Video resources</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Lenten prayer</td>
<td></td>
<td>• Online retreat experience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Lenten retreat</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Lenten service</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Lenten soup</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>suppers</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Build a Digital Platform

Other Platforms
www.wordpress.org  www.wix.com  www.squarespace.com