



# Faith for a Lifetime

*Lifelong faith formation is accompanying people throughout life as they mature in faith and discipleship, learn more deeply about the Christian faith and how it informs and forms their lives today, and practice their Christian faith in all the arenas of their lives.*

## Symposium 2023

*People do not put new wine into old wineskins. Otherwise the skins burst, the wine spills out, and the skins are ruined. Rather, they pour new wine into fresh wineskins, and both are preserved. (Matt 9:17)*

It's never easy to imagine new wineskins, to say nothing of stitching and sewing them.

### Day One

- 11 am Registration begins
- 1 pm Welcome, Introduction, and Prayer
- 1:30 **Activity #1. Growing a Church Culture that Forms Faith**  
**Activity #2. Vision & Practices of Lifelong Faith Formation**
- 5:30 Dinner
- 7:00 **Activity #3. Maturing in Faith for a Lifetime**
- 9:00 Closing

### Day Two

- 8:30 Morning Prayer
- 9:00 **Activity #4. Creating a Plan for Lifelong Faith Formation**
- Noon Lunch
- 1:00 pm **Activity #5. Implementing Lifelong Faith Formation & Building Capacity**
- 4:00 pm Departure

## Lifelong Faith Team

Tanya Campen  
Kathy Pittenger

Christine Hides  
Janet Schaeffler

Leif Kehrwald  
Denise Utter

Jim Merhaut  
John Roberto

# Activity 1

## Growing a Church Culture that Forms Faith

---

### 1. Introduction: The Importance of Congregational Culture

#### Introduction to Church Culture

**Panel Presentation-Discussion (Symposium Team):** “Importance of Church Culture on Faith Formation”

### 2. Activity: Your Ideal Vision of a Faith Forming Church Culture

#### Activity 1. Visual Faith Activity

- What is your image/picture of the ideal vision of a faith forming community?

#### Activity 2. Characteristics

- What are the characteristics of your ideal vision of a faith forming community. Describe: what do you see happening? what are people experiencing? what are people doing? what are leaders doing?

### 3. Reflection

- Complete the “Church Vitality Assessment.”
- What did you learn about your church culture from the assessment results?
- What would you add or revise in your “ideal vision of a faith formation church culture” based on the assessment results?

### 4. Application

- What are the ways your church culture currently promotes maturing in faith?
- What are the ways your church culture could promote maturing in faith?
- How can you strengthen the faith forming potential of your church culture?

# Faith Forming Culture

---

## What Is Church Culture?

A dictionary would define culture as the sum of attitudes, customs, and beliefs that distinguish one group of people from another. Its root meaning is shared with the world agriculture, referring to the soil that has been tilled and by extension a set of traits that have been plowed into a group's way of life. Culture is transmitted from one generation to the next through language, material objects, ritual, institutions, and art.

In *Culture Shift: Transforming Your Church from the Inside Out*, Robert Lewis and Wayne Cordeiro write, "The idea of church culture is often ignored, in part because so little material is available about it. Yet we believe culture is to the church what a soul is to the human body. It is an overall life force that the Holy Spirit uses to give energy, personality, and uniqueness to everything a body of believers says and does." Church culture influences everything you do. It colors the way you choose and introduce programs. It shapes how you select and train leaders.

"Your culture is the lens through which you view your life. If you change the lens, you change your outlook. Change the culture, and everything else changes, including the future."

Nancy T. Ammerman, professor of sociology at Boston University, has researched and written extensively about American congregations and the role of congregational culture. In her essay "Culture and Identity in the Congregation," she explains what a congregational culture is:

Culture is who we are and the world we have created to live in. It is the predictable patterns of who does what and habitual strategies for telling the world about the things held most dear. A culture includes the congregation's history and stories of its heroes. It includes its symbols, rituals, and worldview. It is shaped by the cultures in which its members live (represented by their demographic characteristics), but it takes on its own unique identity and character when those members come together. Understanding a congregation requires understanding that it is a unique gathering of people with a cultural identity all its own.

Congregations draw their culture and identity from their specific religious tradition. What each congregation cooks up, then, is always a mix of local creativity and larger tradition. What we see in a given locale is that group's selective retrieval of their own theological heritage, along with the local inventions that have been necessary to make sense of life in that place. . .

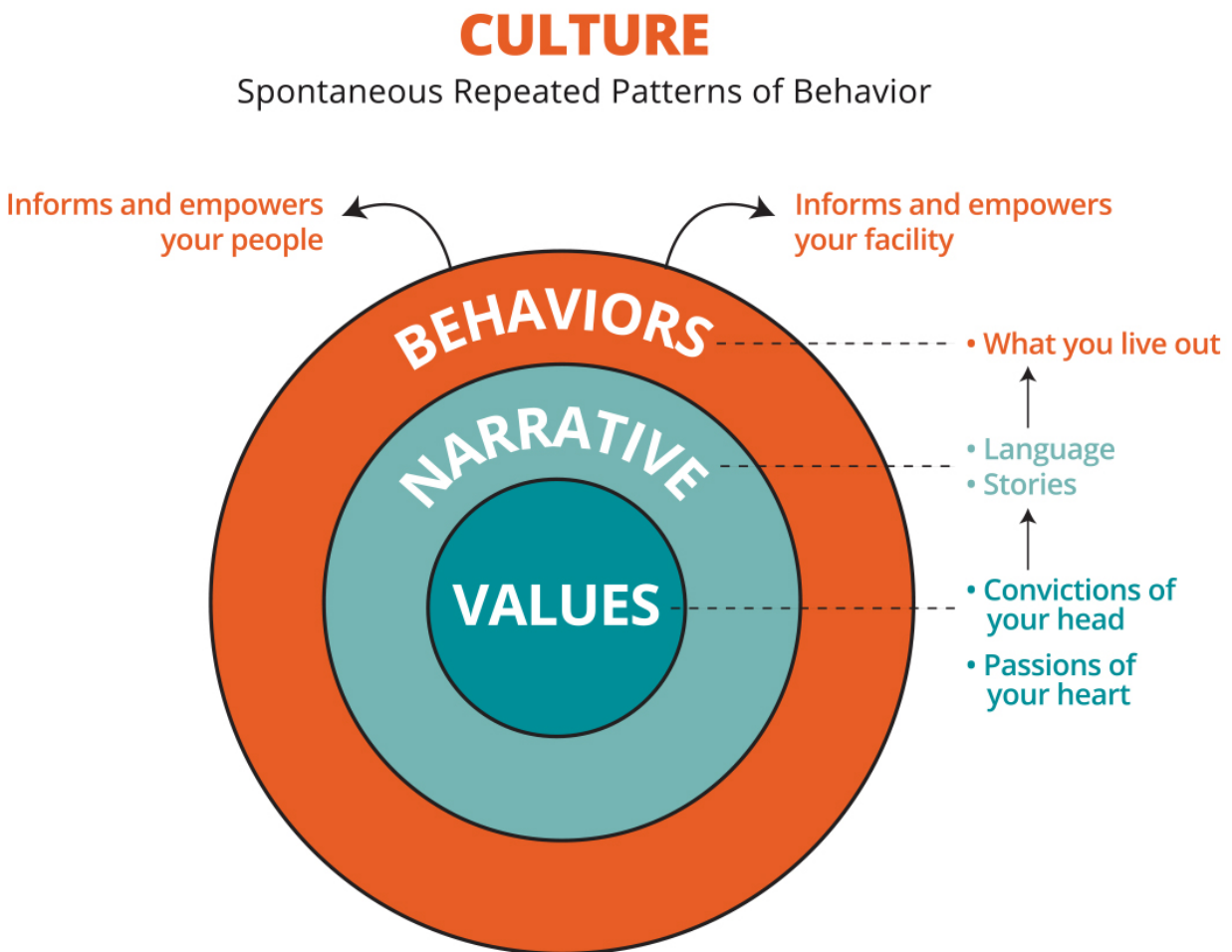
A congregational culture is constructed out of theological and denominational traditions, expectations from the larger culture, patterns of social class and ethnicity, and the like. All those things are carried into the congregation by its members and leaders. Whenever any of those elements changes, the congregational will inevitably change as well. . .

Congregational culture is more than the sum of what people bring with them and more than a mirror image of the theological tradition they represent. It is a unique creation, constructed out of their interaction together over time.

It's helpful to understand culture by looking through the lens of three elements:

1. **Values and Beliefs** – the things that are truly important to us. They are what we really value and really believe about faith and forming faith.
2. **Narrative** – the stories we tell and the language we use. These are the messages that we repeat which explain and give meaning to our behaviors and practices. The narrative is how we tell others about our behaviors.
3. **Behaviors** – the specific practices that embed the beliefs and values. We value culture in our heads and hearts. We tell stories and use language. Behavior is what we do with our hands and feet.

Well-functioning cultures have congruency and intentionality. When there's congruence between our values, narratives, and behaviors, then we have a strong culture. When it's incongruent, our culture suffers.



## Characteristics of Thriving Congregations

Vital and thriving congregations create a culture where lifelong faith formation can thrive. The Exemplary Youth Ministry study 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 that 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. (See the *Spirit and Culture of Youth Ministry*. Roland Martinson, Wes Black, and John Roberto.)

We know from research studies that the following characteristics contribute significantly to congregational vitality.

1. Having a clear sense of mission and excitement about the future
2. Engaging in faith formation and spiritual growth to help people grow their relationship with God, learn how to be a disciple, and grow in faith for a lifetime
3. Cultivating a sense of community and belonging among members
4. Celebrating meaningful and inspirational worship
5. Engaging in the practice of hospitality and welcoming new people
6. Serving those in need and working for social justice locally and globally
7. Sharing faith within the congregation and with the wider community
8. Caring for the younger generations and having an active focus on families
9. Demonstrating inspiring and empowering leadership, and being imaginative and flexibly innovative as leaders
10. Having a strong apostolic culture with a passion to reach new people
11. Demonstrating a commitment to excellence and focus on congregational strengths
12. Being culturally relevant by learning how to speak to the mission field and knowing who to reach and how to reach them
13. Utilizing leadership teams of clergy and lay leaders to lead the ministries and activities of the congregation.

In *Teaching and Learning in American Congregations*, an analysis of the 2015 *Faith Communities Today* survey, Joseph V. Crockett found a strong correlation between vital congregations and faith formation. (See [www.FaithCommunitiesToday.org](http://www.FaithCommunitiesToday.org).) 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 were:

- *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*

## A Faith Forming Church Culture

Robust, vital lifelong faith formation can renew and revitalize the faith life of all ages and contribute toward building a thriving congregation that lives its mission. How and what a congregation is learning is critical to building a vital congregation. The practice of lifelong faith formation can renew and revitalize the life of a church as well. When a church embraces lifelong faith formation as essential to its mission and makes a commitment to create and sustain faith formation with all ages and generations, the culture of the church is strengthened. From research studies and pastoral experience, we can identify characteristics of a church culture that form the faith of all ages, families, and the whole community.

### Characteristics

1. People are experiencing God's living presence in community, at worship, through study, and in service.
2. People are learning who God is, coming to know Jesus Christ personally, and learning how to live as Christians in the world today.
3. People are experiencing a life-giving spiritual community of faith, hope, and love— characterized by hospitality, welcoming, love, and support.
4. People are participating in spiritually uplifting worship experiences that are fulfilling, inspiring, interesting, accessible, and relevant.
5. People are encountering the story of faith through the celebration of the feasts and seasons of the church year.
6. People are experiencing God's love through rituals, sacraments, and milestones that celebrate significant moments in people's lives and faith journeys.
7. People are experiencing the presence of God as individuals and community through prayer and spiritual practices.
8. People are growing in understanding by learning the content of the Christian tradition, reflecting upon it, integrating it into their lives, and living its meaning in the world.
9. People are developing ethical/moral responsibility by learning about Christian perspectives on moral questions and how to apply their faith to decision-making.
10. People are serving those in need, working for justice, and caring for God's creation, locally and globally
11. People are developing intergenerational relationships and community where the Christian faith is shared, modeled, and lived.
12. People are participating in intergenerational faith experiences and activities of worship, prayer, learning, and service as integral to congregational life.
13. People are engaging in experiences for the whole family in faith and discipleship, and teaching parents, grandparents, and caregivers how to nurture growth in Christian faith and practices at home

# Congregational Vitality Assessment

The Congregational Vitality Assessment utilizes the vision of a vital, thriving congregation that is grounded in the Christian tradition and contemporary research on congregational vitality. Part One asks about the importance of characteristics of a vital, thriving congregation. Part Two ask how effectively the church is implementing or practicing the characteristics of a vital, thriving congregation.

## Part 1. Importance

*For each of the following descriptions of a vital congregation, please rate how important you think this should be in the life of your church. Rating: 1=low importance, 3=moderate importance, 5=high importance*

1. Vitality is strengthened when churches have a clear identity – who they are, where they have come from, and where they are going – and are focused on living a shared mission in their specific time, place, and situation.	1 2 3 4 5
2. Vitality is strengthened when churches are willing to adapt and innovate to meet new challenges in living their mission.	1 2 3 4 5
3. Vitality is strengthened when the church engages in lifelong faith formation and spiritual growth to help people of all ages grow in their relationship with God, learn how to be a disciple of Jesus Christ, grow in faith for a lifetime, and live their Christian faith in daily life.	1 2 3 4 5
4. Vibrant lifelong faith formation can renew and revitalize the faith life of all ages, and that how and what a congregation is learning is critical to building a vital congregation.	1 2 3 4 5
5. Vitality is strengthened when the church intentionally engages in living Christian practices within and outside the congregation.	1 2 3 4 5
6. Vitality is strengthened through the individual, familial, and communal practice of historic Christian practices, such as discernment, hospitality, worship, theological reflection, healing, forming diverse communities, testimony, contemplative devotional disciplines, social justice and peacemaking, and beauty (art, music, drama, poetry).	1 2 3 4 5
7. Vitality is strengthened when the church community experiences God's presence, joy, inspiration, and awe at worship, and when worship and preaching connects Scripture to daily life and inspires Christian living.	1 2 3 4 5
8. Vitality is strengthened when a church cultivates a caring, hospitable, welcoming, and safe community where people of all ages, generations, and diversities can experience belonging and acceptance.	1 2 3 4 5
9. Vitality is strengthened when a church has a strong apostolic culture with a passion to reach uninvolved and unaffiliated people where they live, welcoming and incorporating them into the congregation's life, and helping them to come to know Jesus and hear the Good News.	1 2 3 4 5
10. Vitality is strengthened when the church is engaged in outreach and service to those in need, locally and globally; addresses the spiritual, human and emotional needs of those who are marginalized, hungry, homeless, hurting, or in need; works and advocates for social justice; and cares for creation.	1 2 3 4 5

11. Vitality is strengthened when the church communicates its identity, mission, and ministries through digital technologies and platforms (website, social media, e-mail, texts); and provides virtual spaces that are interactive and inclusive of all people—involved and uninvolved in the church community.	1 2 3 4 5
12. Vitality is strengthened when pastors and church leadership lead from a clear set of core values and personal principles; and possess a profound sense of being called by God and called to ministry, that is manifested as a deep trust in God and the willingness to act boldly and to take risks.	1 2 3 4 5
13. Vitality is strengthened when pastors and church leadership have the ability to cast a vision, and mobilize and empower people to work toward it—influencing people in ways that will help them achieve their goals.	1 2 3 4 5
14. Vitality is strengthened when pastors and church leadership demonstrate adaptive skill to frame or reframe a congregation’s vision for ministry, and develop innovative ways of giving expression to the vision in the face of the particular challenges the congregation is facing.	1 2 3 4 5
15. Vitality is strengthened when pastors and church leadership create a team approach—investing time and energy in building and sustaining capable teams; and demonstrating skills to work collaboratively and co-responsibly with leaders.	1 2 3 4 5
16. Vitality is strengthened when pastors and church leadership help people in the congregation discover and utilize their gifts for ministry in the church and world; and engage the gifts of the laity in leadership within the church community.	1 2 3 4 5

## Part 2. Implementation

*Please rate how well you think your church practices or implements each of the following characteristics of a vital, thriving congregation. Rating: 1=poor, 3=adequate, 5=excellent*

<p>1. Vitality is strengthened when churches have a clear identity – who they are, where they have come from, and where they are going – and are focused on living a shared mission in their specific time, place, and situation.</p> <p><b>Indicators:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The church has a clear identity: who they are, where they have come from, and where they are going.</li> <li>• The church has a clear sense of its mission: a shared understanding of God’s larger mission and the purpose for their church in this time and place.</li> <li>• The church is focused on living its mission.</li> <li>• The church possesses a sense of God’s living presence in everything it does.</li> </ul>	1 2 3 4 5
<p>2. Vitality is strengthened when churches are willing to adapt and innovate to meet new challenges in living their mission.</p> <p><b>Indicators:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The church is willing to try something new to live its mission; and is willing to change or adapt to meet new challenges.</li> <li>• The church community is excited about its future.</li> <li>• The church demonstrates a commitment to excellence in all that it does and focuses on its strengths—what it can do well.</li> </ul>	1 2 3 4 5



<p>3. Vitality is strengthened when the church engages in lifelong faith formation and spiritual growth to help people of all ages grow in their relationship with God, learn how to be a disciple of Jesus Christ, grow in faith for a lifetime, and live their Christian faith in daily life.</p> <p><b>Indicators:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The church engages in lifelong faith formation and spiritual growth to help people of all ages grow their relationship with God, learn how to be a disciple of Jesus Christ and grow in faith for a lifetime.</li> <li>• The church provides a multiplicity of ways for people to grow in faith and discipleship.</li> <li>• The church equips people to live their Christian faith in daily life.</li> <li>• The church helps children, youth, adults, and families grow in faith and become active members of the faith community.</li> <li>• The church equips members to share their faith with others.</li> </ul>	<p>1 2 3 4 5</p>
<p>4. Vitality is strengthened when the church intentionally engages in living Christian practices within and outside the congregation.</p> <p><b>Indicators:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Congregations practice Christianity in ways that are dynamic and organic, reconstructing tradition in terms of experience and wisdom rather than programs and absolutes.</li> <li>• Congregations emphasize contemplation in action, faith in daily life, finding God in all things, the reign of God in the here and now, and creating better communities; by joining spirituality to social concerns.</li> <li>• Congregations express strong interest in ancient sources, tradition, and history, mining those sources for practices, models, and insights that bear on their personal lives and communities.</li> <li>• Congregations understand tradition as something to be flexible and fluid, something that contemporary Christians participate in (rather than simply inherit).</li> </ul>	<p>1 2 3 4 5</p>
<p>5. Vitality is strengthened through the individual, familial, and communal practice of historic Christian practices, such as discernment, hospitality, worship, theological reflection, healing, forming diverse communities, testimony, contemplative devotional disciplines, social justice and peacemaking, and beauty (art, music, drama, poetry).</p> <p><b>Indicators:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Congregations provide faith formation – at church, at home, in small groups, online, etc. – to teach all the basic practices of the Christian faith so that people of all ages are drawn into participation in them, learn to do them with increasingly deepened understanding and skill, learn to extend them more broadly and fully in their own lives and onto their world, and learn to correct them, strengthen them, and improve them.</li> </ul>	

<p>6. Vitality is strengthened when the church community experiences God’s presence, joy, inspiration, and awe at worship, and when worship and preaching connects Scripture to daily life and inspires Christian living.</p> <p><b>Indicators</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The church community experiences God’s presence, joy, inspiration, and awe at worship and feels worship helps them with everyday life.</li> <li>• The church celebrates worship that nurtures people’s faith and helps them with everyday life,</li> <li>• The church’s preaching connects Scripture to daily life and inspires Christian living.</li> <li>• The church’s music at worship inspires prayer and worship of God.</li> </ul>	<p>1 2 3 4 5</p>
<p>7. Vitality is strengthened when a church cultivates a caring, hospitable, welcoming, and safe community where people of all ages, generations, and diversities can experience belonging and acceptance.</p> <p><b>Indicators:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The church cultivates a sense of community and belonging among all members where people of all ages are known by others in the congregation and can experience a safe and loving atmosphere.</li> <li>• The church builds caring relationships among members of all ages.</li> <li>• The church is a supportive community where people care for one another.</li> <li>• The church engages in the practice of hospitality and welcoming new people into the community.</li> <li>• The church creates an inclusive and welcoming environment for a diversity of people (ethnicity, social class, age, gender, and sexual orientation).</li> </ul>	<p>1 2 3 4 5</p>
<p>8. Vitality is strengthened when a church has a strong apostolic culture with a passion to reach uninvolved and unaffiliated people where they live, welcoming and incorporating them into the congregation’s life, and helping them to come to know Jesus and hear the Good News.</p> <p><b>Indicators:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The church has a strong apostolic culture with a passion to reach new people where they live, helping them to come to know Jesus and hear the Good News.</li> <li>• The church is culturally relevant by learning how to speak to the mission field and knowing who to reach and how to reach them.</li> <li>• The church seeks out, welcomes, and incorporates newcomers and returnees into the congregation’s life.</li> <li>• The church provides ways for new or returning people to learn about the Christian faith and join the faith community.</li> <li>• The church cultivates and equips leaders with a passion to reach new people.</li> </ul>	<p>1 2 3 4 5</p>

<p>9. Vitality is strengthened when the church is engaged in outreach and service to those in need, locally and globally; addresses the spiritual, human and emotional needs of those who are marginalized, hungry, homeless, hurting, or in need; works and advocates for social justice; and cares for creation.</p> <p><b>Indicators</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The church is engaged in outreach and service to those in need, locally and globally, to address the spiritual, human and emotional needs of those who are marginalized, hungry, homeless, hurting, or in need.</li> <li>• The church is engaged in the work of social justice and advocacy to make our community and world a better place.</li> <li>• The church is a positive force in the community.</li> </ul>	<p>1 2 3 4 5</p>
<p>10. Vitality is strengthened when the church communicates its identity, mission, and ministries through digital technologies and platforms (website, social media, e-mail, texts); and provides virtual spaces that are interactive and inclusive of all people—involved and uninvolved in the church community.</p> <p><b>Indicators</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The church has a website that communicates the church's identity and mission, is interactive, and is inclusive of all people—involved or uninvolved in the community.</li> <li>• The church uses social media (like Facebook, Instagram, etc.) to communicate and connect with people.</li> <li>• The church regularly communicates with all members using digital tools (email, texting, etc.).</li> </ul>	<p>1 2 3 4 5</p>
<p>11. Vitality is strengthened when pastors and church leadership lead from a clear set of core values and personal principles; and possess a profound sense of being called by God and called to ministry, that is manifested as a deep trust in God and the willingness to act boldly and to take risks.</p> <p><b>Indicators:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pastoral Leaders lead from a clear set of core values and personal principles.</li> <li>• Pastoral Leaders possess a profound sense of being called by God and called to ministry, that is manifested as a deep trust in God and the willingness to act boldly and to take risks as part of that called ministry.</li> <li>• Pastoral Leaders combine a fierce resolve for what is best for the organization with a deep personal humility.</li> <li>• Pastoral Leaders transform lives by helping people grow in their love for God and develop a deeper relationship with God.</li> </ul>	<p>1 2 3 4 5</p>

<p>12. Vitality is strengthened when pastors and church leadership have the ability to cast a vision, and mobilize and empower people to work toward it—influencing people in ways that will help them achieve their goals.</p> <p><b>Indicators:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pastoral leaders are good listeners and communicators.</li> <li>• Pastoral leaders assist the community to develop a vision for their corporate life and ministries that is faithful to their best understanding of God and God’s purposes for the congregation in this time and place.</li> </ul>	<p>1 2 3 4 5</p>
<p>13. Vitality is strengthened when pastors and church leadership demonstrate adaptive skill to frame or reframe a congregation’s vision for ministry, and develop innovative ways of giving expression to the vision in the face of the particular challenges the congregation is facing.</p>	<p>1 2 3 4 5</p>
<p>14. Vitality is strengthened when pastors and church leadership create a team approach—investing time and energy in building and sustaining capable teams; and demonstrating skills to work collaboratively and co-responsibly with leaders.</p> <p><b>Indicators:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The pastor shares leadership with members chosen for leadership by the congregation.</li> <li>• The pastor invests time and energy in building and sustaining capable teams to lead the ministries and activities of the congregation.</li> <li>• Pastoral Leaders understand that genuine leadership requires a team approach—investing time and energy in building and sustaining capable teams.</li> <li>• Pastoral Leaders have the desire, qualities, and skills to work collaboratively and co-responsibly with church leaders. They have the relationship skills needed to listen, to communicate, and respond pastorally.</li> </ul>	<p>1 2 3 4 5</p>
<p>15. Vitality is strengthened when pastors and church leadership help people in the congregation discover and utilize their gifts for ministry in the church and world; and engage the gifts of the laity in leadership within the church community.</p> <p><b>Indicators:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pastoral Leaders engage the gifts of the laity in leadership within the church community.</li> <li>• Pastoral Leaders help people in the congregation discover and utilize their gifts for ministry in the church and world.</li> <li>• Pastoral Leaders nurture the faith and theological knowledge of lay leaders, equip them with knowledge and skills for their ministry, and provide continuing support and mentoring.</li> </ul>	<p>1 2 3 4 5</p>

# Identifying Your Church's Culture

## Viewing Your Church as an Outsider

Begin by analyzing your church's culture through the eyes of an outsider. Imagine that in the last month people from your community participated in your church's worship services, sat in on church programs, met several core people, and learned a bit of the history of your church. The goal in this first set of questions is to describe your church's invisible cultural "megaphone" as it is perceived by an observer.

1. What values are communicated most strongly when someone approaches your church from the outside?
2. What would an outsider, after sitting through several worship services, say your church values most?
3. What are outsiders' two of three leading perceptions of your church, after they have participated for a month in a variety of your church's programs and ministries.
4. How would an outsider describe the spirit (or attitudes) most prevalent at your church?
5. Read over your impressions, and sum them up. List a handful of values that the church seems to be broadcasting. How surprised are you by how they compare to what you want to be known for?

## Analyzing Your Church's Current Culture

Consider each of these ingredients carefully, and write your assessment of it.

### 1. Look at leadership and values.

- Who are the culture setters in your church (pastor, church staff, volunteer ministry leaders, community members)?
- What are the primary values exhibited by those who lead (pastor, church staff, volunteer ministry leaders boards/councils, influential members of the church)?
- What are the real values coming from each major leadership group? How much unity exists between these groups? In what ways do they clash?

### 2. Look at the vision statement of your church. Write your assessment of your vision statement, and how you are or aren't living it out.

- Is your vision expressed in a serious written document that leaders and the congregation know and embrace?
- Does your vision statement communicate what you really believe and live?
- If it does, what are the cultural values it clearly spells out? If not, where are the gaps?
- If you don't have a written mission statement, what is the implied or assumed vision.

### 3. Look at your symbols, ceremonies, and celebrations. Write your assessment.

- What symbols do you see when you look around your church facility? What do these things say about what you really value? What do they communicate about your culture?
- What ceremonies and traditions does your church honor? How popular are they with the congregation?

- Who are the heroes in your church—the members who are most celebrated, honored, and emulated? What cultural values do those heroes represent?

4. **Look at yourself as a leader.**

- What do I really value?
- What am I really trying to do and build here at this church?
- Is it my passion to build a kingdom culture that honors and serves God, or a culture that rewards me?
- What are my measurements of success as a leader? Do they match up with what I say my real values are?

## The Bottom Line

Answer the following questions with some short, highly descriptive phrases.

1. How would I describe our church's current culture?
2. Now it's time to boil it down. As I look over the list I just made, what two or three phrases stand out as the key values that presently drive the culture of our church? Are these the values I am passionate about and the ones our leadership team believes that God wants for our church?

(Adapted from *Culture Shift: Transforming Your Church from the Inside Out*, Robert Lewis and Wayne Cordeiro, San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2005)

# Activity #2

## Vision & Practices of Lifelong Faith Formation

---

### 1. Introduction: The Importance of Lifelong Faith Formation Today

*Lifelong learning is the new normal. It is the recognition that learning never stops as we mature and age.*

#### **Panel Presentation-Discussion (Symposium Team)**

- Why is lifelong faith formation important to the future of the church?
- How do you see churches implementing lifelong faith formation?

### 2. Presentation: Features of Lifelong Faith Formation

### 3. Reflection & Analysis: Faith Formation in Your Church

Review the *Profile of Lifelong Faith Formation* activities from your preparation work:

- What did you learn from your *Profile* about lifelong faith formation in your church?
- What do you see as the strengths of lifelong faith formation in your church?
- What do you see as areas for growth or development?

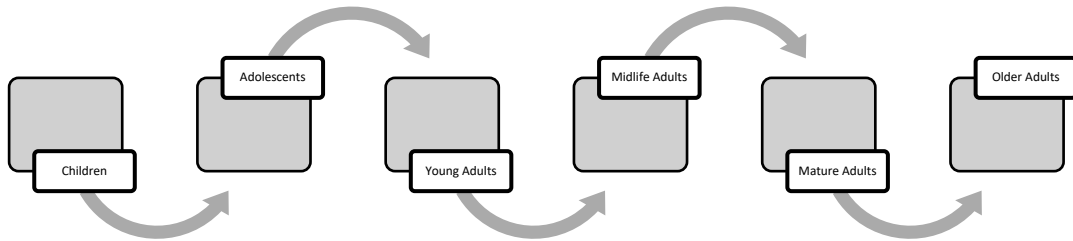
### 4. Activity: Your Model of Lifelong Faith Formation

1. Review the four models of lifelong faith formation.
2. Name your current model.
3. Analyze your current model.

# Features of Lifelong Faith Formation

*Lifelong faith formation is accompanying people throughout life as they mature in faith and discipleship, learn more deeply about the Christian faith and how it informs and forms their lives today, and practice their Christian faith in all the arenas of their lives.*

1. **Lifelong and Continuous:** promoting maturity in faith throughout life that is relevant to the developmental and spiritual-religious growth at each stage of life.



2. **Lifewide and Holistic:** addressing the whole person: life tasks, concerns, milestones and transitions, culture and context.
3. **Goal-Centered:** developing a shared vision for lifelong maturing in faith and goals to guide faith formation at each stage of life that incorporate knowing and understanding more fully the Christian faith (*informing*), developing and deepening a relationship with Jesus Christ and the Christian community (*forming*), and living the Christian faith in every aspect of one's life (*transforming*).
4. **Holistic Formation:** incorporating three essential environments for faith maturing at each stage of life:
  - *Intergenerational relationships and faith forming experiences in the faith community*
  - *Family faith forming experiences – at home and at church*
  - *Life stage/age group/peer group faith forming experiences*
5. **Diverse Programming:** fashioning faith formation around the lives of people (learner-centric) at each stage of life characterized by:
  - *A menu of faith formation experiences for individuals and families*
  - *A variety of content, experiences, activities*
  - *A variety of formats: on your own, mentored, at home, small group, large group, community-wide formats*
  - *A variety of settings: in-person, online, and hybrid*
  - *A variety of schedules: synchronous and asynchronous*
  - *Available anytime, anywhere*
6. **Personalized:** addressing the diverse religious experiences, engagements, and practices of people of all ages today by offering faith formation that specifically designed for people:
  - *who have a vibrant faith and relationship with God and are engaged in a faith community*
  - *who participate occasionally in the faith community and whose faith is less central to their daily lives*
  - *who are uninvolved in a faith community and who value and live their spirituality outside of organized religion*
  - *who are unaffiliated and have left involvement in organized religion, and have little need for God in their lives*



# Activity: Models of Lifelong Faith Formation

---

## 1. Review the Four Models.

Review the four models of lifelong faith formation. These are examples that can be used to stimulate thinking about how to create a model. Any of the four models can easily be adapted for your church or used to create your own unique model.

- Thematic Model
- Worship-Centered Model
- Intergenerational Model
- Life Stage Model

## 2. Name Your Current Model.

- How would we describe our current model of lifelong faith formation?
- Do any of the models help us name our church's model of lifelong faith formation?
- Develop a visual diagram of your current model of lifelong faith formation.

## 3. Analyze Your Current Model.

Identify the strengths and weaknesses in your current model and determine if you need to improve it or if you need to create a new model to better accomplish your goal of providing lifelong faith formation for all ages and generations.

## 4. Use the Four Models to Design Your Model.

Each model has strengths and weaknesses. Consider the following questions for each model:

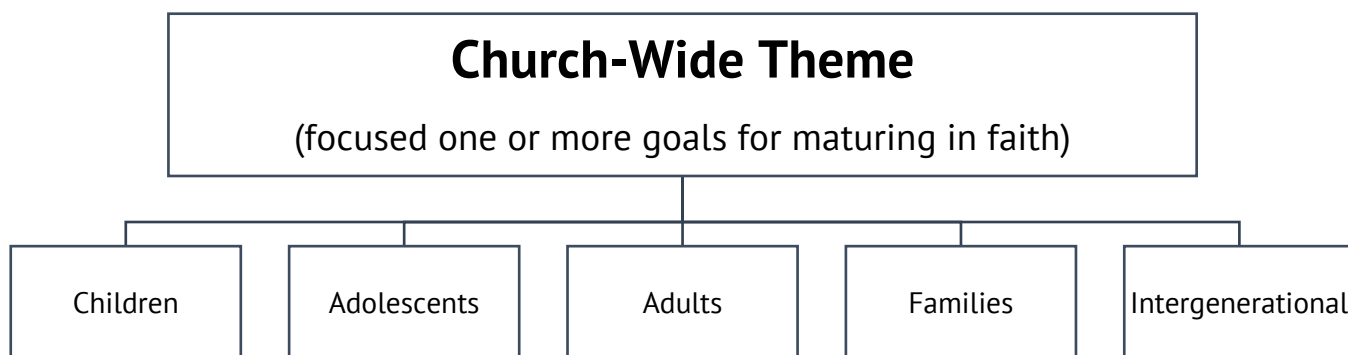
- What it would be like if our church selected this model of lifelong faith formation?
- What are the features I like best?
- What questions do I have about adopting this model?
- Even if we don't adopt this model, what features do I think need to be included in our model of lifelong faith formation?

# Models of Lifelong Faith Formation

## 1. Thematic Model

In the **Thematic Model**, faith formation is built around an annual (or seasonal) church-wide theme that becomes the central focus of the whole community. This theme can emerge from the lives of people, the life of the church community, events in the community and world, the Bible and theology, Christian practices, and more. Faith formation on the theme can include intergenerational gatherings, family programs, life stage programs, online programs and activities, and more.

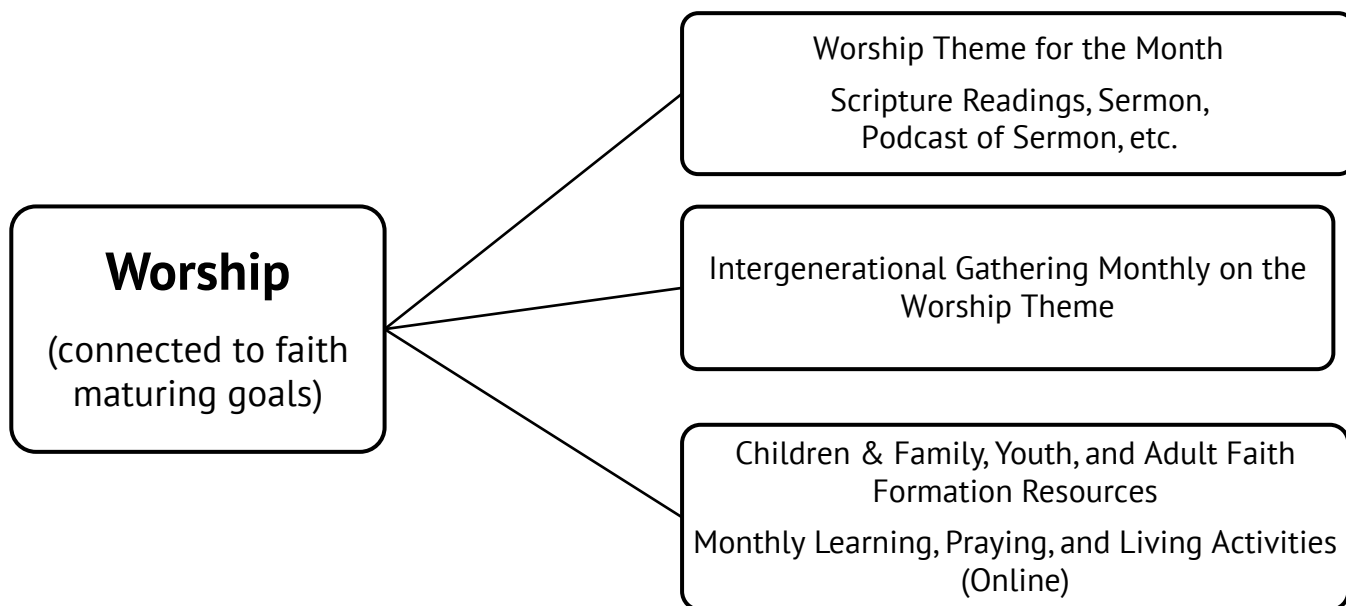
- ✓ Design faith formation around an annual (or monthly or seasonal) church-wide theme that becomes the central focus of the whole community. This theme can emerge from the lives of people, the life of the church community, events in the community and world, the Bible and theology, Christian practices, and more. Faith formation on the theme can include intergenerational gatherings, family programs, life stage programs, online programs and activities, and more.
- ✓ Provide a variety of programming to explore and experience the theme: intergenerational programs, family programs, age group programs, small group programs, online faith formation with a playlist of activities for all ages
- ✓ Develop an online faith formation resource center that extends the theme with activities
- ✓ Continue to offer specialized, short term preparation programs for sacraments and milestones
- ✓ Continue to offer specialized programs for age groups that complement thematic learning,



## 2. Worship Model

In the **Worship Model**, faith formation is developed around Sunday worship— the scripture readings, sermon, and ritual—with a weekly or monthly theme to focus formation. For churches that are lectionary-based, the cycle of scripture readings forms the basis for themes addressed in faith formation. For churches that develop topical worship series, the theme of the series, as found in the sermon and scripture readings, forms the basis of formation. Churches use a variety of programming to address the theme: intergenerational gatherings, life stage experiences, small group programs, online faith formation, and more. For example, a monthly theme that is the focus of the Sunday worship experience can be deepened through an intergenerational program on the first Sunday of the month, life stage programming in a variety of formats throughout the month, and a playlist on the theme with activities for all ages.

- ✓ Develop faith formation for all ages around Sunday worship: the Scripture readings, sermon, and ritual—with a theme to focus formation (weekly, monthly).
- ✓ Provide a variety of programming to explore and experience the theme: intergenerational programs, family programs, age group programs, small group programs, online faith formation with a playlist of activities for all ages each Sunday
- ✓ Develop an online faith formation resource center that extends the Scripture readings with at home and individual activities throughout the month.
- ✓ Continue to offer specialized, short term preparation programs for sacraments and milestones
- ✓ Continue to offer specialized programs for age groups that complement intergenerational learning,

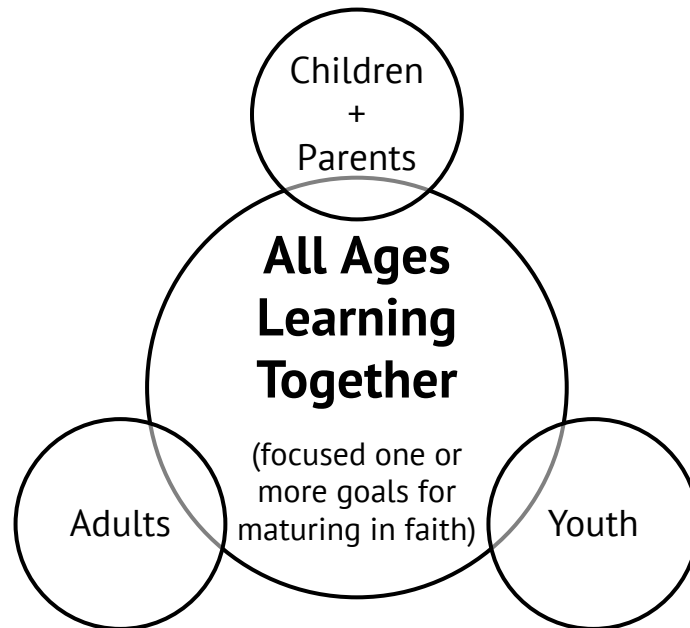


### 3. Intergenerational Model

In the **Intergenerational Model**, faith formation for all ages together is at the center of lifelong faith formation. Intergenerational programming, involving all ages and conducted monthly, biweekly, or weekly, is the shared faith formation experience for all ages. Churches develop a multiyear curriculum of themes that apply to all ages—focusing on one theme per year or integrating multiple themes in one year. The multiyear curriculum can include programming on scripture, Christian beliefs, Christian practices, prayer and spirituality, worship and sacraments, morality, the Sunday lectionary cycle readings, church year feasts and seasons, and social justice.

- ✓ Provide faith formation for all ages and generations together in one learning model, conducted monthly or twice per month. (Learning sessions are usually 2 hours in length with prayer, community building, learning, and a meal.) The intergenerational program includes all ages learning and age-group sessions with children, teens, and adults.
- ✓ Provide foundational faith formation with an annual theme or multiple themes each year, such as Bible, Creed and beliefs, Christian practices, prayer and spirituality, worship and sacraments, morality, service and social justice, Sunday readings, church year feasts and seasons, and social justice.
- ✓ Offer the intergenerational program on multiple dates and times to accommodate the size of your meeting space and to give people choices to choose from.

- ✓ Develop an online faith formation resource center that extends the monthly theme with family, teen, and adult activities throughout the month.
- ✓ Continue to offer specialized, short term preparation programs for sacraments and milestones.
- ✓ Continue to offer specialized programs for age groups that complement intergenerational learning,



#### 4. Life Stage Model

In the **Life Stage Model**, faith formation is developed around each stage of life: children and families (0–10 or 0–5 and 6–10), adolescents (11–19), young adults (20s–30s), midlife adults (40s–50s), mature adults (mid 50s–mid 70s), and older adults (75+). (Many churches combine several adult stages, such as mature and older adults.) Each stage of life incorporates three essential faith-forming experiences: intergenerational relationships, activities, and church life and events (including Sunday worship), family faith practice at home, and life stage activities and experiences designed to address life stage needs and situations, interests, and religious and spiritual journeys at each stage of life.

- ✓ Design faith formation for each stage of life: children and families (0–10 or 0–5 and 6–10), adolescents (11–19), young adults (20s–30s), midlife adults (40s–50s), mature adults (mid 50s–mid 70s), and older adults (75+). (Many churches combine mature and older adults.)
- ✓ Incorporate three essential faith-forming experiences at every stage of life
  - intergenerational relationships, activities, and church life and events (including Sunday worship),
  - family faith practice at home
  - life stage activities and experiences designed to address life stage needs and situations, interests, and religious and spiritual journeys at each stage of life
- ✓ Offer programming in multiple formats: gathered in physical locations, online (website, social media), and hybrid formats combining gathering in-person and online.
- ✓ Develop an online faith formation resource center for every stage of life.
- ✓ Incorporate specialized, short term preparation programs for sacraments and milestones.

# Activity 3

## Maturing in Faith for a Lifetime

---

*What's your vision for maturing in faith? What does a vital Christian faith look like at each stage of the life span? What are the characteristics of a committed, maturing Christian who is growing in faith and discipleship? How does your vision guide the development of faith formation at each stage of life?*

The shift to a lifelong faith formation paradigm in churches begins with a vision of maturing in Christian faith. A church needs a lifelong vision of faith maturing that can guide its practice of faith formation. This vision be expressed through goals for maturing in faith that apply to the whole life span. Faith formation in each stage or season of life would be guided by one vision of faith maturing expressed through specific goals and life stage appropriate faith formation.

Researchers have been studying the characteristics of committed, maturing Christians for decades. The Search Institute's *Effective Christian Education* study of the late 1980s and the *Exemplary Youth Ministry* study of the early 2000s were developed around widely accepted, tested, and easily understood beliefs and practices of committed Christians. The *Effective Christian Education* study proposed eight marks of faith maturing: trusting and believing in God, experiencing the fruits of faith, integrating faith and life, seeking spiritual growth, nurturing faith in community, holding life-affirming values, advocating social change, and acting and serving.

Drawn from the Christian faith tradition and from research studies on what makes a difference in forming faith in people's lives across the life span, here are ten characteristics (goals) of faith maturing. They incorporate knowing and believing, relating and belonging, practicing and living. When taken together, these characteristics describe a person maturing in faith. They form the basis of helping people discern their faith journey and needs, and accompanying them in growing

1. To develop and sustain a personal relationship and commitment to Jesus Christ.
2. To live as a disciple of Jesus Christ and make the Christian faith a way of life.
3. To read and study the Bible and apply its message and meaning to living as a Christian today.
4. To learn the Christian story and the foundational teachings of one's particular faith tradition and integrate its meaning into one's life.
5. To worship God with the community weekly, in ritual celebrations, and through the seasons of the church year.
6. To pray, together and alone, and seek spiritual growth through spiritual practices and disciplines.
7. To live with moral integrity guided by Christian ethics and apply Christian moral values to decision-making.
8. To live the Christian mission in the world by serving those in need, caring for God's creation, and acting and advocating for justice and peace—locally and globally.
9. To be actively engaged in the life, ministries, and activities of the Christian community.
10. To practice faith in Jesus Christ by using one's gifts and talents within the Christian community and in the world.

These ten goals 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,

the lives of people from childhood through older adulthood. The ten goals can be thought of as a framework for designing developmentally appropriate experiences, programs, activities, and resources for each stage of life: children, adolescents, young adults (20s–30s), midlife adults (40s–50s), mature adults (60s–70s), and older adults (80+). The goals provide a seamless process of fostering faith growth from birth through older adulthood because everyone shares a common vision of maturing in faith. Churches (and individuals) can visualize how faith can mature from childhood through older adults.

Focusing on goals for maturing in faith reflects a significant shift from a provider-centered, program- and content-driven approach to a *person-centered* approach to faith formation. In the church-centric focus on providing curriculum, courses, classes, programs, and activities, there was often little reference to how we see faith flourishing at each stage of life. Becoming goal-centered opens multiple ways (activities, methods, programs) to promote faith and discipleship through developmentally appropriate faith-forming experiences at each stage of life. We build faith formation around the maturing in faith goals and then create and curate programs, activities, and resources that are needed to foster faith growth.

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, 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.

Faith formation designed around these goals for maturing in faith needs to be responsive to the diversity of people's religious practice and engagements. We can identify four distinct spiritual-religious identities in people of all ages: the *Engaged* who demonstrate a vibrant faith and relationship with God and are actively engaged in the faith community, the *Occasionals* who participate occasionally in the faith community and whose faith and practice is less central to their lives, the *Spirituals* who are living spiritual lives but not involved in a church community, and the *Unaffiliated* who are not affiliated with a church or religious tradition and have little need for God or religion.

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. Everything is in service to people growing in faith and discipleship.

## Activity: Your Church's Vision of Maturing in Faith

- What are your church's goals (vision) for lifelong maturing in faith and discipleship for all ages and generations?
- What would you change/revise/add to your church's goals for lifelong maturing in faith ?

## Reflection & Application

- How do your goals for maturing in faith inform or guide faith formation with all ages and generations? How do you see these goals reflected in your practice of lifelong faith formation?
- How can your vision of maturing in faith inform what you are trying to accomplish in the lives of people at each stage of life from childhood through older adulthood?

# Activity 4

## Creating a Plan for Lifelong Faith Formation

---

### #1. Review Current Lifelong Faith Formation

Develop a profile of your church's current faith formation programs, activities, experiences, and events – at church, at home, online, and in other settings – for each stage of life. Incorporate intergenerational experiences and events, family programs and activities, and age group programming. Use this format to create your own profile on a large sheet of paper or a spreadsheet.

	Age Group	Parent & Family	Intergenerational
<b>Young Children (0-5)</b>			
<b>Grade School Children (6-10)</b>			
<b>Young Adolescents (middle school)</b>			
<b>Older Adolescents (high school)</b>			
<b>Young Adults (20s-30s)</b>			
<b>Midlife Adults (40s-50s)</b>			
<b>Mature Adults (60s-70s)</b>			
<b>Older Adults (80+)</b>			

#### Analyze Your Profile

1. What do we need to continue doing?
2. What do we need to stop doing?
3. What needs to be strengthened or improved?
4. What needs to be expanded or needs to be extended to reach and engage more people?
5. What do we need to start doing? What new initiatives need to be created to address gaps, respond to new needs and challenges, engage new audiences?

### #2. Explore Using a Model of Lifelong Faith Formation

If we have articulated a model of lifelong faith formation, how will that influence the work of creating a plan for lifelong faith formation:

- Thematic Model
- Worship-Centered Model
- Intergenerational Model
- Life Stage Model

### #3. Select Your Target Audience: Life Stage(s) or Family Life Stage

Identify the major life tasks and interests, life transitions, and spiritual and religious needs of people at each stage of life.

## #4. Develop Ideas for Your Target Audience

**Develop your faith formation plan around the shared goals for faith maturing that is responsive to each stage of life.**

- Develop and sustain a personal relationship and commitment to Jesus Christ.
- Live as a disciple of Jesus Christ and make the Christian faith a way of life.
- Read and study the Bible and apply its message and meaning to living as a Christian today.
- Learn the Christian story and the foundational teachings of one's particular faith tradition and integrate its meaning into one's life.
- Worship God with the community weekly, in ritual celebrations, and through the seasons of the church year.
- Pray, together and alone, and seek spiritual growth through spiritual practices and disciplines.
- Live with moral integrity guided by Christian ethics and apply Christian moral values to decision-making.
- Live the Christian mission in the world by serving those in need, caring for God's creation, and acting and advocating for justice and peace—locally and globally.
- Be actively engaged in the life, ministries, and activities of the Christian community.
- Practice faith in Jesus Christ by using one's gifts and talents within the Christian community and in the world.

### Designing for your Target Audience:

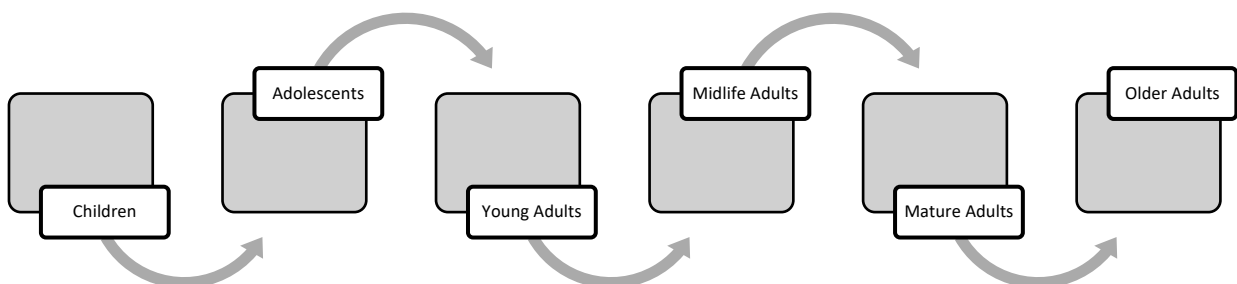
<b>Goals</b>	<b>How should we address the lives of our target audience through this goal?</b>
	Generating programming ideas : intergenerational, family, and age group

### Generating Ideas

<b>Continue</b>	<b>Stop</b>
What do you need to continue doing?	What do you need to stop doing?
<b>Improve / Expand</b>	<b>Create</b>
What do you need to be improved or expanded to reach and engage more people?	What do you need to start doing? What new initiatives need to be created to address gaps in lifelong faith formation, to respond to new needs and challenges, or to engage new audiences?

**Consider what needs to happen before your stage(s) of life.**

**Identify how you are preparing people for the next stage of life.**





## #5. Design Programming for Your Target Audience

### **Key features of programming:**

- Menu of participation
- Content, experiences, activities
- On your own, mentored, at home, small group, large group, community-wide formats
- In-person, online, and hybrid
- Synchronous and asynchronous
- Anytime, anywhere

## #6. Plan in a Three-Year Timeframe

**Short-Term Planning:** ideas that can be integrated into existing plans and programs or can be designed and implemented quickly in the first year. This would be especially true for initiatives that are enhancements or an expansion of a current program or activity.

**Mid-Term Planning:** ideas that need more design time and that can be implemented within one or two years. These initiatives need to be seen over a one-two year timeframe with a more sequenced implementation that might involve piloting the new initiative first before expanding it to a wider audience.

**Long-Term Planning:** ideas that need design time, piloting and testing, and then implementation over the next several years. The initiatives are long term projects that require more time for planning and building capacity, and need to be introduced in stages over multiple years.

### Planning Template

*Goal:* What do we want to accomplish?

*Strategies/Activities:* How we will accomplish the objectives over three years?

- Year 1
- Year 2
- Year 3

*Personnel:* Who will lead and implement the objectives?

*Resources:* What resources are needed to implement the objectives?

# Programming

---

1. **Variety of content, programs, activities, and resources** to address the diverse life tasks and situations, needs and interests, and spiritual and faith journeys of people of all ages.
2. **Variety of methods for learning**, ways to learn, and styles of learning. Address the whole person and how people learn best by offering programs, activities, and resources that incorporate different ways to learn (multiple intelligences: word-centered, verbal- linguistic, logical, musical, visual, intrapersonal, interpersonal, naturalist, and bodily-kinesthetic); and different styles of learning (hands-on experiences, reflective observation, exploration and analysis, and active experimentation).
3. **Variety of formats for learning**—on your own, with a mentor, at home, in small groups, in large groups, in the church community, and in the community and world—delivered in physical gathered settings and online settings. Provide a way to offer a diversity of programs in different formats and to offer one program or experience in multiple formats, expanding the scope of faith formation offerings and providing people with more options to participate
  - *On Your Own* formats provide maximum flexibility for the learner—when to learn, how to learn, where to learn, and what to learn. With the increasing number and variety of books and printed resources, audio podcasts, video presentations, video programs, online courses, and online resource centers, independent learning offers a 24/7 approach to faith growth and learning.
  - *Mentoring* provides a one-to-one relationship that can be utilized as an individual program option, such as a spiritual director/guide with an individual, or as a component in a larger program, such as having mentors for each person in the Christian initiation process or for those who want to explore Jesus and Christianity after leaving church earlier in life. Mentoring works older to younger, but also younger to older as in the case of young people mentoring adults.
  - *At Home* formats provide individuals and whole families with experiences, programs, activities, and resources designed for use at home or in daily life. This can include a wide variety of print, audio, video, digital media, and online programs and resources.
  - *Small Group* formats provide lots of flexibility in content, schedule, and location (online, home, coffee shops, at church, and more). Groups can meet at times and places that best fit members' lives. Small groups create an accepting environment in which new relationships can be formed. It is not always necessary for the church leaders to conduct small group programs.
  - *Large Group* formats provide a way to engage a wider audience with programming and experiences that can be utilized for a variety of theological, biblical, and life-centered themes and topics.
4. **Hybrid programming** provides a way to offer one program in multiple formats. With multiple ways to program in physical, online, and hybrid spaces, one program or experience can be designed in all three spaces, increasing the availability to a wider audience of people. The choice is no longer whether to participate or not, but which option best suits a person's time, schedule, and learning preferences. Here is an example of a video-based program that is conducted in multiple formats – same program, multiple ways to experience it.

1. *Large group physical gathering:* People gather at church and a leader facilitates the program—showing a video, providing time for people to read and reflect, and guiding small groups in discussing the content.
2. *Small group physical gathering:* People gather in small groups in homes or coffee shops or other conducive setting, watch the video, read and reflect on the content, and discuss the content.
3. *Small group hybrid:* People gather online in a small group (Zoom or other video conferencing platform) to watch the video together, read and reflect on the content, and discuss the content.
4. *Online with interaction:* People complete the sessions on their own and share reflections in a Facebook group (asynchronous) or meet on Zoom to discuss the program (synchronous).
5. *Online independent:* People complete the learning program on their own.

*One way to develop a hybrid model is by beginning with in-person faith formation and then deepen it with online faith formation. We can extend the theme of an in-person event or program by curating a variety of faith forming experience that provide more depth and application of the theme through images, video, audio, readings, etc. We can deliver the content using a multi-media newsletter, social media posts, and/or a playlist on a website. Here are several examples you can adapt. In addition, consider designing programs like mission trips, vacation Bible school, and summer camps into hybrid models.*

#### **Worship & Online Formation**

- Participate in weekly worship (in-person or live streamed).
- Engage in faith forming activities using an online playlist on Sunday's theme: prayers, readings, video, podcast, art, music, creative activities, conversations, action ideas, etc.

#### **In-Person & Online Formation**

- Meet in-person once per month (or every other week).
- Engage in online faith formation for the other weeks using a playlist on the theme.

#### **In-Person & Online & Video Meetings**

- Week #1: Meet in-person for the program.
- Week #2: Engage in online faith forming experiences using a playlist on the theme.
- Week #3: Continue with the playlist learning on the theme.
- Week #4: Conduct a video meeting (Zoom) for small groups or age groups or families to discuss and apply the online learning.

#### **In-Person & Live Streamed or Video & Online**

- Week #1: Meet in-person for the program.
- Week #2: Engage in online faith forming experiences using a playlist on the theme.
- Week #3: Conduct a livestream presentation or demonstration or prerecorded video (using Zoom, Facebook Live, or YouTube Live) on the theme of the month's program.
- Week #4: Continue with the playlist learning on the theme.

*A second way to develop a hybrid model is to begin with online faith formation, leading to in-person experiences. This approach is known as *Flipped Learning* in which direct instruction moves from the group learning space to the individual learning space online, and the group space is transformed into a dynamic interactive learning environment where the leader/teacher guides participants as they creatively discuss, practice, and apply the content.*

Here is a basic outline of a 4-week model that can be applied to children and youth programs, as well as adult Bible studies and short courses.

### **Online & Small Group Gatherings**

- Week #1: Engage in online learning using Playlist #1 on the theme.
- Week #2: Participate in a small group gathering to discuss and apply the learning (in-person or through video conferencing)
- Week #3: Engage in online learning using Playlist #2 on the theme.
- Week #4: Participate in a small group gathering to discuss and apply the learning (in-person or through video conferencing)

The Flipped Learning Model is very helpful when it is difficult to gather people, such as preparation for a sacrament or milestone. We can *prepare* people online with the appropriate content (experiences, activities, video/audio, and resources); then *engage* them in-person for the event or program; and *sustain and apply* the experience through online faith formation.

A good example of this is an adolescent confirmation program. Here is a Flipped Model illustrated in a monthly format for young people that can be woven into a yearlong program.

- **On Your Own:** Engage young people with a monthly learning playlist—watching videos, reading short articles, praying, writing reflections in a journal—on the theme.
- **In a Small Group:** Have young people participate in one small group experience (online) to discuss the content in the playlist and what they are learning.
- **In a Large Group:** Involve young people in a monthly meeting with all groups for community sharing, interactive activities, short presentations, and ideas for living faith.

## **5. Menus of Faith Formation Experiences for All Ages**

A significant systemic change in faith formation programming is the move from one-size-fits-all programming to multiple approaches and programming for each season of life (children, teens, young adults, midlife adults, mature adults, and older adults) that provide a variety of experiences, activities, content, and resources for diverse needs and interests; in a variety of formats (on-your-own learning, mentored, small group, large group, church-wide, in the community); with gathered in-person, online, and hybrid modes of faith formation.

The assumption of the one-size-fits all approach is that people of a certain age or stage of life learn in the same way, are in a similar place in their faith journey, have similar religious backgrounds, share common interests and learning needs, and, therefore, have the same religious and spiritual learning needs that can be addressed by one program. This mentality focuses churches on how to get everyone (whoever the audience might be) to participate in the one program.

Even though we all recognize the diversity of people's religious experience and practice, churches continue to design "one-size-fits-all" programming because that mindset is so deeply ingrained in our practice. We know that the 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 do that. Churches can offer a *menu of experiences* with wider variety of content, experiences, and activities if we are going to help people grow and mature in faith and discipleship.

At every stage of life we can build a *menu of experiences* that include intergenerational, family, and age group activities. People can select programs, activities, and experiences from the menu to create their own learning plan for the year or for a season of the year. You can establish participation guidelines so that each year or season children (and their families) and youth would select a certain number of intergenerational experiences, family at-home activities, and age-specific programs at church. This approach puts the learner at the center of faith formation and gives them choice over what and when and where they will learn.

The menu approach can transform current one-size-fits-all marriage, baptism, first communion, and confirmation preparation programs. We can create a menu of faith-formation experiences—intergenerational, family, and age group-specific—tailored to the religious experience and practice of the people (i.e., people who are actively engaged in practicing their faith, who are minimally engaged, who are not engaged but want to participate in a significant milestone or sacrament). Use a menu approach to structure learning with experiences, programs, and activities designed to promote growth in faith for people who want to grow deeper in the faith, for those who are inquiring or aren't sure the Christian faith is for them, and for those who don't need God or religion in their lives.

At every stage of life – children (0–10), adolescents (11–19), young adults (20s–30s), midlife adults (40s–50s), mature adults (mid 50s–mid 70s), and older adults (75+) – we can offer people faith-forming experiences in intergenerational, family, and life stage settings with (1) a variety of content, programs, activities, and resources; (2) a variety of formats—on your own, mentored, small groups, and large groups; (3) a variety of scheduling—synchronous and asynchronous; and (4) in hybrid, online, and gathered modes of programming.

## Resources

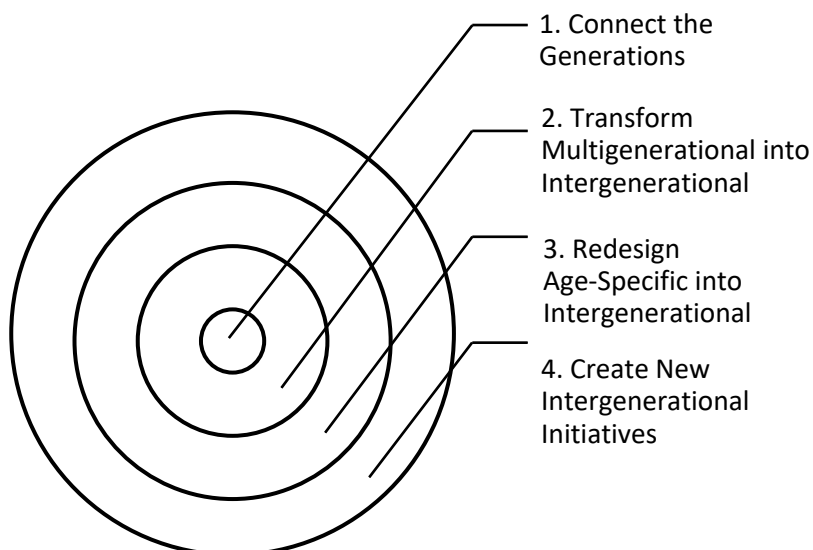
- ❖ Read more about hybrid faith formation in the article: “A Hybrid Future for Faith Formation” on the Lifelong Faith website: [www.LifelongFaith.com](http://www.LifelongFaith.com).
- ❖ For videos and articles on hybrid faith formation go to the “hybrid” section of the Lifelong Faith website: <https://www.lifelongfaith.com/hybrid.html>.
- ❖ For an example of an adult menu approach go to the Seasons of Adult Faith website at [www.SeasonsofAdultFaith](http://www.SeasonsofAdultFaith). See especially the Bible and Prayer and Spiritual Life sections for illustrations of a menu of faith forming experiences.
- ❖ For an example of a family menu approach go to the Family Faith Practice website at <https://www.familyfaithpractice.com>. See especially the Just for Parents section for an illustration of a menu of faith forming experiences.

# Intergenerational Faith Formation

It is well documented now that there has been a decades-long trend toward greater generational isolation in our society, now accelerated by the pandemic. A study by Springtide Research, *The State of Religion & Young People 2020: Relational Authority*, found that nearly 70 percent of young people ages thirteen to twenty-five report having three or fewer meaningful interactions per day. Nearly 40 percent say they feel they have no one to talk to and that no one really knows them well, at least some- times. More than one in four young people say they have one or fewer adults in their lives they can turn to if they need to talk. As the number of trusted adults in a young person's life increases, their reported feelings of loneliness, social isolation, and stress decrease. The pandemic heightened the experience of isolation and loneliness across generations. Individuals and families shifted so many social things to home—work, school, shopping, food, fitness, and even church—that they lost social connection. Older adults dramatically reduced their outside interactions. Families with children and teens worked hard to limit outside exposure, and often selected particular family members or a few local families to create a safe “pod.”

People have a tremendous hunger for in-person relationships and shared experiences, like celebrating holidays, birthdays, and milestones with other generations. One of the best ways to overcome the loneliness and isolation people have experienced during the pandemic is to increase the number of opportunities for intergenerational relationships, experiences, and activities. Connecting the generations—(re)building intergenerational community, relationships, and experiences—is a tremendous opportunity for every church community.

A systemic response is to build a church culture of intergenerationality – to make a commitment to become more intentionally intergenerational in everything we do. Faith formation can take a lead in strengthening an intergenerational culture in four ways with increasing depth and scope:



Here are ideas to spark your own creativity for each of the four ways to strengthen an intergenerational church culture:

1. *Connect the Generations*: Creating small actions to build relationships, trust, and respect by praying for other generations; mixing generations in leadership and ministry teams; developing mentoring

relationships between generations (old to young, young to old); and encouraging generations sharing and contributing at worship.

2. *Transform Multigenerational Settings into Intergenerational Experiences* by including relationship building activities; engaging in storytelling; praying for each other; participating in shared activities as mixed-generation groups; sharing leadership roles appropriate to gifts, abilities, and age; and making people feel welcome, respected, valued, and recognized by other generations.
3. *Redesign Age-Specific Programs into Intergenerational Experiences* by incorporating another generation to share their life story, faith, wisdom (interviews, storytelling, presentations, demonstrations); adding mentors or spiritual guides such as grandparent mentors for young parents and spiritual guides for young people in confirmation; adding regular intergenerational gatherings into age group programs throughout the year; and redesigning an age-specific program such as camp or vacation Bible school into a grandparent-grandchild program and a service program or mission trip into an intergenerational activity.
4. *Create New Intergenerational Initiatives* that will contribute toward building an intergenerational culture in your congregation by celebrating milestones throughout life as intergenerational experiences at church and home, conducting intergenerational learning programs—weekly, bi-weekly, monthly, or seasonally—for the whole faith community; offering intergenerational models of vacation Bible school, camp programs, Bible study programs; retreat programs (in a variety of time formats); and intergenerational local and global service projects, actions for justice, care for creation.

Develop a three year plan for strengthening the intergenerational fabric of your church community through faith formation by creating strategies for the four ways described above. Move from *connecting* and *transforming* into the more challenging *redesigning* and *creating* over three years. No one action brings about an intergenerational church culture. It is the cumulative effect of becoming intentional using these four ways that leads to strengthening the intergenerational fabric of your church community.

## Resources

- ❖ For videos and articles on intergenerational faith formation go to the “intergenerational” section of the Lifelong Faith website: <https://www.lifelongfaith.com/intergenerational.html>.
- ❖ For video-based training to design intergenerational faith formation go Lifelong Faith Training: <https://www.lifelongfaithtraining.com/intergenerational-faith-formation.html>.
- ❖ For free intergenerational programs go to the Intergenerational Faith website: <https://www.intergenerationalfaith.com>

# Milestones Faith Formation

(Debbie Streicher, Milestones Ministry)

*A faith milestone is a marker along life's journey that says, 'This is something important and God is here, too.' It is a faith formation practice for both home and congregation that helps all generations recognize God's presence in everyday life. David Anderson*

Milestones Ministry can help strengthen the church's role in the community through simple, yet memorable, celebrations of important life events. All milestones ministry events include caring conversations, prayers, and blessings that immerse one in a faith journey alongside family and friends.

Milestones Ministry includes five parts: Naming, Equipping, Blessing, Gifting, and Reinforcing. By incorporating these into each Milestones Ministry event and providing monthly event opportunities throughout the year, it gives each milestone a greater chance to take deeper root in lifelong faith formation.

## **Naming**

- ◆ Identify meaningful and memorable moments in people's lives.
- ◆ Honor, celebrate, and name significant events and times such as birth, the beginning of school, getting a driver's license, graduation, a new job, parenthood, grandparenthood, retirement and more.
- ◆ Enable people to name the holy in life, recognize milestones along life's journey, and take the time to be nurtured in the Christian faith in home and congregation.

## **Equipping**

- ◆ Provide a basic framework for faith practices, caring conversations, devotions, service, rituals, and traditions as a way to experience milestones as a faith-forming moment.
- ◆ Provide activities for an intergenerational event in the congregation.
- ◆ Provide activities for celebrating in the home.

## **Blessing**

- ◆ Offer a prayer to bless the lives of those involved in the milestone moment.
- ◆ Offer a prayer and special blessing during worship for this milestone.
- ◆ Offer a prayer to use in small groups or to use with family at home.

## **Gifting**

- ◆ Give a visual reminder to help the milestone moment be recalled again and again.
- ◆ Provide a gift as a visible sign that gives witness to one's faith.

## **Reinforcing**

- ◆ Host a follow-up gathering of those involved in the milestone moment to help it gain deeper roots in the life of faith of those who participated.
- ◆ It is not unusual to recognize baptism, first Bibles, a mission trip, or entering Sunday school to mention a few, but I invite you to think beyond these and consider how to recognize other milestones in the lives of those in our communities.



## Milestones in Church Life and Daily Life

Many congregations celebrate milestones related to the sacraments and others to life transitions in the congregation such as entering Sunday school and first Bible. Events are designed for the entire year and often a schedule is sent to parents and families. For example:

Milestone	Age	Date
Welcoming Children to Worship	2-4 years old	Late August
Entering Sunday School	3 years old	Early Sept
First Bible	1 <sup>st</sup> grade	Mid-Oct
Communion	2 <sup>nd</sup> grade	March
Confirmation	8 <sup>th</sup> grade	May
Graduation	HS Seniors	June

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

As we move into the future together in ministry, a calendar like the one you see below including milestones in our daily lives can create outreach opportunities we can envision as an effective model for faith formation. What milestones could be done in your community?

Milestone	Age	Date
Driver's License	16 years old	August
Blessing Backpacks & Briefcases	K-Adult	Sept
Retirement	Adult 55+	Oct
New Job	Teen-Adult	Jan
Empty Nest	Adult	March
Prayer	All Ages	April

All milestone (both congregational and daily life) events include the entire family, friends, and relatives. They happen in large gathering settings and in the home. We recently celebrated my husband's retirement in our home. We invited friends, family, and neighbors.

1. *Naming*: This was a time to recognize my husband's retirement and transition to a new lifestyle.
2. *Equipping*: We enjoyed dinner together, showed pictures of his work history, and engaged in caring conversations.
3. *Blessing*: Each person present passed a stone with retirement written on it and gave a wish about my husband's retirement and gave him a blessing. We said a prayer.
4. *Gifting*: The gift was the stone as a remembrance of the occasion.
5. *Reinforcing*: The stone is a reminder every day of this special time. We often reflect on the stone and plan to intentionally revisit the topic of retirement and talk about how life has changed at the end of the year.

### Resources

- ❖ For videos and articles on milestones faith formation go to:  
<https://www.lifelongfaithtraining.com/milestones-faith-formation.html>

*Milestones Ministry provides a faith milestone as a marker along life's journey that provides faith formation practices for the home and the congregation recognizing God's presence in everyday life.*

### **Milestone Modules Related to Child and Youth Life**

#### **Transitions:**

- FaithChest®
- Baptism
- Anniversary of Baptism
- Prayer
- Welcoming Young Children to Worship
- Entering Sunday School
- Kids and Money
- Blessing of the Backpacks
- Communion
- Bible
- Bible Camp
- My Body, God's Gift
- Middle School
- Beginning Confirmation
- Confirmation
- Driver's License
- Mission Trip
- High School Graduation

#### **Milestone Modules Related to Adult Life Transitions:**

- Aging Parent
- Grandparents
- Retirement
- Return from Military Deployment
- New Job
- New Home
- Anniversary of Marriage
- Empty Nest
- Faith Community
- Loss of a Loved One
- Becoming a Parent
- Affirming Spiritual Gifts

*We believe: Faith is formed by the power of the Holy Spirit through personal, trusted relationships – often in our homes.*



<https://milestonesministry.org>

### **Milestone Moments in Daily Life:**

- Back to School
- Beginning School
- First Cell Phone
- Vacation
- Broken Bone
- Christmas Tree
- Easter Egg Blessing
- Family Reunion
- First Christmas
- New Year
- Anniversary of Baptism
- Learning the Lord's Prayer
- Transition to Assisted Living
- First Home
- Medicare Card
- Severe Weather Recovery
- Learning the Ten Commandments
- Class Reunion
- Learning the Apostles' Creed
- Shrove Tuesday
- Birthday
- Confirmation Day
- Congregational Anniversary
- Blessing of the Animals
- Report Card
- Congregational Visit
- Work Anniversary
- Giving a Bible
- End of Life Conversations
- Remembering the Saints
- Saint Patrick's Day
- Mother's Day
- At the Time of Death
- Father's Day
- Thanksgiving Day
- Feast of the Epiphany
- Saint Valentine's Day
- Preparing for Worship
- End of the School Year
- Pre-Surgery
- Blessing the Home Altar
- Veterans Day
- Longest Night
- Candlemas
- Loss of a Pet
- Advent Wreath Blessing
- Graduation

# Family & Parent Faith Formation

---

## **1. Parents are the most significant influence on the religious and spiritual outcomes of young people.**

The single most powerful force in a child's religious formation is the spiritual personality of the parent. We know the parental factors that make a significant difference in promoting faith in children and youth include:

- parents' personal faith and practice
- a close and warm parent-child relationship
- parent modeling and teaching a religious faith
- parent involvement in church life and Sunday worship
- grandparent religious influence and relationship

## **2. The primary way by which a religious identity becomes rooted in children's lives 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.**

## **3. The family is the primary community where Christian faith practices are nurtured and practiced.**

Certain faith practices make a significant difference in nurturing the faith of children and adolescents at home. Raising religious children should thus primarily be a practice-centered process, not chiefly a didactic teaching program. Parents modeling religious practices is primary, and explaining belief systems is secondary. Among the most important practices are:

- Reading the Bible as a family and encouraging young people to read the Bible regularly
- Praying together as a family and encouraging young people to pray personally
- Serving people in need as a family and supporting service activities by young people
- Eating together as a family
- Having family conversations about faith
- Talking about faith, religious issues, and questions and doubts
- Ritualizing important family moments and milestone experiences
- Celebrating holidays and church year seasons at home
- Providing moral instruction
- Being involved in a faith community and participating regularly in Sunday worship as a family

## **4. The quality of a parent's relationships with their children or teens and the parenting style they practice make a significant difference in faith transmission.**

- Parents cultivate relationships of warmth and love which makes everything else possible.
- Parents balance religious firmness with religious flexibility in their parenting.
- Parents balance desire for religious continuity with children's agency. They transmit their faith to their children while honoring their children's agency by teaching principles and values, providing expectations of religious participation and responsibility.
- Parents talk with their children about religious matters during the week. This is one of the most powerful mechanisms for the success or failure of religious transmission to children.
- Parents practice an "authoritative" parenting style and maintain and enforce high standards and expectations for their children while simultaneously expressing warmth and connection to their children and confidently giving them space to work out their own views and values.

- Parents listen more and preach less. The way parents approach parent–youth conversations about religion and spirituality matters. It is a more satisfying and successful religious and relational experience when the conversations were more youth-centered than parent-centered.

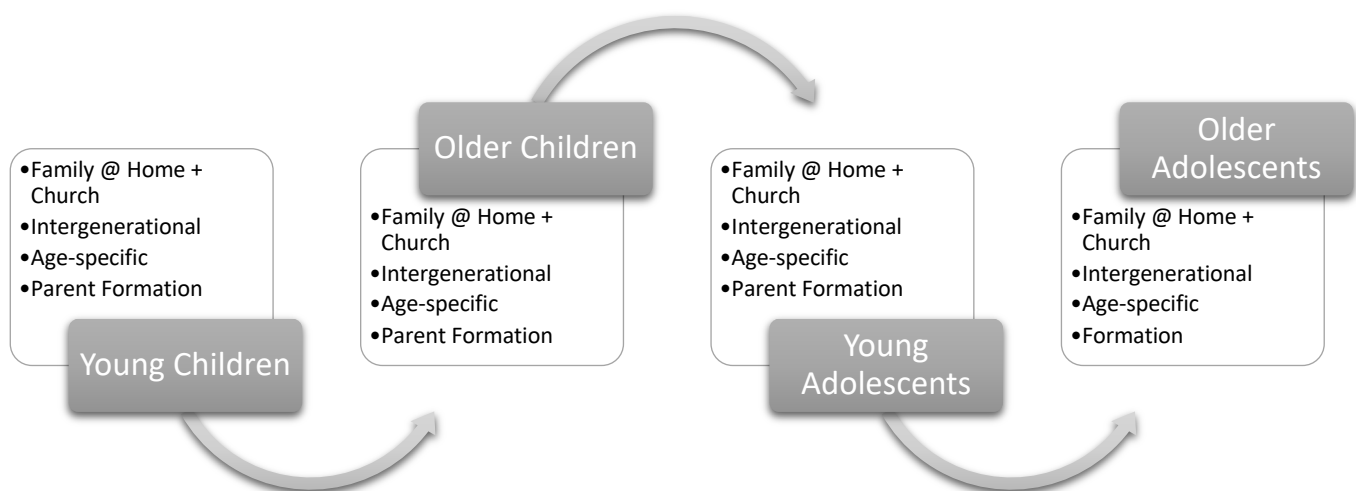
## Family Faith Formation with Children, Adolescents, and Parents

Faith formation needs to start early in life and engage the whole family (three generations: children, parents, and grandparents) throughout the childhood years. We need to start early in the family and build a foundation for a life of faith in the new generation if we hope to address the decline in passing on faith from generation to generation. In most churches, it would be a systemic change to shift priorities and energies to focus on families with young children (0-5 years old) and families with grade school children – moving beyond a “classroom” approach to engage the whole family—at church and at home.

Family faith formation is designed to *encourage* parents to grow in faith and become faith formers, *equip* parents to incorporate faith practices into family life at home, and *engage* parents in education and formation, as well as the whole family in faith forming experiences and program.

Design and implement a plan for forming the faith of families that incorporates four stages of life: young children, grade school children, young adolescents, and older adolescents. Develop a template that you can use for each stage of life and then design or select age-appropriate programs, activities, and resources. A template can include the following elements:

- ◆ *Family faith practices*: reading the Bible, praying together, serving people, working for justice, caring for creation, eating together, having family faith conversations, providing moral instruction
- ◆ *Celebrating Milestones*: ritualizing important family moments and milestone experiences
- ◆ *Celebrating church year seasons*—at church and home: Advent, Christmas, Lent, Holy Week, Easter, Pentecost, and more
- ◆ *Parenting practices and skills* appropriate to the stage of life
- ◆ *Parenting for faith* programs, videos, and activities
- ◆ *Family-centered gatherings and programs* at church
- ◆ *Intergenerational faith forming experiences*



## Example: Early Childhood

To create a plan for families with young children we could include the following types of activities that would be offered on a website designed for families, and supported by a monthly e-newsletter highlighting activities that are especially relevant in that month. Activities can be structured in a way that identifies what's appropriate for each year of early childhood: 0-1, 1-2, 2-3, 3-4, and 4-5. The goal is to provide a comprehensive formation process at church and at home with the parents-only and with the whole family.

1. *Baptism preparation* that engages the parents in their own faith growth and prepares them for nurturing faith in young children
2. *Mentors* from the church community (e.g., grandparents) to accompany parents on the journey from Baptism to start of school (5 years old)
3. *Faith practices* such as Bible stories, prayers, meal rituals, moral values
4. *Seasons of the year* including activities for the church year seasons, holidays, and the four seasons
5. *Milestones* such as birthdays, baptism anniversaries, “first” milestones, entry to preschool and kindergarten
6. *Parenting knowledge* such as understanding young child development and practices for effective parenting of young children
7. *Parenting for faith skills* such as reading a Bible story, praying with a young child, having faith conversations
8. *Online group* for parents of young children (e.g., Facebook group)
9. *Gatherings for parents and for families* at church

## Resources

- ❖ For videos and articles on family faith formation go to the “family” section of the Lifelong Faith website: <https://www.lifelongfaith.com/family.html>.
- ❖ For video-based training to design family faith formation go Lifelong Faith Training: <https://www.lifelongfaithtraining.com/family-faith-formation.html>.
- ❖ For an example of a family faith formation website go to the Family Faith Practice website at <https://www.familyfaithpractice.com>.
- ❖ For curated resources for families go to the Lifelong Faith Studio website and find the “family resources” for each content area: <https://www.lifelongfaithstudio.com>.
- ❖ For free family programs go to the Intergenerational Faith website: <https://www.intergenerationalfaith.com>

# “Front Porch” Faith Forming Experiences

Churches are feeling the impact of the dramatic rise of disaffiliation from organized religion, and the challenge of greater diversity in religious practice. We know that people’s participation in church life and Sunday worship has been declining for the past two decades and has only accelerated during the pandemic. Many churches are expending a lot of time and energy on getting people “back to church” for worship and faith formation programming. This focus on “bringing back” needs to be balanced with an emphasis on “going out.”

What if churches and faith formation began to focus on “bringing the church to people”? What if we created “front porch experiences” – spaces, programs, and experiences that expand the scope and reach of the church into the lives of people in the neighborhood and community? What if we made a special effort to reach and engage people who are not involved or have given up on church or were never affiliated with any church or religion?

One way to build a “front porch” is to move some of the at-church programs and activities into community settings, such as Bible study offered in a café or a prayer/retreat experience offered at a retreat house or other quiet setting. Changing the location of a program opens up the possibility of inviting people to join in a “neutral” setting.

A second way is open-up programs currently sponsored by the church to the whole community, such as a vacation Bible school offered for all of the children in the community, and service projects and care for creation projects that welcome people from the community to get involved.

A third way is to offer activities directed to the needs, hungers, and interests of people sponsored by the church in a variety of settings and spaces so that everyone feels comfortable participating. We have seen examples of this type of outreach in the variety of “theology on tap” or “God on tap” programs offered for young adults in pubs. A church could offer a variety of projects targeted to different ages or audiences, for example:

- ◆ Workshops, resources, and support groups targeted to all parents of young children, grade school children, middle school and high school adolescents
- ◆ Family events for the whole community such as concerts, movie nights, games day
- ◆ Programs and activities designed for older adults at the senior center or adult living center or nursing home.
- ◆ A Dinner Church ministry (<https://dinnerchurch.com>) that brings people together over a meal to share stories, build relationships, and engage with each other spiritually.
- ◆ Career and life mentoring or coaching, especially for young adults
- ◆ Life skills courses for teenagers and young adults
- ◆ An arts program such as art exhibits or arts workshops
- ◆ A music program such as concerts, opportunities to join a musical group, and music workshops
- ◆ Community-wide service days, service projects, and mission trips
- ◆ And much more

# Activity 5

## Implementing & Building Capacity for Lifelong Faith Formation

---

### Implementing in a Three-Year Timeframe

**Short-Term Planning:** ideas that can be integrated into existing plans and programs or can be designed and implemented quickly in the first year. This would be especially true for initiatives that are enhancements or an expansion of a current program or activity.

**Mid-Term Planning:** ideas that need more design time and that can be implemented within one or two years. These initiatives need to be seen over a one-two year timeframe with a more sequenced implementation that might involve piloting the new initiative first before expanding it to a wider audience.

**Long-Term Planning:** ideas that need design time, piloting and testing, and then implementation over the next several years. The initiatives are long term projects that require more time for planning and building capacity, and need to be introduced in stages over multiple years.

### Planning Template

This design process uses the following template to develop implementation plans for each goal:

*Goal:* What do we want to accomplish?

*Strategies/Activities:* How we will accomplish the objectives over three years?

- Year 1
- Year 2
- Year 3

*Personnel:* Who will lead and implement the objectives?

*Resources:* What resources are needed to implement the objectives?

### Suggestions for Moving Ahead

In *Switch: How to Change Things When Change Is Hard* Chip and Dan Heath offer insights for how to guide the process of change. Here are several suggestions, based on their wisdom, for sustaining, expanding, and creating innovations that “stick.” (*By the way: If you have not read the book, make it a priority. I think it’s the best book on change available.*)

**1. Focus on the bright spots of innovation:**

- When creating an innovation, investigate what's working in other churches (or organizations) and adapt it for your context.
- When sustaining or expanding an innovation, collect feedback from participants in the form of stories, videos, audio, and images that describe their experience, and share it widely.

**2. Point to the destination for the innovation:**

- Designing and implementing an innovation is easier when you know where you're going and why it's worth it.
- Paint a rich, detailed picture of what the innovation looks like when it is operational. Be concrete: imagine it is happening. Be motivational: share why it's a destination worth working toward.
- Avoid metrics, like participation, as destinations. Focus on the innovation fully operational and having an impact on people. Focus on people's experience! What's happening in their lives because of the innovation?

**3. Script the critical moves from design through implementation:**

- Don't think big picture—which can overwhelm your team—think in terms of specific behaviors or actions to implement. Outline all of the steps (moves) from design to implementation and then script out each step and be clear on how your team should act and what they should do.
- Be sure each critical move is do-able for your team. It can be hard and challenging, but within the team's grasp.

**4. Find the feeling behind the innovation:**

- Knowing something isn't enough to cause change and implement an innovation. Make people feel something. Build an emotional and rational case for the innovation.
- Make the need for the innovation visual. Things people see are more likely to evoke emotion than things they read. Use video, images, graphics, etc. woven together into a story to help people find the feeling. What could you show your team, and eventually church leaders and the community, that would help them see what's possible? What could you show them that would touch their hearts?

**5. Plan for small wins that lead to significant innovations:**

- Prototype your innovations with a "soft opening," similar to what new businesses do, so that you can work-out the "bugs" in the innovation. Select a segment of your target audience to test-out the new innovation.
- Discover the small wins from the prototype experience so that success does not feel distant to the team.
- Celebrate the small wins so that your team builds confidence and develops an innovation mindset.
- Evaluate the prototype, revise it based on feedback, and then scale the innovation to engage a wider audience.

**Resources**

Heath, Chip and Dan Heath. *Switch: How to Change Things When Change Is Hard*. New York: Broadway, 2010.

Heath, Chip and Dan Heath. *Switch Your Organization: A Workbook*. (Accessed at

<http://heathbrothers.com/resources>. (Available on the Lifelong Faith web site:

<https://www.lifelongfaith.com/what-if.html>)



# Building Capacity for Faith Formation

**Capacity** is “the ability of a person or organization to do something (Cambridge Dictionary); “the ability to understand or to do something, such as the intellectual capacity for something, the work capacity for doing something, or the capacity to do something to enjoy life” (Oxford Dictionary).

***One of the essential roles of all pastoral leaders today is to develop the mindset, the processes, and the skills for becoming capacity builders.***

What is capacity building? **Capacity-building** is the process of developing an organization’s strengths and sustainability. Capacity building refers to activities that improve and enhance an organization’s ability to achieve its mission and sustain itself over time. In the nonprofit world this includes identifying a communications strategy, improving volunteer recruitment, identifying more efficient uses of technology, and engaging in collaborations with community partners. When capacity building is successful, it strengthens an organization’s ability to fulfill its mission over time and enhances the organization’s ability to have a significant, positive impact on lives and communities.

Pastoral leaders today need to become **capacity-builders**. The good news in the 2020s is that churches now have access to an abundance of resources available to them at little or no cost. Technical expertise is available from websites, blogs, and online groups. Faith formation resources are available in digital formats (websites, video, podcasts, apps, and more). Training is available for free or low-cost through online webinars and courses. The digital transformation of society and church is giving mid-size and small churches access to the same resources and expertise that was once reserved for high capacity churches.

## A Capacity Building Mindset

All of this abundance will go untapped unless leaders develop a **capacity building mindset**. A mindset is our way of thinking, a mental attitude or frame of mind. A mindset is our collection of thoughts and beliefs that shape our thought-habits. And your thought-habits affect how we think, what we feel, and what we do. Our mindset impacts how we make sense of the world, and how we make sense of ourselves.

In my experience church leaders have two different mindsets about capacity. One group of leaders has a **scarcity mindset**—not enough volunteers, money, resources, facilities, and so forth. These leaders often limit the scope of their ministry to fit their scarcity mindset. “We can’t try anything new because we don’t have enough people, money, and resources to continue what we are already doing.” The scarcity mindset hinders leaders from adapting approaches, expanding ministries, reaching new audiences, and developing innovations to address new needs. The scarcity mindset has a direct impact on creating, sustaining and enhancing church vitality. Practiced long enough, the scarcity mindset is a prescription for church decline.

Another group of pastoral leaders embrace an **abundance mindset**. They start with the belief that their community has assets and strengths to uncover and build on. They believe that there are an abundance of resources they can access for ministry and faith formation. Their primary job is to discover resources in the people of their community, in community organizations, in the wider church, online, and much more. They believe that they will be able to discover the resources necessary for adapting approaches, expanding

ministries, reaching new audiences, and developing innovations to address new needs. *They are capacity-builders.*

Capacity building is designed to improve and enhance the church's ability to achieve its mission and sustain itself over time. Among the essential capacities needed in churches today are leadership (professional and volunteer), financial sustainability, facilities, communication, technology, collaborations with other churches and community organizations, and programmatic resources in all forms—print, audio, video, digital, and online.

A good practice for capacity-building is to conduct an annual **Capacity Assessment** (for the whole church or for a particular ministry like faith formation). Review the plans for each ministry and ask, “*What do our ministry plans require in order to be implemented effectively and successfully?*” Use questions like the following to guide your assessment. Customize these questions for individual ministries.

1. What capacities do we require to implement our ministry plans for the coming year?
  - What will our plans require of the pastor and professional ministry leadership (competencies, skills, processes and procedures)?
  - What volunteer leaders will be required for our plans, and what competencies (knowledge and skills) and resources will they need to perform effectively (tools and resources)?
  - What material resources (facilities, communication, technologies, print and digital resources) will our plans require?
  - What financial resources will our plans require?
2. What capacities (resources) do we already have available to us for the coming year within our church community (people, programs, resources, finances), and outside our church in other religious congregations, schools and colleges, community organizations, denominational agencies—regional and national?
3. What capacities (resources) do we need to develop or enhance in order to implement our plans and flourish as a community (or ministry)?

Create a “Capacity Report” that presents what is required this year, what we already have, and what we need to develop. This can form the blueprint for develop a plan of action.

## Developing Leaders for Faith Formation

According to research studies, only about 10% of “registered” members are actively engaged in ministry leadership positions in most churches. This generally follows the 80-20 rule (also known as the Pareto Principle) which asserts that 80% of outcomes (or outputs) result from 20% of all causes (or inputs) for any given event. Other studies show that large parishes (defined as 2000 members or more) receive significantly lower support at all levels when calculated as a factor of participation, with people feeling that their participation won't be missed since there are so many “others” who will contribute talent and financial resources.

If only 10% of members are accomplishing more than 80% of what your church is doing today, imagine what 20% or 30% could do. If your church engaged just an additional 2% of your members over the next

year, it could result in 20% more volunteer hours, which would allow the church to expand and deepen its ministries. *How can you make this a reality in your church?*

## A Leadership Strategy

What does an empowering mindset mean in practice for the development of a leadership strategy for lifelong faith formation? Here are five key principles and a process to guide the creation of a leadership development strategy.

*Every leadership experience in the church deepens a leaders relationship with Jesus Christ.* We recognize that leaders have an opportunity to grow in their faith through involvement in ministry. We are concerned about the spiritual growth of leaders *and* their knowledge and skills for the practice of ministry.

*Leaders are respected as full partners in ministry.* We give volunteer leaders responsibility and work with them as team members, sharing the decision-making and work.

*The gifts, abilities, interests, and passions of the leader are honored.* We take the time to discern the gifts and talents of leaders and see that their leadership role matches well with their gifts.

*Leaders receive specialized training, resources, and support so that they can adequately perform their ministry, especially when the knowledge or skills involved are new to them.* We ensure that volunteer leaders feel capable and confident that they can perform their ministry. We tailor the training and resources to the needs of the leader and his or her responsibilities.

*Leaders are appreciated and recognized for the value of their contributions to their ministry and to the church.* We take the time, formally and informally, to express the gratitude of the church for the work of the volunteer leaders. We create specific strategies, such as dinners, gatherings, rituals, and thank-you notes, to demonstrate appreciation and recognize the contributions of leaders.

## Process

**Step 1.** Assess the way that your church currently engages in identifying or calling, matching, preparing, and supporting volunteer leaders. One way to do this is to use the five leadership development principles (above) as a reflection tool and describe how your church or ministry practices each principle.

1. Every leadership experience in the church deepens a leaders relationship with Jesus Christ.
2. Leaders are respected as full partners in ministry.
3. The gifts, abilities, interests, and passions of the leader are honored.
4. Leaders receive specialized training, resources, and support so that they can adequately perform their ministry.
5. Leaders are appreciated and recognized for the value of their contributions to their ministry and to the church.

The second way is to use the “Leadership System Checklist” (at the end of the article) to assess each aspect of your leadership development system, identify strengths and areas for growth, and develop action plans to improve.

**Step 2.** Create a *Ministries Guide* (in print, digital, and website versions) with the ways that people can be involved in the ministries of the church. Use or adapt the “Researching Ministry Opportunities in Your Church” worksheet (at the end of the article) to collect information.

**Step 3.** Develop a *Gifts Inventory* for all ministries (or for a particular ministry) by using or adapting the “Gifts Inventory” (at the end of the article) to help people identify their gifts and help the church community recognize and celebrate the abundance of the community’s gifts. Have people complete the gifts list (left column) and then the list of ways they can be involved (right column). Be sure to add specific gifts (left column) from your analysis of leadership roles in the *Ministry Guide*. Add specific leadership opportunities from your *Ministry Guide* to the experience and interest list (right column).

**Step 4.** Engage the community in identifying their gifts, experiences, and interests using the *Gifts Inventory* and in finding ways to be involved using the *Ministries Guide*.

The *Gifts Inventory* can be conducted in gathered settings such as during or after Sunday worship or church events. Consider sponsoring a Stewardship Sunday with displays of ministries and volunteer leadership opportunities and presentation by leaders representing church ministries who can speak briefly about the ways people can get involved. Use church meetings and gatherings to present the opportunities for engagement and have people complete the *Gifts Inventory*. Be sure to distribute the *Ministries Guide* at all gathered events.

Make the *Gifts Inventory* and *Ministry Guide* part of new member welcome kits, and preparation programs for Baptism, First Communion, Confirmation, and other program settings.

The *Gifts Inventory* can be designed into an online form or survey using SurveyMonkey (<https://www.surveymonkey.com>) or Google Forms (<https://www.google.com/forms/about/>). Send the invitation via email, e-newsletter, and social media to the whole community. Send personalized invitations, such as targeted e-mail to families with children and teens, adults who participate in programs, men’s and women’s groups, and more. Be sure to have the *Ministries Guide* available online for people to review.

If your church does not have a communication system to send invitations and directly communicate with those who are interested (matching gifts with ministries), this is the time to create one. There are three widely-used email systems, each with different annual subscription fees (and often nonprofit discounts): Constant Contact: <https://www.constantcontact.com>, Mail Chimp: <https://mailchimp.com>, and Flocknote: <https://flocknote.com>. It’s also a good time to select a group texting app to communicate with people.

**Step 5.** Develop a system to inventory people’s gifts and match them with potential ministry leadership positions. If you use SurveyMonkey or Google Forms you can easily create individual profiles of people who have responded, as well as Google Sheets or Excel spreadsheets of all people.

**Step 6.** Meet with people (in-person, phone, video meeting) to interview them and match people with a ministry leadership position. Connect them to the leader who is responsible for coordinating the ministry or program or activity.

**Step 7.** Prepare people for their ministry leadership role with specialized training and resources so that they can adequately perform their ministry. First, provide an orientation to their ministry so they feel confident and knowledgeable about their leadership role. Second, provide them with the knowledge and skills for performing their role. Leaders bring experience, so it’s important to discern what they need,

rather than what we think they need. Here are several key insights to guide designing training experiences for leaders.

- ◆ Training needs to be *applicable* to the leadership role. We customize the training around the required knowledge and skills. There is no such thing as a one-size-fits-all approach to training leaders. The scope and the depth of training are related to the requirements of the volunteer leadership position and the knowledge and skills the leader possesses. This approach focuses on what he or she *needs* to learn.
- ◆ Training needs to be *experiential* (“hands-on”), so that leaders develop both the knowledge and the practical skills for their ministry.
- ◆ Training needs to be *on-the-job*. The best context for training is the actual work the leader is doing. Learning and performing are intertwined. In this sense training is embedded in the doing of the ministry, such as planning meetings, individual preparation, conducting the program or activity, and evaluation meetings. Training is woven into every aspect of the ministry.
- ◆ Training needs to be *just-in-time* so that there is immediacy of application. This provides a way for the leader to see progress, immediate results, and some rewards for the time they put into training.
- ◆ Training needs to use a *variety of learning approaches*—independent learning, apprenticeship learning, group learning, and courses and workshops. There are lots of ways for leaders to develop the knowledge and skills they need.

**Step 8.** Support and encourage leaders continuously. First, recognize leaders as they begin their ministry. Sometimes this is done in a commissioning service where leaders are recognized and blessed. Second, provide leaders with easy access to the resources, information, and tools they need to accomplish their work. Third, gather information and evaluate the work of leaders through observation, consultation, group discussion, instruments, or other means; and guide leaders in creating plans for their continued growth. Fourth, express and celebrate the support of the church. There are many ways to do this throughout the year: public recognition (at worship, in a church bulletin or newsletter), support (child care while they provide their service), gatherings (an annual recognition dinner, an annual picnic), personal (notes of appreciation, praying for leaders), and enrichment (an annual retreat, support meetings, paying for workshops or conference fees).

# Leadership System Checklist

*Assess the leadership system in your church and identify areas for growth.*

## Part 1. Inviting People into Leadership

- |  |     |    |
|--|-----|----|
| 1. We list all the tasks and positions for which leaders will be needed.   | Yes | No |
| 2. We write a job description for each leadership position.  | Yes | No |
| 3. We use a variety of targeted strategies for recruiting leaders.   | Yes | No |
| 4. We use a variety of community-wide strategies for recruiting leaders.   | Yes | No |
| 5. We survey the church community to discover leadership abilities and interests (gifts inventory).                  | Yes | No |
| 6. We search throughout the year for persons with leadership potential.  | Yes | No |
| 7. We maintain an up-to-date database of potential leaders.  | Yes | No |
| 8. We select each prospective leader based on a thorough knowledge of both the job and the person.                   | Yes | No |
| 9. We interview each person and explain the responsibilities involved.   | Yes | No |
| 10. With each leader, we establish a clear agreement regarding the responsibilities and terms of his or her service. | Yes | No |

## Part 2. Preparing and Training Leaders

- |  |     |    |
|--|-----|----|
| 11. We customize the training to each leader and leadership position.  | Yes | No |
| 12. We use a variety of learning approaches including independent learning, apprenticeship, group learning, and courses and workshops. | Yes | No |
| 13. We provide an orientation program for all leaders.   | Yes | No |
| 14. We develop a training plan to prepare for leaders.   | Yes | No |
| 15. All leaders participate in the training they need.   | Yes | No |
| 16. We evaluate the effectiveness of the training with leaders.  | Yes | No |

## Part 3. Supporting Leaders

- |   |     |    |
|---|-----|----|
| 17. We authorize leaders to begin their service.  | Yes | No |
| 18. We provide all leaders with the resources and information they need for their work. | Yes | No |
| 19. We gather information and evaluate the work of leaders.                             | Yes | No |
| 20. We express and celebrate the community's appreciation for leaders.                  | Yes | No |

**We need to strengthen or improve the following areas of our leadership system:**

# Researching Ministry Opportunities in Your Church

---

This tool is one way to gather information about the leadership roles and needs from each ministry, program, and organization in your church.

## Ministry/Program/Organization

*Please indicate the key leader or leaders in your ministry, program, or organization.*

Leader/Coordinator	Leader/Coordinator	Leader/Coordinator
Name	Name	Name
Phone	Phone	Phone
Email	Email	Email

## Volunteer Jobs for Your Ministry/Program/Organization

*For each volunteer job please indicate the name of the job, a few key responsibilities, the abilities needed, where the job is done (in the parish, in the community, etc.), and the amount of time required. Please complete this information for each of your volunteer jobs.*

**Job**

Name

Responsibilities

Abilities Needed

Where?

When?

How Long?

**Job**

Name

Responsibilities

Abilities Needed

Where?

When?

How Long?

# Gifts Discernment Inventory

*Each one, as a good manager of God's different gifts, must use for the good of others the special gift he has received from God. (1 Peter 4:10)*

Each of us is like a gift package from God. Our combination of gifts is unique. Not one of us has ever been replicated on this earth! Our giftedness includes our talents and abilities, styles, interests, experiences, preferences, and passions for serving in the world. Our gifts are part of an abundant web of giftedness in our faith community. These gifts were given to us so that we might minister together as partners in God's work in the world. And our gifts are meant for us to enjoy too! When we live out our gifts, we discover the joys of an abundant life.

This inventory will help you identify your own gifts, and help our church community recognize and celebrate the abundance of our gifts. Complete the gifts inventory (left column) and then the list of ways you can be involved (right column). Equipped with a list of your gifts and talents, you can now consider the type of activities you want to be involved in. Think about which interests best match with your gifts and talents.

## About You

Name:

Address:

City/State/Zip

Phone

Email

Age

- |                                |                                      |
|--------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> 11-19 | <input type="checkbox"/> 50-59       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 20-29 | <input type="checkbox"/> 60-69       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 30-39 | <input type="checkbox"/> 70-79       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 40-49 | <input type="checkbox"/> 80 and over |

## Special Information

- I am interested in becoming more involved in the ministries of our church. Notify me of opportunities that fit my gifts.
- I am interested in changing some of my current commitments.
- I prefer a one-time commitment (1 hour to 1 day).
- I prefer a short-term commitment (up to 6 months)
- I prefer a specific, longer term of service (1 year or more)
- I am satisfied with my current involvements in the ministries of our church.
- I am unable to take on additional commitments at this time.
- I would like to talk with a member of the team about my using my gifts.



**Note: Add specific gifts you are seeking based on your analysis of leadership roles in the Ministry Guide.**

**My gifts are...**

*Check up to a dozen things you do well. Feel free to add other gifts not specifically listed.*

- accounting/finances/budget
- acting/drama
- artwork/crafts
- caring and compassion
- carpentry/building
- child care
- clerical work
- communication
- computer skills
- cooking and serving food
- coordinating and organizing projects
- dancing
- decorating
- facilitating and working with groups
- faith-sharing
- fundraising
- gardening
- graphic design
- hospitality
- housekeeping
- legal services
- listening
- maintaining buildings/grounds
- mechanical work
- mediating and problem-solving
- medical/nursing care
- mentoring/tutoring
- music: instrumental or voice
- photography
- planning/visioning
- praying
- promotion/advertising
- public speaking
- researching
- social justice work
- sound recording/audio production
- teaching/training
- video and video production
- visiting others
- web design
- writing

**Note: Add specific leadership opportunities from your Ministry Guide to this list.**

**I have experience or interest in these areas of involvement. . .**

*Mark the 5 greatest areas of **experience (E)** with +  
Mark the three greatest areas of **interest (I)** with ✓*

E	I	Potential Involvement
_____	_____	arts
_____	_____	children's ministry
_____	_____	care for and dignity of the elderly
_____	_____	consolation/grief ministry
_____	_____	communications
_____	_____	community outreach/service
_____	_____	data administration
_____	_____	disabilities / special needs
_____	_____	education: children
_____	_____	education: youth
_____	_____	education: adults
_____	_____	environment / care for the earth
_____	_____	family ministry
_____	_____	finance
_____	_____	global mission
_____	_____	grief and loss
_____	_____	health ministry
_____	_____	media (photography, videos)
_____	_____	music
_____	_____	new member welcome
_____	_____	pastoral care
_____	_____	prayer ministry
_____	_____	addiction and recovery
_____	_____	sacramental preparation
_____	_____	service to the poor and vulnerable
_____	_____	singles ministry
_____	_____	small faith communities
_____	_____	social justice
_____	_____	social/community life
_____	_____	spiritual growth
_____	_____	stewardship
_____	_____	web ministry
_____	_____	worship/liturgy
_____	_____	young adult ministry
_____	_____	youth ministry