

Faith Formation 2020: Creating 21st Century Faith Formation that Engages All Ages and Generations

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Envisioning Faith Formation through 4 Scenarios

Faith Formation 2020 Scenarios

Relationship with Organized Religion and Christianity

Receptive to Organized Religion

Scenario #4

Participating but Uncommitted

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

Scenario #1

Vibrant Faith and Active Engagement

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

LOW

Hunger for God and the Spiritual Life

HIGH

Scenario #3

Unaffiliated and Uninterested

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

Scenario #2

Spiritual but Not Religious

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

Resistant to Organized Religion

Researching Spiritual & Religious Needs

Focus Group Interviews

Organize focus groups of six to twelve people for each age group from young teens (middle school) through older adults, for parents of children, for parents of teens, and for people who represent each of the four scenarios. Be sure to select a diversity of people in each focus group, reflecting the ethnic/cultural and socio-economic character of your church, and the various states in life (single, married, divorced, and so on). Use the following questions as a guide for developing your own focus group interviews.

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

Profile

Based on the results of your research, discussion, and focus group interviews, identify *the most important* life issues and spiritual/religious needs of each group (individuals, age groups, families, generations) that your church needs to address in each of the four scenarios. For each scenario answer the question: *What would people in this scenario like to see the church offer them through faith formation?*

Scenario # _____

People	What are their priority spiritual and religious needs?	What they would like to see the church offer them through faith formation?

Key Features of a Lifelong Faith Formation Network

1. A Lifelong Faith Formation Network addresses the diverse life tasks and situations, spiritual and religious needs, and interests of all ages and generations by offering a variety of content, programs, activities, and resources.
2. A Lifelong Faith Formation Network recognizes that learning is a process of active inquiry with the initiative residing within the individual.
3. A Lifelong Faith Formation Network guides individuals and families in discerning their spiritual and religious needs and creating personal learning pathways for faith growth and learning.
4. A Lifelong Faith Formation Network incorporates informal learning that is intentional and unexpected, as well as formal learning (intentional and unexpected) in faith formation.
5. A Lifelong Faith Formation Network utilizes a variety of faith formation formats to address the diverse life tasks and situations, interests, and religious and spiritual needs of people.
 - *Faith Formation on Your Own*: through reading, online courses, audio and video programs, movies, television programs
 - *Faith Formation with a Mentor*: through spiritual direction and one-on-one study
 - *Faith Formation at Home*: through Bible reading, storytelling and caring conversation, prayer and devotions, rituals and traditions, and service
 - *Faith Formation in Small Groups*: through Bible and theology study groups, social issues study groups, faith sharing groups, lectionary-based groups, service/mission action groups, support groups, special interest groups
 - *Faith Formation in Large Groups*: through courses, speaker series, workshops, film festivals, retreats, conferences, intergenerational programs
 - *Faith Formation in the Congregation*: through Sunday worship, Church Year events and celebrations, service projects, ministry and leadership in the church and community
 - *Faith Formation in the Community and World*: through programs, courses, clinics, workshops, and presentations at universities, retreat centers, YMCAs, libraries, bookstores, regional church programs; through engagement in community/political action, local and global service and justice projects
6. A Lifelong Faith Formation Network offers programs and activities in face-to-face physical settings; in virtual, online settings, and in blended settings that combine both.
 - They can be offered only in *physical locations*, such as church facilities, homes, retreat centers, camps, and community settings
 - They can be offered only in *virtual settings*, such as an online course, collaborative wiki, and online resource center.
 - They can be offered in a *blended approach*, combining a gathering in a physical location with online delivery (activities, group projects, interaction) and some element of individual control over time, place, path, and/or pace.

Fully online program or activity with options for face-to-face interaction in physical settings.	Mostly or fully online program or activity with regular interaction and programming in physical settings.	An online platform that delivers most of the program or activities with leaders providing on-site support on a flexible and adaptive as-needed basis through in-person mentoring and small group sessions.	Programs and activities in physical settings guided by a leader with online components that extend beyond the program sessions.	Programs and activities in physical settings that include online resources to supplement the program content.
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7. A Lifelong Faith Formation Network offers a variety of faith formation programs, activities, experiences, and resources to address the diverse ways people learn and grow in faith.
8. A Lifelong Faith Formation Network incorporates communities of practice to connect individuals and groups throughout the congregation.
9. A Lifelong Faith Formation Network is guided by curators who find, organize and deliver the most relevant content and experiences to address the specific needs of people.

A Lifelong Faith Formation Network

*providing faith formation for everyone—
all ages and all generations—24x7x365*

