

Tool #1

A Vision of Lifelong Faith Formation

Most Christian churches have similar goals for faith formation. Churches want faith formation that helps all ages and generations to grow in their relationship with God, develop a deeper understanding of the Bible and their faith tradition, relate the Christian faith to life today, participate in the life and ministries of the faith community, and live as disciples of Jesus Christ in their daily life at home, in the workplace, in the community and the world. Churches want faith formation that touches the head, the heart, and actions of adults. They want faith formation that informs, forms, and transforms.

The Charter for Lifelong Christian Formation of the Episcopal Church, adopted at the Episcopal Church's General Convention in July 2009, captures so many of the elements of a lifelong vision that can shape the future of faith formation in Christian churches. The *Charter*, slightly adapted here to include all Christian churches, provides a comprehensive vision for developing a congregation's vision and practice of lifelong faith formation.

Christian formation is a lifelong journey with Christ, in Christ, and to Christ. Lifelong Christian faith formation is lifelong growth in the knowledge, service and love of God as followers of Christ and is informed by scripture, tradition and reason.

Through the Christian Church God **invites** all people:

- To enter into a prayerful life of worship, continuous learning, intentional outreach, advocacy and service.
- To hear the Word of God through scripture, to honor church teachings, and continually to embrace the joy of Baptism and Eucharist, spreading the Good News of the risen Christ and ministering to all.
- To respond to the needs of our constantly changing communities, as Jesus calls us, in ways that reflect our diversity and cultures, as we seek, wonder and discover together.
- To hear what the Spirit is saying to God's people, placing ourselves in the stories of our faith, thereby empowering us to proclaim the Gospel message.

Through the Christian Church, God **inspires** all people:

- To experience liturgy and worship, which draws us closer to God, helps us discern God's will, and encourages us to share our faith journeys.
- To study Scripture, mindful of the context of our societies and cultures, calling us to seek truth anew while remaining fully present in the community of faith.
- To develop new learning experiences, equipping disciples for life in a world of secular challenges, and carefully listening for the words of modern sages who embody the teachings of Christ.
- To prepare for a sustainable future by calling the community to become guardians of God's creation.

Through the Christian Church, God **transforms** all people:

- By doing the work Jesus Christ calls us to do, living into the reality that we are all created in the image of God and carrying out God's work of reconciliation, love, forgiveness, healing, justice and peace.
- By striving to be a loving and witnessing community, which faithfully confronts the tensions in the church and the world as we struggle to live God's will.
- By seeking out diverse and expansive ways to empower prophetic action, evangelism, advocacy and collaboration in our contemporary global context.
- By holding all accountable to lift every voice in order to reconcile oppressed and oppressor to the love of God in Jesus Christ our Lord.

(See *Charter for Lifelong Faith Formation* at www.formationcharter.com.)

Tool #2

Faith Formation 2020 Inventory

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 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.

Who we are addressing	Ways we are addressing this through faith formation

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 nondenominational Christian church focused on their spiritual needs, while others may find an outlet for their spiritual hunger in small communities of like-minded spiritual seekers, in acts of service—locally or globally, or in online spiritual resources and communities.

Who we are addressing	Ways we are addressing this through faith formation

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.

Who we are addressing	Ways we are addressing this through faith formation

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.

Who we are addressing	Ways we are addressing this through faith formation

Tool #3

Life Issues and Spiritual/Religious Needs

Develop a profile of the spiritual and religious needs, interests, and life situations of people in each of the four scenarios.

1. **Scenario #1. Vibrant Faith and Active Engagement**
2. **Scenario #2. Spiritual, but Not Religious**
3. **Scenario #3. Unaffiliated and Uninterested**
4. **Scenario #4. Participating, but Uncommitted**

For each scenario answer the questions:

- *Who are the people in your community in this scenario? How would you describe them?*
- *What are the religious and spiritual needs of people (age groups and families) in this scenario? How would you describe one or two aspects of each group's religious and spiritual hopes or desires?*

Consider the following areas in your research:

1. **Life Issues:** What's happening in the lives and world of people (age group or family) today—the myriad dimensions of human life today: family, work, leisure, relationships, sexuality, suffering and grief, social and political issues, community issues?
2. **Life Cycle Tasks and Generational Characteristics:** What are the developmental life tasks facing people in the decades of life from childhood through old adulthood? What are the unique generational characteristics of the iGeneration (2000 and later), the Millennial Generation (1980–1999), Generation X (1964–1979), Baby Boom Generation (1946–1964), and the Builder Generation (1945 and earlier)?
3. **Milestones and Transitions:** What are the significant milestones/transitions throughout life, such as marriages, births, graduations, geographic relocations, family formation and re-formation, career changes, empty nests, retirement, unanticipated illness, divorce, and the loss of loved ones?
4. **Religious Needs:** What are the significant religious and learning needs of people at each stage of life?
5. **Spiritual Needs:** What are the significant spiritual needs of individuals and families at each stage of life?
6. **Ethnic/Cultural Needs:** Who are the ethnic/cultural communities in your church? What are the unique lived experiences, needs, and aspirations of people from each ethnic/cultural community in your church?

Tool #4

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?

Tool #5

A Profile of Spiritual & Religious Needs

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 #1. Vibrant Faith and Active Engagement

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

Scenario #2. Spiritual, but Not Religious

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

Scenario #3. Unaffiliated and Uninterested

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

Scenario #4. Participating, but Uncommitted

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

Tool #6

Resources for the Lifelong Faith Formation Network

1. People Resources

Using your priority issues and learning needs as guide, conduct a gifts/skills/knowledge survey of the people resources in your church, the wider community, the wider church, colleges and seminaries, and church-related organizations who can be invited to take a leadership role in the Network plan. Consider people who teach courses or specialized programs, guest presenters on specialized topics, leaders for small groups and Bible studies, prayer guides/spiritual directors, and leaders for service/mission programs .

Priority Needs	Potential Program Leader	Particular Gift/Talent/Skill/Knowledge

2. Face-to-Face Faith Formation Programs and Activities

Identify face-to-face faith formation activities that you can use to address priority issues and spiritual/religious needs. There are a variety of options: (1) programs that your church is already sponsoring, (2) an opportunity that you are not utilizing (for example, design reflection activities around Sunday worship), (3) a new program that your church can design or adopt, and (4) a program sponsored by another organization that you can promote as part of your plan. Consider programs in your church, the wider community, the wider church, retreat and conference centers, colleges and universities, and religious organizations. Indicate the faith formation model(s) used in the program: Faith Formation on Your Own, Faith Formation at Home, Faith Formation in Small Groups, Faith Formation in Large Groups, Faith Formation in the Congregation, and/or Faith Formation in the Community and World.

Priority Needs	Program	Faith Formation Model	Location	Date/Timing	Cost

3. Print and Media Faith Formation Resources

Identify print and media resources from publishers and religious organizations that you can use to address the priority issues and spiritual/religious needs. Indicate which of the six faith formation model(s) are used in the resource.

Priority Needs	Resource	Publisher	Faith Formation Model	Cost

4. Online Faith Formation Programs, Activities and Resources

Identify online faith formation programs, activities, social networks, and resources that you can use to address priority issues and spiritual/religious needs. Indicate which of the six faith formation model(s) are used in the activity.

Priority Needs	Website	Activity	Faith Formation Models	Website Address	Cost

Tool #7

Designing New Initiatives for Faith Formation 2020

There are three elements in the design process: (1) *inspiration*—the need or opportunity that motivates the search for solutions; (2) *ideation*—the process of generating, developing, and testing ideas; and (3) *implementation*—the path that leads from the project stage into people’s lives.

Step 1. Select a priority need.

Select a priority need for a scenario and group of people for your new initiative.

Step 2. Consult the Faith Formation 2020 Strategies.

1. Faith Formation through the Life of the Whole Church (Scenarios 1 and 4)
2. Faith Formation using Digital Media and Web Technologies (All Scenarios)
3. Family Faith Formation (Scenarios 1, 2, and 4)
4. Intergenerational Faith Formation (Scenarios 1 and 4)
5. Generational Faith Formation (Scenarios 1, 2, and 4)
 - Faith formation with the iGeneration and the Millennial Generation
 - Faith formation with Generation X
 - Faith formation with the Baby Boomer Generation
 - Faith formation with the Builder Generation
6. Milestones Faith Formation (All Scenarios)
7. Faith Formation in Christian Practices (All Scenarios)
8. Transforming the World: Engagement in and Formation for Service and Mission (All Scenarios)
9. Spiritual Formation (All Scenarios)
10. Multi-Ethnic Faith Formation (All Scenarios)
11. Faith Formation for Spiritual Seekers (Scenario 2)
12. Apprenticeships in Discipleship (Scenarios 2 and 4)
13. Pathways to Vibrant Faith and Active Engagement (Scenario 2 and 4)
14. Faith Formation in Third Place Settings (Scenarios 2 and 3)
15. Empowering the Community to Share their Faith (Scenario 1)
16. Interfaith Education and Dialogue (Scenario 1)

Step 3. Generate creative ideas.

Generate ideas for innovative programs, activities, and/or strategies to provide faith formation. Remember the rules of effective brainstorming:

- Defer judgment.
- Encourage wild ideas.
- Build on the ideas of others.
- Stay focused on topic.
- One conversation at a time.
- Go for quantity.

Step 4. Evaluate the ideas.

Evaluate your ideas and select one or more innovative programs, activities, and/or strategies for your target audience. The group can discuss the ideas to see which one(s) surface as the best choices or you can use a voting strategy to select ideas.

Step 5. Design an implementation plan.

Describe, in detail, each of your new initiatives (strategy, program, activity, or resource). Develop a plan for each initiative by developing the actions that you will need to take to move from idea to implementation. Use the “Design Worksheet.”

- How many of the six faith formation models will be utilized?
- What are the dates and times?
- What is the location: physical/facility and/or online/website?
- What are the implementation steps and target dates (timeline) for completing each step.
- What resources will you need to implement the initiative.
- How much will the initiative cost?
- How many leaders will you need to implement the initiative, how you will find them, and how you will prepare them?

Step 5. Implement the initiative through small scale prototyping.

Consider a version 1.0 pilot effort (prototyping) of the program, activity, strategy or resource with a small group of your target audience before scaling-up the initiative to reach a wider audience. Through prototyping, you can test the initiative and the implementation plan, get feedback from your target audience, improve the initiative, and then develop plans to reach a wide audience.

Step 6. Implement the initiative with a wider audience and continue evaluation and improvements.

After making adjustments based on the pilot, develop version 2.0 and implement the plan with wider audience. Use the marketing suggestions on **Tool #9** to assist you in promoting the initiative to a wider audience. Continue to improve the initiative. Communicate the stories and examples of the benefits and blessings that are coming to individuals, groups, families and to your whole church community. Continue to reach new audiences.

Six Faith Formation Models

Churches can use the six faith formation models to (1) inventory their current faith formation programs, activities, and resources, (2) uncover new faith formation opportunities, and (3) design faith formation that offers the same “content” in six different models, giving people six ways to learn and grow in faith. The six faith formation models include:

- **Faith Formation on Your Own:** through reading, online courses, audio and video programs, movies, television programs
- **Faith Formation at Home:** through Bible reading, storytelling and caring conversation, prayer and devotions, rituals and traditions, 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/mission activities, 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

Every faith formation activity plan for an age group or family can offer a variety of faith formation models with differing levels of depth and commitment, in online and face-to-face settings, and at a variety of times and locations that are convenient for people. This approach means that people can have a variety of ways to learn and grow in faith, removing many of the more common obstacles to participating in faith formation.

The six faith formation models expand the ways a church can address a particular spiritual or religious need, a church event or church year season, the Bible and biblical teachings, and the religious tradition and teachings. For example, a faith formation activity plan for adults during Lent could include the following activities:

- providing a book of Scripture readings, reflections, and prayers for each day of Lent (print and online)
- making all the sermons/homilies during Lent available online in mp3 files with a personal and small group study guide
- providing daily Bible reading, reflections, and prayer emailed to adults and available online
- sponsoring a Sunday morning Bible study on the Lenten lectionary readings offered after the Sunday worship service, and an online small group meeting during the week to study and reflect on the readings
- presenting a guest speaker for a two-evening program on Lenten themes during the first two weeks of Lent; making the video of the two presentations available online in a podcast with a study guide
- promoting a retreat day on a Lenten theme sponsored by the local retreat house the week prior to Holy Week
- providing resources for Lenten study and reflection online
- celebrating a reconciliation service during the third week of Lent

Face-to-Face & Virtual Online Faith Formation

Faith formation includes learning activities in physical places and virtual spaces, blending face-to-face, interactive learning with virtual, online learning. Online websites, social networking services, and digital technologies (an iPod Touch, smart cell phones, iPad) mean that churches can deliver faith formation experiences and resources anytime and anywhere, reaching people wherever they go online (home, work, school, vacation, coffee house). The interplay between learning in physical places and virtual online spaces can revolutionize faith formation in a church.

There are two ways to envision the relationship between the physical and virtual. The first approach begins with people's participation in face-to-face learning activities (small group, large group, congregation, community/world) and then uses virtual online spaces (learning activities, print/audio/ video, social networking) to extend, deepen, and support the learning that began in the physical program. For example, a church sponsors a three-session program or intergenerational program on the coming year's lectionary cycle of readings, such as the Gospel of Luke. The learning from this short program is then extended and deepened with (1) online weekly commentaries and activities on the Sunday readings from the Gospel of Luke, (2) an online Bible study program (independent or with a small group) on the Gospel of Luke, (3) a university course on the Gospel of Luke on iTunes U, and 4) an online blog that allows people to post their reflections on each Sunday's reading and invites discussion online.

The second approach integrates faith formation in virtual spaces (online) with faith formation in physical spaces using the six faith formation models. For example, a church can use its website to develop an online spiritual formation center focusing on spiritual disciplines and practices and using a variety of already existing resources.

On Your Own

- Daily prayer delivered to people's computers and mobile devices: www.sacredspace.ie, www.taize.fr, www.upperroom.org, www.loyolapress.com
- Fixed hour prayer online: www.explorefaith.org/prayer/fixed/hours.php
- Spiritual guides and mentoring available for people
- Spiritual reading: a list of recommended books on the church website
- Online retreat: *A Thirty-Four week retreat for Everyday Life* from Creighton University, (<http://onlineministries.creighton.edu/CollaborativeMinistry/cmo-retreat.html>)
- Online spirituality course: forty-day retreats with spiritual guides like Thomas Merton, Joyce Rupp, Henri Nouwen, and Joan Chittister from *Spirituality and Practice* (www.SpiritualityandPractice.com)

At Home

- Weekly and seasonal prayer resources: online and in booklets

In Small Groups

- Prayer groups
- Spiritual formation course: *Companions in Christ: A Small-Group Experience in Spiritual Formation* for adults, *The Way of Pilgrimage* for youth, and *Companions in Christ: The Way of the Child* for

children (Upper Room, www.companionsinchrist.org)

- Spiritual book clubs: monthly meetings to discuss the book-of-the-month

In Large Groups

- Intergenerational learning programs on prayer: monthly sessions for all ages on prayer practices
- Retreat experiences at church or a retreat center
- Workshop series on the spiritual disciplines: *lectio divina*, silence, contemplation, the Examen, meditation, spiritual reading, fixed hour prayer
- Monastery trip to experience monastic life and prayer

In the Congregation

- Church-wide retreat experience
- Prayer room with resources about prayer and spiritual practices
- Advent and Lent prayer services

Design Worksheet for a New Initiative

Scenario # _____

Priority Spiritual/Religious Need: _____

Target Participants: _____

Faith Formation Models

- on your own
- at home
- small group
- large group
- congregation
- community and world

Dates and Times _____

Location (physical/facility and/or online/website) _____

Implementation Steps and Timeline

What	When	Who
1.		
2.		
3.		
4.		
5.		
6.		
7.		
8.		
9.		
10.		

Resources Needed to Implement the Initiative

Leaders Needed to Implement the Initiative

Costs to Implement the Initiative

Tool #9. Marketing Suggestions

Create Your Message

1. **Find the inherent drama within your offering:** What's interesting in your project? How does it respond to something within the lives of people?
2. **Translate that inherent drama into a meaningful benefit:** What are the major benefits in participating? Why should people respond? The benefit should come directly from the inherently dramatic feature. And even though you have four or five benefits, stick with one or two—three at most.
3. **Get people's attention:** How will you interest people? People do not pay attention to advertising. They pay attention only to things that interest them. So you've just got to interest them.
4. **Motivate your audience to do something:** What do you want people to do once you've introduced the Network? You must tell people exactly what you want them to do. Tell them to go online to register for a program, send in a registration form, call someone, and so on.
5. **Be sure you are communicating clearly:** Do people understand what you're talking about? Make sure you are putting your message across. Show your promotion or booklet or website or advertising to ten people and ask them what the main point is. If one person misunderstands, that means 10% of the audience will misunderstand. Make revisions so your message is clear.

You may need to develop several “messages” for each target audience. Be sure to pay careful attention to the titles of your programs so that they capture people's interests. Develop descriptions that are positive in tone, indicate clearly the content or focus of the program, and include the particulars (date, location, cost, and time).

Develop Marketing Strategies for the Lifelong Faith Formation Network

1. Brainstorm marketing/promotion strategies: print catalog of the Network, website, online ads, e-newsletter, email, Facebook page, Twitter messages, and so on.
2. Use your church's website to promote the Network, post regular announcements, new program offerings, calendar, and so on.
3. Establish a Facebook site for your project and include a calendar of events with descriptions, locations, times, a link to your church's website, current news, stories from people who are participating, and so on.
4. Send email or regular mail invitations targeted to particular groups or ages.
5. Have the pastor share the benefits of the Network at Sunday worship.
6. Host information sessions to describe the Network, for example, after Sunday worship.
7. Promote the Network in the community: coffee shops, YMCA/YWCA, gyms, bookstores, theaters, schools/colleges, and so on.
8. Include information about the Network in new member packets. Send a personalized invitation to new members.
9. Promote the Network at all gathered programs and events in the church.