



# Faith Formation 2020 National Initiative

Envisioning Dynamic, Engaging and Inspiring Faith  
Formation for the 21st Century

A Project of LifelongFaith Associates

## Group Consultation Process

### Participant Preparation

Prepare the participants for the consultation meeting using one of the three options below:

- Purchase copies of the Summer 2009 Lifelong Faith Journal: *Faith Formation 2020 Special Report—Envisioning the Future*. Individual copies are available for order online at [www.LifelongFaith.com](http://www.LifelongFaith.com). If you want 5 or more copies, there is a special price of \$7 per copy including shipping. This is \$2 off the individual issue price of \$9 (including shipping). Send your order to [jroberto@lifelongfaith.com](mailto:jroberto@lifelongfaith.com) and we will bill you.

**Have the participants read the following sections in the Summer 2009 Journal to prepare for the consultation:**

1. Part One. A Way to Think about the Future of Faith
2. Part Two. Thirteen Trends & Forces Affecting the Future of Faith Formation
3. Part Three. Envisioning the Future: Four Scenarios for the Future of Faith Formation 2010-2020

- You can also access excerpts of the *Faith Formation 2020 Special Report—Envisioning the Future* by going online to the Faith Formation 2020 resources at [www.LifelongFaith.com](http://www.LifelongFaith.com).

**Have the participants read the following materials online at [www.LifelongFaith.com](http://www.LifelongFaith.com) to prepare for the consultation:**

1. Read the “Overview of the Working Paper on Faith Formation in 2020.”
2. Read the PDF file of the summary of the “Thirteen Trends and Forces Influencing the Future of Faith Formation in a Changing Church and World.”
3. Read the PDF file of the “Four Scenarios for the Future of Faith Formation in 2020.” People may want to print a copy of the Four Scenarios document to use as a reference to help them complete the Faith Formation 2020 survey.

- You can also print the PDF files of the excerpts from the *Faith Formation 2020 Special Report—Envisioning the Future* by going online to Faith Formation 2020 resources at [www.LifelongFaith.com](http://www.LifelongFaith.com).

**Have the participants read the following materials (in print form) to prepare for the consultation:**

1. Read the summary of the “Thirteen Trends and Forces Influencing the Future of Faith Formation in a Changing Church and World.”
2. Read “Four Scenarios for the Future of Faith Formation in 2020.”

# Consultation Process

## Preparation

- **Download** the “Faith Formation 2020 Version 1.0” PowerPoint presentation to guide the group through the consultation process. Go to [www.LifelongFaith.com](http://www.LifelongFaith.com) and then the Faith Formation 2020 section.
- **Review** the Summer 2009 Lifelong Faith Journal: *Faith Formation 2020 Special Report—Envisioning the Future*.
- Please record your group’s responses on your computer (if possible) or in written form, and send the responses to John Roberto at [jroberto@lifelongfaith.com](mailto:jroberto@lifelongfaith.com) or 40 Brighton Road, Naugatuck, CT 06770.

## Process

### Part 1. Thinking about the Future

1. Review the understanding of scenarios and scenario planning using the PowerPoint presentation. Use Part 1 in the *Faith Formation 2020 Special Report—Envisioning the Future* as reference.

### Part 2. Thirteen Driving Forces

1. Introduce “Outside-in Thinking” and the nature of driving forces using the PowerPoint presentation and the material in Part 2 of the *Faith Formation 2020 Special Report—Envisioning the Future*.
2. Invite the group to discuss the “Consider This” question. Record the group’s responses on your computer if possible or in written form.
  - *What 3-4 driving forces do you think will have the most impact on the future shape of faith formation in Christian churches in the next decade?*
3. Review the 13 driving forces in Part Two of the *Faith Formation 2020 Special Report—Envisioning the Future* using the PowerPoint presentation. Supplement the presentation by drawing additional information from the Special Report.
4. Invite the group to discuss the “Consider This” questions. Record the group’s responses on your computer if possible or in written form.
  - *Will these forces and trends continue on their present course or change direction?*
  - *What impact will they have on the future direction of faith formation in the decade from 2010-2020?*

### Part 3. Four Scenarios

1. Introduce the four scenarios by presenting the two “critical uncertainties” that make-up the Faith Formation 2020 Matrix, using the PowerPoint presentation and the commentary in Part Three of the *Faith Formation 2020 Special Report—Envisioning the Future*.

2. Present the four scenario descriptions using the PowerPoint presentation and the commentary in Part Three of the *Faith Formation 2020 Special Report—Envisioning the Future*.
3. Invite the group to discuss the “Consider This” questions. Record the group’s responses on your computer if possible or in written form.
  - *How well do these four scenarios describe the situation of faith formation—today and in 2020?*
  - *Which of the four scenarios will rise in ascendancy over the next decade?*
  - *Where are people in our churches and culture moving?*
  - *How well are churches prepared to address each scenario?*
4. Review the features of each of the four scenarios using the PowerPoint presentation and Part Three of the *Faith Formation 2020 Special Report—Envisioning the Future*. It would be helpful if everyone had a copy of the document “Four Scenarios for the Future of Faith Formation in 2020” from the Journal or reprinted from the PDF file online. After the presentation of the features for each scenario, invite the group to discuss the “Consider This” question. Record the group’s responses on your computer if possible or in written form.
  - *What features or strategies would you add to this Scenario that you think are essential for developing this scenario in a church?*

#### **Part 4. Online Survey**

**Conclude the consultation by inviting people to go online to complete the Faith Formation 2020 Survey.** They survey gives people the opportunity to give feedback on the four scenarios and their features, and add their own ideas for the future of faith formation. People should go to [www.LifelongFaith.com](http://www.LifelongFaith.com) and look in the Faith Formation 2020 section for the link to the online survey at [SurveyMonkey.com](http://SurveyMonkey.com).

Please remind people that **the consultation process ends on November 1, 2009.**

**THANK YOU!**

# Overview of the Working Paper on Faith Formation in 2020

---

## Key Trends and Forces Affecting the Future of Faith Formation in a Changing Church and World

We know that we are called to read the signs of the times, but so often these seem unclear or contradictory. We cannot know what the future will hold beforehand. But we can see forces and trends in the present, which, continuing on their current course, will impact our focus: *What will Christian faith formation in churches look like in 2020?* What are the “driving forces” of change that will shape future dynamics in predictable and unpredictable ways. Christian churches are up against a number of significant social, cultural, technological, and economic forces that make faith formation for all ages and generations quite difficult. We have identified thirteen “driving” trends and forces because they seem to be having a significant impact on faith formation today and we project that they will continue to do so over the next decade. The key question to consider as you review the driving trends and forces is this: ***Will these forces and trends continue on their present course or change direction, and what impact they will have on the future direction of faith formation in the decade from 2010-2020?***

- Trend 1. Declining Participation in Christian Churches
- Trend 2. Growth in No Religious Affiliation
- Trend 3. Becoming More “Spiritual” and Less “Religious”
- Trend 4. Influence of Individualism on Christian Identity and Community Life
- Trend 5. Increasing Social, Cultural, and Religious Diversity in the U.S.
- Trend 6. Growing Influence of Hispanic/Latino Religious Faith
- Trend 7. Identifying a New Stage of Life: “Emerging Adulthood”
- Trend 8. The Rise of a Distinctive Post-Boomer Faith and Spirituality
- Trend 9. Changing Structures and Patterns of Family Life in the United States
- Trend 10. Rediscovering the Impact of Parents and Families on Faith Practice
- Trend 11. Living in a Digital World
- Trend 12. Educating in New Ways
- Trend 13. Increasing Numbers of Adults 65 and Older

## Four Scenarios for the Future of Faith Formation 2010-2020

To help church leaders envision the future of faith formation we have employed a process called *scenario thinking*. No one can definitively map the future, but we can explore the possibilities in ways that support preparation for the future and good decision-making about the directions church life and faith formation need to take. The four faith formation scenarios we developed can help you and your church wrestle with the key issues and developments that shape what the future may hold and prepare more effectively. The scenarios presented in this report are meant to stimulate discussion about what choices Christian churches need to make today in order to thrive in 2020. When reading this report, please bear in mind that *this work is intended to begin a stimulating discussion about the future of faith formation—not to propose readymade answers or solutions*. This is the beginning of a conversation!

Scenarios are built around critical uncertainties about the external environment. That is, the stories are based on different outcomes of a few key uncertainties that are both most important to the future of faith formation in Christian churches *and* most uncertain in terms of future outcome. It is often useful to create a two-by-two scenario matrix based on two axes that represent the extreme possible outcomes of the two most critical uncertainties. After much discussion and consideration, the framework that we

selected for the final set of scenarios is a matrix with two axes that represent two critical uncertainties in the external environment that will affect the future of faith formation from 2010-2020:

- **Will trends in U.S. culture lead people to become more *receptive* to organized religion, and in particular Christianity or will trends lead people to become more *resistant* to organized religion and Christianity?**
- **Will people’s searching and hunger for God and the spiritual life *increase* over the next decade or will people’s need for God and the spiritual life *decrease*.**

The “future of faith formation framework” was developed because the combination of *receptivity* to organized religion and Christianity, and *openness* or *hunger* for God and the spiritual life seemed to best express people’s contemporary experience today and over the next decade.

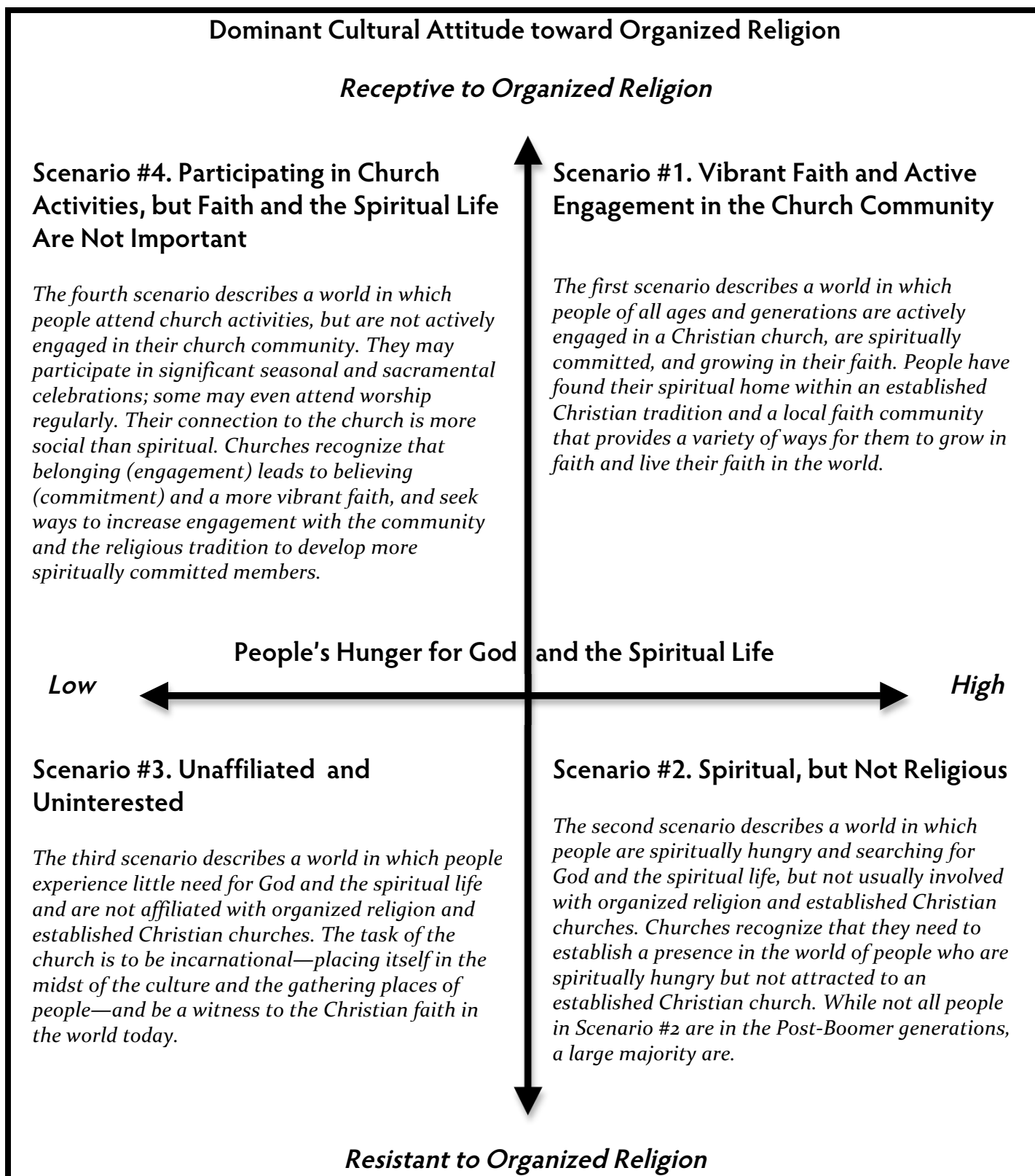
At the same time that this matrix represents a map of today, it can also be seen as a moving image of future reality. That is, each of the four quadrants of this map also represents a dynamic story that is based on a different future outcome of the two critical uncertainties. ***Which of the scenarios will rise in ascendency over the next decade? Where are people in our churches and culture moving?***

Once this framework was identified, four scenarios were created to express the range of possible futures facing congregational faith formation in the next decade: 2010-2020. Each scenario story explains why the “main story” of faith formation in 2020 will be framed by the response of Christian churches to the dominant culture’s attitude toward organized religion (receptive or resistant) and to people’s hunger for God and the spiritual life (high or low). The four scenario headlines are:

- Scenario #1. Vibrant Faith and Active Engagement in the Church Community
- Scenario #2. Spiritual, but Not Religious .
- Scenario #3. Unaffiliated and Uninterested
- Scenario #4. Participating in Church Activities, but Faith and the Spiritual Life Are Not Important

The four scenario narratives with their key features seek to provide insights on how churches might respond to these key trends and forces over the next decade. The focus of each scenario is viewed from the response of the local church: *What will congregational faith formation look like in 2020?* Every strategy and idea needs to be adapted to the size, geography, people, and culture of a particular church. Many of the features in Scenario 1 are used, with adjustments and adaptations, in the other three scenarios. Many of the features of Scenario 2 are also found in Scenario 3, as both scenarios share a common resistance to organized religion.

# Scenario Matrix for Faith Formation 2020 (Version 1.0)



## Scenario #1. Vibrant Faith and Active Engagement in the Church Community

- **Receptive to Organized Religion**
- **High Hunger for God and the Spiritual Life**

*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 a variety of ways for them to grow in faith and live their faith in the world.*

### Key Features of Scenario #1

#### Faith formation in 2020...

1. Creates a community of lifelong learners, utilizing the whole church as a community of formation and transformation for lifelong faith formation for all ages and generations.
2. Offers people of all ages a compelling vision of a Christian way of life that is worth living and guides them in developing that way of life.
3. Is intentionally intergenerational.
4. Is personalized and customized.
5. Is fashioned around the significant milestones and life transitions across the life span.
6. Engages all ages in mission and service.
7. Promotes spiritual formation and transformation throughout life.
8. Is inclusive of a diversity of ethnic cultures and their religious traditions and expressions.
9. Fosters the capacity for people to engage in the public arena as people of faith in constructive dialogue with a diversity of religious traditions, communities, and expressions.
10. Provides learning that is experiential, image-rich, multi-sensory, interactive, engaging, and varied in learning style.
11. Is making a massive investment of time, resources, and energy in family faith formation at home and at church.
12. Is 24x7 through the dynamic use of new digital media technologies.
13. Creates a multi-dimensional platform for faith formation with *face-to-face* interaction/experience at the core leading to continuing learning and faith growth or *virtual* interaction leading to face-to-face interactions and experiences.
14. Engages the distinctive style of faith and spirituality of the Post-Boomer generations through innovative approaches and models.

## Scenario #2. Spiritual, but Not Religious

- **Resistant to Organized Religion**
- **High Hunger for God and the Spiritual Life**

*The second scenario describes a world in which people are spiritually hungry and searching for God and the spiritual life, but not usually involved with organized religion and established Christian churches. Churches recognize that they need to establish a presence in the world of people who are spiritually hungry but not attracted to an established Christian church. While not all people in Scenario #2 are in the Post-Boomer generations, a large majority are.*

## Key Features of Scenario #2

### Faith formation in 2020...

1. Establishes a “Third Place” gathering space, planted in the midst of the community, that offers hospitality, builds relationships, provides a variety of programs and activities, and nourishes the spiritual life of people.
2. Offers a guided process for spiritually hungry people to become spiritually committed and actively engaged in the church community.
3. Offers an apprenticeship process for spiritually hungry people to experience the transformative power of God and the Gospel.
4. Assists and supports spiritually-hungry people in establishing “House Churches” for spiritual growth, faith formation, worship and prayer, and service to the community.
5. Creates a virtual spiritual formation center where people can diagnose their spiritual health and find online classes and resources for developing their relationship with Christ.
6. Establishes a virtual “church campus” to connect with the everyday life of spiritually hungry people, offer them online ways to gather and grow in faith, and support face-to-face programs and activities.
7. Sponsors local and global “transforming the world” projects—serving the poor and vulnerable, working for justice and peace, and caring for creation—to engage people in action projects with the church and in the wider community.
8. Offers people of all ages a variety of Christian practice immersion experiences that give people a firsthand experience of a Christian practice, and guide them in living the practice in their daily lives.
9. Offers a variety of spiritual formation experiences in diverse settings, focusing on spiritual disciplines and practices.

## Scenario #3. Unaffiliated and Uninterested

- **Resistant to Organized Religion**
- **Low Need or Interest in God and the Spiritual Life**

*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 task of the church is to be incarnational—placing itself in the midst of the culture and the gathering places of people—and be a witness to the Christian faith in the world today.*

## Key Features of Scenario #3

### Faith formation in 2020...

1. Establishes a “Third Place” gathering space, planted in the midst of the community, that offers hospitality, builds relationships, provides a variety of programs and activities, and nourishes the spiritual life of people.
2. Offers a guided process for spiritually hungry people to become spiritually committed and actively engaged in the church community.
3. Offers an apprenticeship process for those who are interested in an experience of the transformative power of God and the Gospel.
4. Establishes an online presence by being actively engaged in social networking sites and in working with websites that reach the unaffiliated and uninterested.
5. Establishes a virtual “church campus” to connect with the everyday life of spiritually hungry people, offer them online ways to gather and grow in faith, and support face-to-face programs and activities.

6. Sponsors local and global “transforming the world” projects—serving the poor and vulnerable, working for justice and peace, and caring for creation—to engage people in the church and in the wider community.
7. Sponsors festivals, conferences, and events with a spiritual/faith perspective for the whole community.

## **Scenario #4. Participating in Church Activities, but Faith and the Spiritual Life Are Not Significant**

- **Receptive to Organized Religion**
- **Low Need or Interest in God and the Spiritual Life**

*The fourth scenario describes a world in which people attend church activities, but are not actively engaged in their church community. They may participate in significant church events such as Christmas and Easter and sacramental celebrations involving their families. Some may even attend worship regularly. But they do not have a strong connection to the congregation; their connections are more social than spiritual. Faith and the spiritual life are not a significant part of their life. Many are looking for an opportunity to become engaged and to develop their spiritual lives. Churches recognize that belonging (engagement) leads to believing (commitment) and a more vibrant faith, and seek ways to increase engagement with the community and the religious tradition to develop more spiritually committed members.*

### **Key Features of Scenario #4**

#### **Faith formation in 2020...**

1. Increases active engagement by connecting faith formation programming to participation in church life.
2. Creates expectations for family participation in learning and church life by providing a yearly faith growth plan with a variety of options for experiencing the Christian faith through community life.
3. Offers people of all ages a variety of Christian practices immersion experiences that give people a firsthand experience of a Christian practice and guides them in living the practice in their daily lives.
4. Utilizes the naturally-occurring milestones and life transitions in people’s lives to deepen their faith, engagement in church life, and family faith practices.
5. Begins faith formation early in life.
6. Utilizes the new digital media technologies to deliver faith formation opportunities and experiences in virtual spaces that connect people to church even if their participation in church life and faith formation programming is occasional.
7. Is inclusive of a people from a diversity of ethnic cultures providing a hospitable and welcoming community, and programs and resources that are culturally appropriate and in the language of the people.
8. Guides people in renewing their faith as a foundation for deeper growth in faith.