



A new vision of faith formation for the 21st century. . .

A new set practices and approaches for faith formation with all ages & generations. . .

A new online leadership formation experience to equip Christian leaders for 21st century faith formation. . .

Foundations

Every congregation wants vibrant, life-transforming faith formation that promotes a lifelong journey of discipleship—experiencing, learning, and practicing the Christian faith as we seek to follow Jesus and his Way in today’s world—for all ages and generations. **Vibrant Faith University** seeks to equip Christian leaders to develop faith forming communities that nurture this journey of discipleship in the 21st century.

Vibrant Faith University is developed around the emerging concept of creating a new faith forming ecosystem in the 21st century. For more than one hundred years in the United States, Christian churches had a highly integrated religious ecosystem. It was comprised of multigenerational family faith practice and religious transmission at home; strong congregational community relationships and church life, especially participation in Sunday worship; weekly Sunday school for children and youth (and in many cases adults); and church groups (youth, men, women). Many Christian traditions relied heavily on the ethnic faith traditions of their people to transmit faith from generation to generation—at home and at church. And all of this was surrounded by an American culture that explicitly or implicitly supported the Christian value system and Christian practices.

This ecosystem has eroded over the past several decades because of changes in the culture and society, in the family, in technology and communication, and much more. The generational and socio-cultural changes in America over the past four decades have had a profound impact on the transmission of religious faith from generation to generation. There has been a decline in religious transmission at home and the ability of parents and grandparents to pass on faith to the younger generations. We are now witnessing a second generation of families in which there is non-transmission of religious faith. This is having a significant effect on the faith forming impact of congregations, as witnessed in the decline in the participation of families, children, and youth in worship, children’s faith formation, and youth ministry.

Faith transmission is most definitely a family affair, but changes in the environment surrounding the family have a huge impact. The changes occurring in the contextual factors and in the influences from religious organizations are having a direct impact on the ability of the family (parents and grandparents) to transmit religious beliefs, practices, and way of life, and an overall decline in religious transmission. And the changes within the family—rise of interfaith marriages, impact of divorce, and transmission of non-affiliation from generation to generation—are also major contributors toward this decline in religious transmission.

It is becoming increasingly clear that the most important tasks for church leaders in faith formation today is to create a new faith forming ecosystem that is faithful to the continuing mission of making disciples and forming faith across the whole life span and, at the same, responsive to the challenges of the twenty-first century and the religious and spiritual needs of people today. This new faith forming ecosystem incorporates five, essential, interconnected components: 1) intergenerational faith formation in the congregation, 2) age group and generational faith formation in a variety of physical places and online

spaces, 3) family faith formation at home, 4) missional faith formation to the spiritual but not religious and the unaffiliated, and 5) online and digital faith formation.

A New Approach

Vibrant Faith University is new.

The curriculum is new—developed around the *new* knowledge, practices, approaches, and skills of a 21st century faith forming ecosystem. **Vibrant Faith University** provides Christian leaders with the knowledge and skills, practices and approaches, support and encouragement to embrace a new vision for faith formation and implement a comprehensive approach in their faith community that will engage all ages and generations in a lifelong process of growing as disciples of Jesus Christ.

Vibrant Faith University equips Christian leaders with the knowledge and skills, practices and approaches for faith formation that. . .

- engages all generations—intergenerationally
- nurtures family faith and equips parents to transmit faith at home
- addresses the unique needs of age groups—children, youth, and adults
- develops missional outreach to the unaffiliated and uninvolved and invite people into discipleship and participation in the faith community
- utilizes online communities and resources, and digitally-enabled strategies for faith formation

The curriculum consists of six online courses –each spanning four months—offered in sequence over two years:

Course 1: A Faith Forming Congregational Culture for the 21st Century

Course 2: Intergenerational Faith Formation

Course 3: Family Faith Formation

Course 4: Age-Group Faith Formation

Course 5: Missional Faith Formation

Course 6: Leading Faith Formation in the 21st Century

The learning model is new—immersing Christian leaders in a learning environment that includes live online presentations from national experts, self-paced online learning, online learning community, 1-1 guidance from learning guides, and projects that apply the new faith forming ecosystem to the local congregation. The learning model is designed to address the needs of busy ministry leaders.

Vibrant Faith University will guide and support Christian leaders in designing and implementing a comprehensive model of faith formation for all ages and generations especially suited to the needs of their faith community.

Participants

Vibrant Faith University is for leaders who care about the future of faith formation in their communities—whether they are full time, part time, or volunteer ministry leaders. They may be a pastor or Christian education director or faith formation coordinator or children, youth, and family minister or in any number of ministry leadership roles. If they are involved in some aspect of faith forming in the congregation and they want their faith community to embrace a 21st century approach to faith formation, then Vibrant Faith University is designed for them.

Courses are limited to 30 participants. Each cohort of 30 participants moves through the program together for two years.

Cost

The tuition for each participant is \$2000 for the entire two-year program, payable in two annual \$1000 installments. Books are bought separately and are estimated to cost approximately \$50 per course.

Sponsoring Partners

Vibrant Faith University has a *national* program that is offered to Christian leaders across North America.

Vibrant Faith University has *regional* programs that can be sponsored by a denomination—a diocese, synod, conference, presbytery—or by several denominations in a geographic region. By partnering with Vibrant Faith regional church bodies can make VFU part of their ministry education offerings and bring a local focus to the courses by incorporating local gatherings of participants who can now meet face to face with their cohort. Regional partners have the option of hosting selected live presentations from the six courses on-site in their location. Sponsors partner with Vibrant Faith to promote the program, organize local venues for on-site training, and host gatherings of learning cohorts. All of the program administration and finances are managed by Vibrant Faith.

Faculty

Vibrant Faith University has been designed by Leif Kehrwald and John Roberto, members of the Vibrant Faith staff, who will also serve as primary faculty for the program.

Leif Kehrwald has worked in family ministry and faith formation on the local, regional, and national levels for more than thirty years. Leif serves as Vibrant Faith Training Services Coordinator. He travels frequently throughout the country offering presentations and workshops on family faith development. He is an author and editor. He served as the project coordinator and editor for the *Catholic Faith and Family Bible* (Harper).
(M.A. Pastoral Ministry, Regis University)

John Roberto of LifelongFaith Associates is editor of the journal *Lifelong Faith* and works as a consultant to churches and national organizations, teaches courses and conducts workshops in faith formation. John works on the Vibrant Faith team as Special Projects Coordinator involved in research, training, and consulting. His most recent publications include *Seasons of Adult Faith Formation* (editor and co-author, 2015) *Reimagining Faith Formation for the 21st Century* (2015) , *Generations Together: Caring, Celebrating, Learning Praying, and Serving Faithfully* (co-authored, 2014), and *Faith Formation 2020: Designing the Future of Faith* (2010).
(M.A. Religious Education, Fordham University)

A team of faith formation experts and ministry educators will also serve as Vibrant Faith University faculty.

Kathie Amidei – Pastoral Associate at St. Anthony on the Lake Parish, Pewaukee, WI; Author, Instructor (Ph.D. Leadership, Cardinal Stritch University)

(Rev) Von Clemans – Associate Pastor for Adult Education, Myers Park Presbyterian Church, Charlotte, NC (D.Ed.Min., Educational Ministry, Columbia Theological Seminary)

Dave Csinos – Founder and President of Faith Forward, Halifax, Nova Scotia; Author, Instructor, Researcher (Ph.D. Theology, University of Toronto)

(Rev) Matt Marino - Associate Rector of St. John the Divine Episcopal Church, Houston, TX; Instructor (M.Div. Phoenix Seminary)

Jim Merhaut – Director of Coaching to Connect; Author, Trainer, Coach (MS Religious Education, Duquesne University)

(Rev) Kyle Matthew Oliver – Digital Missioner at the Center for the Ministry of Teaching, Virginia theological Seminary; Alexandria, VA; Instructor, Author (M.Div, Virginia Theological Seminary)

Jolene Roehlkepartain - Founder and President of Ideas to Ink, Author, Educator; Minneapolis, MN (MBA, University of St. Thomas)

Janet Schaeffler, O.P. – Adult Education Consultant, Instructor, and Author; Detroit, MI (M.A. Religious Studies, Detroit-Mercy University)

Tom Schwolert – Staff Member at Vibrant Faith, Instructor; Dallas, TX (M.A. Pastoral Ministry, Luther Seminary)

The Curriculum

The **Vibrant Faith University** curriculum consists of six online courses—each spanning four months—offered in sequence over two years:

Course 1: A Faith Forming Congregational Culture for the 21st Century

Course 2: Intergenerational Faith Formation

Course 3: Family Faith Formation

Course 4: Age-Group Faith Formation

Course 5: Missional Faith Formation

Course 6: Leading Faith Formation in the 21st Century

Each four-month course in the **Vibrant Faith University** curriculum follows a similar pattern:

1. **Preparation** for the course such as reading, viewing videos, and conducting research
2. Online live **Presentation #1** (webinars) conducted by experts in the field of faith formation (Presentations are recorded for those who cannot attend live.)
3. Four self-paced, dynamic **Online Learning Sessions** which deepen and apply the knowledge, practices, and skills from the live presentation
4. **Application** activities for developing the course project
5. Online live **Presentation #2** conducted by experts in the field of faith formation (Presentations are recorded for those who cannot attend live.)
6. Four self-paced, dynamic **Online Learning** sessions which deepen and apply the knowledge, practices, and skills from the live presentation
7. **Application** activities for developing the course project
8. Online **Live Presentation** of course projects by participants
9. Completion of **Course Project**

Each course also includes:

- Two or three required books plus online resources such as articles or podcasts.
- Access to an online platform for learning, conversation, support, and mentoring.
- One-on-one and small group consultation (online or by phone) facilitated by a Learning Guide – a practitioner in the field and one who has experience and expertise to share.

Questions/Info

Contact Leif Kehrwald, Vibrant Faith Training Services, lkehrwald@vibrantfaith.org, 503-351-9889.

Courses

Course #1. A Faith Forming Congregational Culture for the 21st Century

Overview

Course #1 introduces the participants to the five elements of the new faith forming ecosystem which forms the foundation for developing a vibrant congregational culture in the 21st century. The new faith forming ecosystem is designed to: 1) engage all generations—intergenerationally; 2) nurture family faith and equips parents to transmit faith at home; 3) address the unique needs of age groups—children, youth, and adults; 4) develop missional outreach to the unaffiliated and uninvolved and invite people into discipleship and participation in the faith community; and 5) utilize online communities and resources, and digitally-enabled strategies for faith formation. Participants will apply the five elements by exploring their congregational culture and faith formation programs and activities.

Course #1 also introduces the practices of developing digitally-enabled faith formation and connecting people with online faith forming resources and communities. Participants will explore the potential of blended models of faith formation that incorporate physical settings and online settings ranging from fully online programming to gathered programming in physical settings that use online resources: 1) gathered program with online content, 2) gathered program and online content, 3) online and gathered, 4) mostly online, and 5) fully online. Participants will begin building a website platform for faith formation.

Books & Online Resources

- *Envisioning the Congregation Practicing the Gospel*. John W. Stewart (Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2015)
- *The Digital Cathedral: Networked Ministry in a Wireless World*. Keith Anderson (Church Publishing, 2015).
- *Reimagining Faith Formation for the 21st Century*. John Roberto (LifelongFaith, 2015).
- 21stCenturyFaithFormation.com
- FaithFormationLearningExchange.net

Course Outline (16 weeks)

- Weeks 1 and 2 – Preparation
- Week 3 – Online Live Presentation #1: “The New Faith Forming Ecosystem & Congregational Culture”
- Weeks 4-8 – Online Learning Topics:
 - Intergenerational Faith Formation
 - Family Faith Formation
 - Age Group Faith Formation
 - Missional Faith Formation
 - Theological Foundations of a Faith Forming Congregation
- Week 9 – Online Live Presentation #2: “Digitally-Enabled & Online Faith Formation”
- Weeks 10-14 – Online Learning Topics:
 - Developing Faith Formation Networks
 - Using Digitally-Enabled Strategies in Faith Formation
 - Building a Faith Formation Website
- Week 15 – Online Live Presentation #3: “Participant Project Presentations”
- Week 16 – Project Completion

Course #2. Intergenerational Faith Formation

Overview

Course #2 explores how intergenerational faith formation and whole community faith experiences are at the center of the new faith forming ecosystem. “Throughout Scripture there is a pervasive sense that all generations were typically present when faith communities gathered for worship, for celebration, for feasting, for praise, for encouragement, for reading of Scripture, in times of danger, and for support and service. . . . To experience authentic Christian community and reap the unique blessings of intergenerationality, the generations must be together regularly and often—infants to octogenarians” (Holly Allen and Christine Ross).

People learn by participating in the life of a community. Practices of faith are taught through the interrelationships of worship, learning, service, ritual, prayer, and more. A faith forming education that is centered in the life of the Christian community is intrinsically an intergenerational experience.

Course #2 guides the participants in 1) envisioning the role of the intergenerational faith community-caring community, celebrating worship, learning, praying, and serving - in developing vibrant faith in people of all ages and generations; 2) exploring the theory, research, and principles of intergenerational faith formation; 3) applying practices and models for becoming intentionally intergenerational in a congregation; and 4) designing intergenerational strategies, programs, activities for church life.

Books & Online Resources

- *Generations Together*. Kathie Amidei, Jim Merhaut, and John Roberto (LifelongFaith, 2014).
- *Intergenerational Christian Formation*. Holly Allen & Christine Ross (IVP Books, 2012).
- *Reimagining Faith Formation for the 21st Century*. John Roberto (LifelongFaith, 2015).
- 21stCenturyFaithFormation.com
- FaithFormationLearningExchange.net
- IntergenerationalFaith.com

Course Outline (16 weeks)

- Weeks 1 and 2 – Preparation
- Week 3 – Online Live Presentation #1: “Theory, Principles, and Practices of Intergenerational Faith Formation”
- Weeks 4-8 – Online Learning Topics:
 - Biblical Foundations
 - Social Science Research Foundations
 - Educational Foundations
 - Models of Intergenerational Communities and Faith Formation
- Week 9 – Online Live Presentation #2: “Designing Intergenerational Experiences”
- Weeks 10-14 – Online Learning Topics:
 - Caring Relationships
 - Celebrating Worship, Rituals, and Milestones Intergenerationally
 - Learning Intergenerationally
 - Praying Intergenerationally
 - Serving Intergenerationally
- Week 15 – Online Live Presentation #3: “Participant Project Presentations”
- Week 16 – Project Completion

Course #3. Family Faith Formation

Course Overview

Course #3 explores the family as the single most important influence on religious transmission and faith practice—a truth demonstrated in research studies, the Christian tradition, and pastoral experience. The faith of parents and grandparents, their role modeling, their teaching, their warm and affirming parenting style are key factors in religious transmission and developing highly religious children, youth, and young adults. In the new faith forming ecosystem, congregations need to equip families as centers of faith formation developed around three essential elements.

Congregations equip families to become centers of learning and faith growth at home by 1) nurturing family faith at home, especially through faith practices; 2) strengthening family life by developing family assets; 3) developing the faith life of parents and grandparents; and 4) developing the knowledge, skills, and confidence of parents (and grandparents) for parenting.

Course #3 guides the participants in 1) exploring the research on the importance of families in religious transmission and developing a vibrant faith; 2) designing approaches for equipping the congregation to nurture family faith practices at home and develop the faith life of parents and grandparents; 3) applying the research on family assets to strengthening family life; and 4) designing approaches for developing the knowledge, skills, and confidence of parents (and grandparents) for parenting.

Books & Online Resources

- *Family Faith Formation for the 21st Century*. John Roberto, editor. (LifelongFaith, 2016).
- *Reimagining Faith Formation for the 21st Century*. John Roberto (LifelongFaith, 2015).
- 21stCenturyFaithFormation.com
- FaithFormationLearningExchange.net
- IntergenerationalFaith.com
- VibrantFaithatHome.org

Course Outline (16 weeks)

- Weeks 1 and 2 – Preparation
- Week 3 – Online Live Presentation #1: “Transmission of Faith & Values at Home”
- Weeks 4-8 – Online Learning Topics:
 - Biblical View of Faith Transmission
 - Sociological View of Faith Transmission
 - Psychological View of Faith Transmission
 - Ethnic-Cultural View of Faith Transmission
- Week 9 – Online Live Presentation #2: “Congregations Equipping the Family for Faith Transmission”
- Weeks 10-14 – Online Learning Topics:
 - Developing Family Faith Practice
 - Equipping Parents/Grandparents with Skills for Faith Formation & Transmission
 - Strengthening Family Life through Asset Building
 - Developing Parenting Knowledge and Skills
 - Congregational Strategies and Programs
- Week 15 – Online Live Presentation #3: “Participant Project Presentations”
- Week 16 – Project Completion

Course #4: Faith Formation across the Life Span

Course Overview

Age group and generational faith formation addresses the unique life tasks, needs, interests, and spiritual journeys of age groups and generations across the whole lifespan. The eight faith forming processes—caring relationships, celebrating church year seasons, celebrating rituals and milestones, learning the tradition, praying and spiritual formation, reading the Bible, serving and working for justice, and worshipping—are the framework for an age-specific or generationally-specific curriculum, which also includes life issues appropriate to that stage of life. Age group and generational faith formation needs to be connected to the events of church life and to family life.

Course #4 explores faith formation across the life span by 1) understanding the life stages of children, adolescents, young adults, middle adults, mature adults, and older adults; 2) identifying and applying effective practices and approaches for faith formation at each stage of life; and 3) designing a faith formation plan (programs, activities, strategies) for specific life stages delivered and conducted in multiple settings—self-directed, mentored, at home, in small groups, in large groups, church-wide, in the community and world; and in physical and online learning environments.

Books & Online Resources

- *Children's Ministry in the Way of Jesus*. David Csinos and Ivy Beckwith. (IVP Books, 2013)
- *The Adolescent Journey: An Interdisciplinary Approach*. Amy Jacober. (IVP Books, 2011)
- *Reimagining Faith Formation for the 21st Century*. John Roberto (LifelongFaith, 2015).
- *Seasons of Adult Faith Formation*. John Roberto, editor. (LifelongFaith, 2015)
- 21stCenturyFaithFormation.com
- FaithFormationLearningExchange.net
- SeasonsofAdultFaith.com

Course Outline (16 weeks)

- Weeks 1 and 2 – Preparation
- Week 3 – Online Live Presentation #1: “Faith Formation with Children and Adolescents”
- Weeks 4-8 – Online Learning Topics:
 - Understanding Children Today: Developmentally, Generationally, Spiritually, Religiously
 - Children's Faith Formation Practices and Approaches
 - Understanding Adolescents Today: Developmentally, Generationally, Spiritually, Religiously
 - Adolescent Faith Formation Practices and Approaches
 - Designing Faith Formation for Children and Adolescents
- Week 9 – Online Live Presentation #2: “Faith Formation with Adults—Young Adults, Midlife Adults, Mature Adults, Older Adults”
- Weeks 10-14 – Online Learning Topics:
 - Young Adults: Life Stage Understanding & Faith Formation Practices
 - Midlife Adults: Life Stage Understanding & Faith Formation Practices
 - Mature Adults: Life Stage Understanding & Faith Formation Practices
 - Older Adults: Life Stage Understanding & Faith Formation Practices
 - Designing Faith Formation for Adults
- Week 15 – Online Live Presentation #3: “Participant Project Presentations”
- Week 16 – Project Completion

Course #5. Missional Faith Formation

The new faith forming ecosystem incorporates a missional emphasis by focusing on the spiritual and religious needs of the unaffiliated and the spiritual but not religious. Missional faith formation expands and extends the church's presence through outreach, connection, relationship building, and engagement with people where they live—moving faith formation out into the community. Missional faith formation provides pathways for people to consider or reconsider the Christian faith, to encounter Jesus and the good news, and to live as disciples in a supportive faith community. Missional faith formation guides people as they move from discovery to exploration to commitment.

Course #5 explore missional faith formation by 1) understanding the research and experience of people who are unaffiliated or spiritual but not religious or “done” with established churches; 2) developing missional faith formation approaches that expand and extend the church's presence through outreach, connection, relationship building, and engagement with people where they live—moving faith formation out into the community; and 3) developing missional faith formation that provides pathways for people to consider or reconsider the Christian faith, to encounter Jesus and the Good News, and to live as disciples in a supportive faith community.

Books & Online Resources

- *Belief without Borders: Inside the Minds of the Spiritual but not Religious*. Linda A. Mercandante. (Oxford University Press, 2014).
- *Choosing Our Religion*. Elizabeth Dreschler. (Oxford University Press, 2016)
- *The Digital Cathedral: Networked Ministry in a Wireless World*. Keith Anderson (Church Publishing, 2015).
- *The Social Media Gospel*. Second Edition. Meredith Gould (Liturgical Press, 2015)
- *Reimagining Faith Formation for the 21st Century*. John Roberto (LifelongFaith, 2015).
- 21stCenturyFaithFormation.com
- FaithFormationLearningExchange.net

Course Outline (16 weeks)

- Weeks 1 and 2 – Preparation
- Week 3 – Online Live Presentation #1: “Profiles of the Unaffiliated (the “Nones”), Church Refugees (the “Dones”), and the Spiritual but Not Religious across the Life Cycle”
- Weeks 4-8 – Online Learning Topics:
 - Exploring the Lives of the Unaffiliated (the “Nones”
 - Exploring the Lives of the Spiritual but Not Religious
 - Exploring the Lives of Church Refugees (the “Dones”)
- Week 9 – Online Live Presentation #2: “Missional Faith Formation”
- Weeks 10-14 – Online Learning Topics:
 - Models and Approaches for Missional Outreach
 - Models and Approaches for Pathways for Encountering Jesus and Developing Discipleship
 - Designing Missional Faith Formation
- Week 15 – Online Live Presentation #3: “Participant Project Presentations”
- Week 16 – Project Completion

Course #6: Leading Faith Formation in the 21st Century

Course Overview

Christian leadership has an internal (heart and soul) dimension and an external (practices and skills) dimension. The effective leader balances these two dimensions. Christian leaders cultivate the inner life (“from within”) by developing a spirituality that sustains and guide their leadership—centered in a personal mission that is informed by a living faith in Jesus Christ and his mission and ministry. Christian leaders develop the knowledge and skills for the effective practice of leadership in congregations and in the world.

Course #6 explores leadership for 21st century faith formation by 1) strengthening the inner life and spirituality of the Christian leader; 2) applying contemporary leadership theory to congregational life, especially focusing on the five practices and ten commitments developed by Kouzes and Posner; 3) learning the skills and process for equipping leaders in the congregation; and 4) learning how to lead change and implement innovative faith formation in a congregation.

Books & Online Resources

- *The Leadership Challenge* (Fifth Edition). James Kouzes and Barry Posner. (Jossey-Bass, 2012).
- *Let Your Life Speak: Listening to the Voice of Vocation*. Parker Palmer (Jossey-Bass, 2000)
- *Teams that Thrive: Five Disciplines of Collaborative Church Leadership*. Ryan T. Hartwig and Warren Bird. (InterVarsity Press, 2015).
- 21stCenturyFaithFormation.com
- FaithFormationLearningExchange.net

Course Outline (16 weeks)

- Weeks 1 and 2 – Preparation
- Week 3 – Online Live Presentation #1: “The Inner Life of the Christian Leader”
- Weeks 4-8 – Online Learning Topics:
 - Leading from Within
 - Vision of Christian Leadership
 - Cultivating Your Spiritual Life
 - Spiritual Disciplines
 - Heart of Spiritual Leadership
- Week 9 – Online Live Presentation #2: “The Practices of Effective Leadership”
- Weeks 10-14 – Online Learning Topics:
 - Model the Way
 - Inspire a Shared Vision
 - Challenge the Process
 - Enable Others to Act
 - Encourage the Heart
- Week 15 –Online Live Presentation #3: “Participant Project Presentations”
- Week 16 – Project Completion