

# **Who's In Your Pews?**

## **A Vibrant Faith Webinar**

**With Dr. Nancy Going, Rick Lawrence, Denise Utter, and Dr. Christian Smith**

### ***(AI Summary of the Webinar)***

Rick introduced a webinar exploring the church's relationship with families, highlighting ministry leaders' concerns about declining attendance and the cultural mismatch between traditional religion and younger generations. Christian Smith, a sociology professor, explained the cultural shift away from traditional religion, attributing it to a mismatch between post-Boomer sensibilities and the church's offerings, as well as a growing distrust of institutions. He noted that younger people often view religion as valuable for immediate benefits rather than transcendent issues, leading to a self-reinforcing trend of older, less diverse congregations. The discussion concluded with an exploration of how climate change concerns and environmental issues further alienate younger generations from traditional religious institutions.

### **Family Engagement in Church Survey**

Nancy and Rick discussed findings from a survey of 38 ministry leaders about family engagement in church. They noted high concern about the drain of families from congregations and shared insights from their Fourth-Soil Parenting Grant project, emphasizing the importance of listening to parents and adapting to their needs. The discussion highlighted how parents often prioritize faith in non-traditional ways and seek community support, challenging traditional church expectations. Rick and Nancy stressed the need for curiosity and non-judgmental engagement with families to better understand and serve their spiritual needs.

### **Worship and Family Engagement**

The group discussed worship and its meaning, with participants choosing photos that represented their personal experiences of worship. Denise, the project director, emphasized the importance of listening to families and helping to normalize worship in everyday life. Rick outlined a plan to partner with parents in new ways, focusing on relational practices and creating a connection between church and home activities. The group explored various "what-ifs" for transforming worship services and engaging with parents more effectively, with an emphasis on listening and creating a family-friendly culture in the church.

### **Raising Faithful Kids Project Launch**

Rick and Nancy invited participants to partner with them in exploring worship and faith formation for families, particularly through a new project called "Raising Faithful Kids." They described their approach of creating flexible, research-based tools like "Pop-Up Conversations for Parents" to address parental concerns and foster community. Participants were encouraged to sign up via a form shared in the chat or follow-up email to join upcoming cohorts and contribute to the project, which aims to explore uncharted territory in intentional family ministry.