

How to transmit the faith?

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My youngest child hasn't missed a church choir rehearsal in five years. But when the ten-year-old went too rehearsal one day recently, she was one of only two people to show up. It was a hard evening for the interim music director—it's hard to be a resilient leader when your numbers are dwindling.

It's troubling for those of us who have good memories of childhood in a congregational setting. How are we transmitting the faith now, amid all of the shifts in the current culture? When I was young—in an era when *Godspell*, *Jesus Christ Superstar* and *Free to be You and Me* were my favorite records—the church and all her people, including my family, were forming me in faith through scripture and song. “Shook up? Look up! This is your day to be glad, lucky lad, what a day to be had!” I sang those words from “Barbecue for Ben” in a sanctuary filled with friends and the church family, and they remain seared in my memory and imagination. Those experiences inform the ways I pastor.

When I come to the story of the Prodigal Son, I still see the burnt orange carpet on the sanctuary stage, the harvest gold chairs and the grey cement block walls. I hear the director's voice crying out, “Goodness children, this is good news—can't you add a little excitement to this story? This child was lost—but now he is found! Help me to believe!” Our congregation used music as a way to teach and to fellowship, to nurture and form the body of Christ.

These days of technological tsunamis leave me bewildered. Days when we carry devices that connect us over long distances yet keep us at arm's reach. How are our brains being re-shaped, and how does this change ministry? What does it mean to be the church, to seek to shape a life of faith, to transmit the faith?