

The Book of Provocation

faith in the future

CONVERSATIONS

Use this package of resources to stimulate conversations like these:

- Developing leadership skills for an uncertain future
- External input to strategy development for individual churches
- Community forums
- Interfaith exchanges
- Leadership retreats
- Input to sermons
- Book clubs
- Stimulation for interest and advocacy groups
- Input to financial investment decisions
- Encounters with faith and science
- Helping people discern meaning in current events and future possibilities



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customized edition for

THE CONSORTIUM
OF ENDOWED EPISCOPAL PARISHES



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This is a futures guide initiated and commissioned by the Consortium of Endowed Episcopal Parishes (CEEP). It explores external future forces that will be particularly important for Episcopal congregations to consider. It is designed to stimulate conversations that matter for you and your church. The most important outcomes will be the insights and actions that you create in conversation.

This futures guide is grounded in continuing research at Institute for the Future (ITF), an independent nonprofit think tank in Palo Alto, California, that has been doing ten-year forecasting for 40 years. This is the first ITF forecast that has focused on faith in the future. The forecast is an independent outside-in perspective by ITF; it is not a forecast by the Consortium or by the Episcopal Church.

Building on the base of our new book *Get There Early: Sensing the Future to Compete in the Present*, ITF has created a package of resources that includes:

- **A Custom Forecast Map of external future forces** likely to have major impacts on Episcopal churches, looking out over the next ten years. This new forecast map is printed on the inside of the special edition *Get There Early* book jacket produced for the Consortium. This forecast is a customized version of ITF's annual *Ten-Year Forecast* done especially for the Consortium of Endowed Episcopal Parishes. This customized ten-year forecast is an internally consistent, plausible, and provocative view of what ITF thinks will be the most important external future forces for Episcopal congregations to consider.
- **The Book of Provocation** with 15 provocations from the future meant to stimulate conversation within Episcopal churches. Each provocation is linked to the forecast map inside the book cover. For each provocation, we include a brief analysis of dilemmas that are raised for people of faith and a set of discerning questions intended to spark conversation. Each provocation is also attached to an artifact from the future, they are described in more detail on pages 18-21. In addition, we encourage you to create your own discerning questions that are raised by the forecast and the provocation from the future.
- **A set of Artifacts from the Future** in the form of digital stories (video mini-documentary scenarios) and physical artifacts for use in Episcopal communities to stimulate conversation. The videos are available on CD and through a special Web site set up for this project.
- **Guidelines for using these resources in your congregation, your community, or your family.** We include case studies in *Get There Early*, with many examples showing how this kind of foresight can be used to provoke insight and action.



Our forecast is not a prediction of the future of the Episcopal Church or of religion in general. That future, we hope, will be created by people who become inspired by faith in the future conversations.

The Book of Provocation is about provocation from the future, not about prediction of the future. Foresight is inherently provocative: nobody truly knows what will happen, but possibilities from the future can provoke you to think creatively about what you might do and improve your readiness. A provocation is a call to attention, an arousal of the spirit caused by something that doesn't fit your expectations. A provocation is irritating because it does not make sense. It is annoying because it lacks the order that you expect. But provocations can also be positive as they incite deep thoughts that can lead to "Aha!" moments. Nobody can predict the future, but you can have an impact on it if you have a good sense of what is possible and probable.

You don't have to agree with our forecast to find it useful. In fact, some of the most valuable forecasts are those that articulate a future you want to avoid. A forecast gives you a chance to change your behavior in the present so that a frightening future never happens.

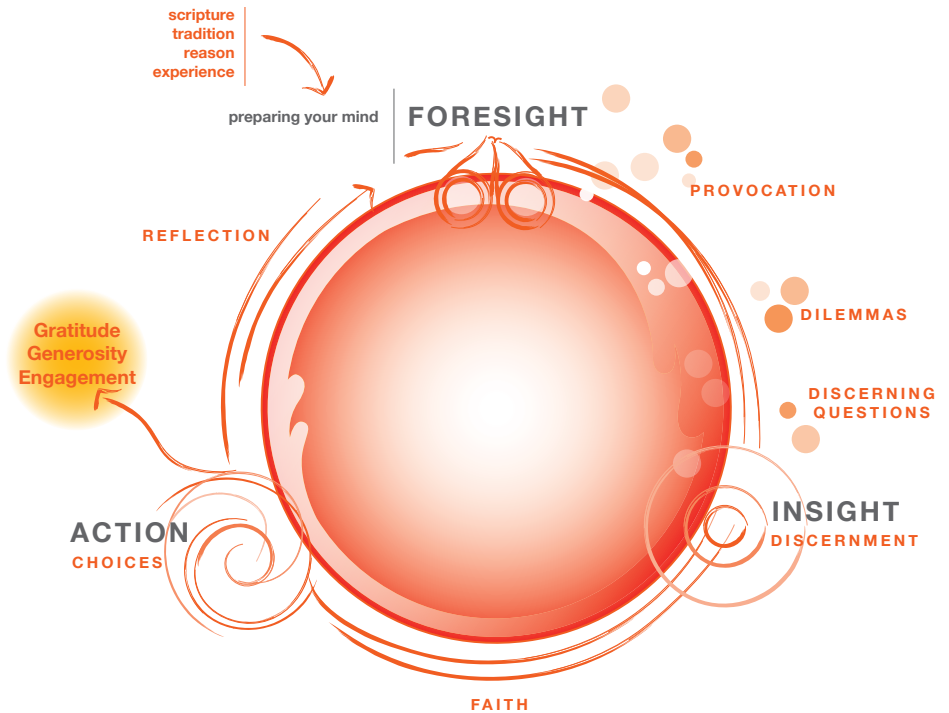
The Episcopal parameters of scripture, tradition, reason, and experience are all inputs that will help prepare your mind for this ten-year forecast and for faith in the future conversations like the ones we are proposing. Your degree and style of mindfulness as you approach this forecast will frame your expectations and shape your learning.

Conversations that cycle from Foresight to Insight to Action, as shown on Page III, can help us all grow the skills and the wisdom that we need to thrive in the future.

Our ten-year forecast is laced with dilemmas: problems that can't be solved and that won't go away. The Episcopal tradition, of course, already prepares people for dilemmas. That the Anglican Church can be both Catholic and Protestant is a dilemma, for example, that comes from your history.

The Episcopal tradition deals with dilemmas through creative use of discerning questions. Your tradition will be very useful as you consider this forecast of external future forces. A discerning question challenges you to explore, learn, and make sense of life situations. We all need to learn how to engage with the future world of dilemmas and learn how to thrive, even when we cannot solve them. We need to engage constructively with questions, even when we cannot answer them. The scale and intensity of the dilemmas we will face in the next decade will grow dramatically.

Discernment is very much the same as what we call Insight on the Foresight to Insight to Action Cycle and describe in more detail in *Get There Early*. Discernment is an "Aha!" that allows you to see things that are not apparent, to filter out a signal from the noise, to find clarity that helps you engage with dilemmas. For some people of faith, discernment is a perception of God's will for their lives. Discernment could be a calling, making some new sense out of life, at least for the moment.





Also, discernment has an intimate relationship with faith. Discernment can help people recognize God's grace, respond with gratitude, and react with generosity. Discernment helps you see the needs of other people. Discernment and faith give you the preparation you need to make difficult life choices. Faith can be a catalyst in moving from Discernment to Action.

Provocations from the future can seed faith in the future conversations, with an interest in making a difference. Faith-inspired action can cultivate stewardship, a responsibility for living one's values, principles, and community. To be a steward of the future means being an agent in helping shape it in a way that is just. Ultimately, thinking about tomorrow helps one make better decisions today, whether personal, professional, or spiritual.



In this section, we highlight 15 sources of provocation for the Episcopal Church from the IFTF Custom *Ten-Year Forecast Map*. For each provocation, we suggest dilemmas that are likely to be raised for Episcopal churches if this forecast comes to pass, as well as discerning questions for church members to consider. In addition, there are related artifacts from the future are listed at the bottom of each provocation and are further described in the back of the book. We also encourage you to generate your own discerning questions—based on your reactions to this forecast for the next decade.

Sources of provocation from the future:

The VUCA World

Extreme Climate Variability

The Rich/Poor Gap

Personal Empowerment

Grassroots Economics

Smart Networking

Polarizing Extremes

High-Impact Religions

Health Insecurity

Body Hacking

Boomers Reinvent Aging

Digital Youth

Urban Wilderness

Digital Physical Blend

Dilemmas of Difference



The world of the future will be an amplified world of extreme urgency, unpleasant surprises, and enigmatic choices. The future will be characterized by Volatility, Uncertainty, Complexity, and Ambiguity: a VUCA World. VUCA is an unpleasant acronym, but it captures the spirit necessary to begin a useful conversation about the future.

Our Forecast Map unpacks a future that requires new forms of leadership beyond the quick-fix problem-solver style so common among today's leaders, who love to solve problems but hate dealing with dilemmas. Leaders must develop the same kinds of complex emergent qualities as the challenges they are facing in the VUCA world of Volatility, Uncertainty, Complexity, and Ambiguity. (See Get There Early, pages 45–68.)

DILEMMA(S):

Get There Early forecasts that the VUCA world will increase in intensity over the next ten years, along with the scale of potential impacts on people, on churches, and on our planet. This *Ten-Year Forecast* is the most threatening ever done at Institute for the Future, through 40 years of ten-year forecasting. Increasingly, we are VUCA people, living in VUCA families, in VUCA communities, all in a VUCA world. In the VUCA world, people are likely to turn to religion for stability and orientation—needs that can easily lead toward fundamentalism.

Problems that can be solved will abound, but the VUCA world will be laced with dilemmas: problems that can't be solved and that won't go away. In some ways, the Episcopal Church is an orderly religion in a disorderly world. The Episcopal tradition of discerning questions should tune you to the VUCA World, where questions will abound.

DISCERNING QUESTION(S):

- In what ways could the clarity of the Episcopal principles and practices around scripture, tradition, reason, and experience help provide meaning for people in the VUCA world? How might church leaders help people make their own sense out of the VUCA world—which often seems to make no sense at all?
- How can your church help leaders to avoid judging too soon, but still have the courage to act when action is needed?
- How does your congregation stack up in terms of the leadership style needed to thrive in the VUCA world? (To get a sense of how you might apply these criteria to your church, see *Get There Early*, pages 49-53 for a description of how Muhammad Yunus has reflected these values in his work on microeconomics for impoverished areas.)

DILEMMA(S):

Global climate change is not a straightforward problem that can be solved all at once. The worst of the impacts may not hit until the next generation, or even later, but the choices we make today will have major impacts. Our policy-making and business-performance measures are focused on the short term, but climate change is a long-term process.

Climate change involves at least two intersecting future forces: environmental and social. Environmental change means the climate literally will change with immense consequences. Meanwhile, society will struggle to respond to social challenges as air and water quality decline. Society needs a long-term view in order to even explore these potential impacts and seek to avoid them—rather than wait until they hit a crisis stage.

DISCERNING QUESTION(S):

- The climate change challenge is about respect for God's creation. How could the wisdom of Episcopal tradition help people engage with the dilemmas of extreme climate change?
- What is the carbon footprint (the contribution you are making to global warming) of your church? What is your own personal carbon footprint? To measure carbon footprints, just Google the term "carbon footprint" and you'll notice many ways of measuring it. Pick a measure and use it on yourself.
- The social and environmental impact of climate change will grow more volatile, and unforeseen consequences will arise and demand response. How can the Episcopal Church prepare itself to react with vision, understanding, clarity, and agility?



There is growing scientific consensus that we are a planet at extreme risk.

At IFTF, we have done expert panels on climate change since 1977. Until recently, most of the concern was at the fringes of science. Now, the mainstream of science is concerned, and most businesses are seriously considering the possibilities. We expect this concern to grow, along with a variety of responses. The gradual increase in global atmospheric temperature ... will have significant—but unpredictable—impacts ... Climate change is likely to have implications for global health. The human herd is not in a healthy state. (See Get There Early, pages 41–64 and 94–100.)



ARTIFACTS



ARTIFACTS



the rich/poor gap

It is difficult to argue that the rich/poor gap will narrow in the future, unless dramatic change is mounted. Also, the rich/poor gap is becoming both more visible and more blatant, with potentially severe implications.

... The greatest psychological value of fundamentalism is a clear identity and a compelling sense of belonging. Of course, people who are hungry and hopeless are most in need of identity and belonging. (See *Get There Early*, pages 78–79.)

DILEMMA(S):

Get There Early forecasts that the rich/poor gap will be a central concern for the future and a central source of unrest. While new media provide new opportunities to organize for giving, such as the remarkable grassroots responses to recent natural disasters, new media also publicize economic differences vividly.

People on both sides of the rich/poor gap see images of each other and they are often close enough to touch. A central dilemma is that the rich/poor gap, which in some ways has always been with us, is both more visible, more able to be addressed, but also more likely to trigger insurgent violence—particularly in heavily urban areas where daily life is dramatically difficult. Still, the Internet and micro-lending innovations are allowing new ways to engage across faiths, cultures, and economic conditions to address the challenges of the rich/poor gap.

DISCERNING QUESTION(S):

- The Episcopal Church has always been concerned about the poor, but how can you respond with more vigor and creativity as the rich/poor gap widens?
- What are possible alternatives that move beyond traditional forms of public generosity in response to rich/poor dilemmas?
- What are the ways in which your church might be widening the gap between the rich and the poor? In a networked VUCA world, consequences often go unseen and unrealized. How can you detect and address those that might be harmful?
- How can your church be relevant to the very rich and encourage their ability to contribute to those who are poor?



personal empowerment



Looking ten years ahead, people will be characterized by three bellwether behaviors: Self-Agency, Self-Customization, and Self-Organization. People will want to act on their own behalf, customize and personalize whenever they can, and organize themselves to maximize their impacts. These behaviors will affect all aspects of life.

Engaged consumers are a force to be reckoned with. Engaged consumers can inject a brand with incredible buzz, as did the early iPod users. Apple got there early with a well-designed product that was promoted mostly by word of mouth, although Apple fueled the fire. (See *Get There Early*, pages 27–31.)

DILEMMA(S):

Get There Early forecasts that people will want more customization and personalization—that they will be less willing to conform to top-down norms, yet Episcopal churches have an established liturgy and hierarchy. The central dilemma will be how to manage the scale of the Episcopal faith so that it feels local and personal in authentic ways.

The Episcopal tradition attracts thoughtful and empowered people, so this provocation should favor Episcopalians. The forces of the future will amplify the Episcopal tradition of empowerment.

DISCERNING QUESTION(S):

- How could your church engage with the empowered energy of your members? For example, how could you seed a positive word-of-mouth personal empowerment buzz around the activities of your church, or the Episcopal Church in general?
- How could Christianity, as interpreted by the Episcopal Church, become more personalized and customizable, while still maintaining the strength of the historical Episcopal message?
- How can the global Anglican Communion improve its worldwide engagement and yet not be perceived as foreign anywhere?
- As people become more than consumers they also need to assume greater responsibility for their own actions. How might churches guide this personal empowerment toward social good?





The grassroots economy derives its energy from the bottom up and allows personal empowerment to be expressed economically. The Internet and other forms of interactive media are allowing new economic structures that create value, new models for competition, and new opportunities for cooperation across great distances.

*Economies of scale, where bigger is almost always better, are giving way to economies of organization, where you are what you can organize. To get oriented, think of it as eBay on steroids. (See *Get There Early*, pages 31–35.)*



DILEMMA(S):

Most congregations include local informal grassroots economies in the midst of more formal economies of scale all around them, in the Episcopal Church and in their local community. To members, Episcopal gatherings can feel both very large and very small.

Meanwhile, megachurches and intensely personalized religions are both growing. The quest for emotional experiences is visible across generations and across regions. The need for meaning and connectivity in the midst of the VUCA world is imperative and likely to grow. The Episcopal Church is governed nationally with links to the global Anglican community, but it is *also* linked with local economies and communities. The Episcopal Church, however, is at risk of being a top-down organization in what is becoming a bottom-up world.



DISCERNING QUESTION(S):

- How could you shape the hierarchical organization of the Episcopal Church to perform better—socially, economically, spiritually—in a bottom-up grassroots economy? Pierre Omidyar created a special eBay inspired marketplace (see *Get There Early*, pages 158–9) that takes the principles of eBay and applies them for social good. What might the Episcopal Church learn from the Omidyar Network, eBay, or other emerging models for bottom-up social engagement? What might those models learn from the Episcopal Church?
- In the emerging grassroots economy, what other organizations are Episcopal congregations “competing with” for members?
- What kinds of community values might Episcopalians foster? How might you help foster an economy of good deeds in your community?



DILEMMA(S):

Get There Early forecasts that social networks will have decided advantages over hierarchies in the world of the future. The Anglican Communion is already a global diaspora (or, more accurately, many different diasporas), joined by shared values and liturgy.

The Episcopal Church is a community that includes both networks and hierarchies, but it is often viewed as more hierarchy than network. When an Episcopal congregation reaches out to potential new members, it is reaching out to both individual people and social networks to which those people belong. The risk for the future is that the Episcopal Church becomes a hierarchy in a networked world.



DISCERNING QUESTION(S):

- How might your church function more like a social network and less like a hierarchy? For example, what could the Episcopal Church learn from Wikipedia? (See pages 152–154 in *Get There Early*.) What could Wikipedia learn from the Episcopal Church?
- What if you re-imagined your congregation as a “smart mob” of loosely connected but amplified individuals working together for a common goal (see page 35 of *Get There Early*)? If you are already a smart mob, how could you improve your abilities to perform? How could you leverage smart networking to accomplish a social mission?



Social networks are not new. What is new is the electronic amplification of networks to create powerful community connections that can span great distances. Smart electronic networking is not necessarily a good or a bad thing: it greatly increases the potential for both.

*We are moving toward a global fishnet of connectivity, with regional talent clusters but uneven technological infrastructure and network practices. In a fishnet of connectivity, smart networkers live at the leading edge of market trends, making distinctive and influential choices about entertainment (which are abundant), health, home, policy issues, and elections. The people who make these choices are not just individuals; they are networks of empowered people. Increasingly, brands are selling not just to an individual; they are selling to a social network. (See *Get There Early*, pages 35–37.)*





The VUCA world of the future will be an often-uncomfortable place that reeks with polarization.

Everything, and especially the proliferation of extreme views, is amplified on the Internet. No matter how strange or extreme their views are, people can find others with similar views on the Web and use the Web to organize their collective strangeness. (See Get There Early, pages 37–40.)

Extreme groups tend to be more sophisticated at using new media than do more moderate groups.



DILEMMA(S):

Get There Early forecasts that the number and power of extremely self-righteous groups will grow. These groups will be more important but harder to engage in dialogue—since they believe so strongly that only they have the right answers.

Ironically, in a world of extreme media richness and access to diverse points of view, it will be possible for true believers with a narrow point of view to electronically insulate themselves from anyone who doesn't agree with them.

It's necessary to engage with extreme groups, but it will be impossible to please them all—since they themselves don't agree.



DISCERNING QUESTION(S):

- Since Episcopalians thrive on discerning questions, how can you best communicate with those who believe they already have absolute answers? In other words, how can your community engage with people who crave or already think they have certain answers to questions for which there are no certain answers?
- How might your congregation expand its “circle of empathy” to include a wider range of beliefs? That is, how might you improve your own perspective-taking abilities, to see the world from other points of view? (Try Googling “circle of empathy” for more ideas.)
- As extremes polarize, the need for perspectives and conversations that are characterized by listening will grow. How can the Episcopal Church foster creative tension that includes humility, courage, and tolerance?

Over the next ten years, religion will become more controversial and the arguments more heated. On the world stage, extreme religions are likely to bully the more moderate faiths.

From inside a protective bubble of self-righteousness, the world feels like a better place: volatility is calmed by an image of order, uncertainty disappears, complexity becomes simple, and ambiguity appears resolved. Dilemmas look like solvable problems. (See Get There Early, page 79.)

Many people will cross over the threshold of self-righteousness and extreme religions will not only believe that they are right, but that everyone else is wrong. Such self-righteousness and extreme fundamentalism is likely to kindle more fighting, more terrorist acts, and greater insecurity for almost everyone—especially in heavily urban environments. Meanwhile, however, other progressive religions will strive to have a positive impact without polarizing.



DILEMMA(S):

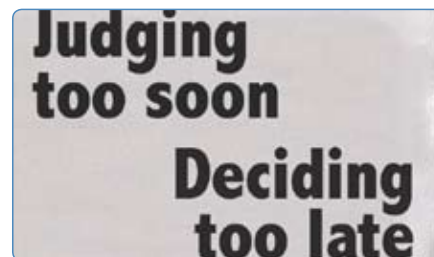
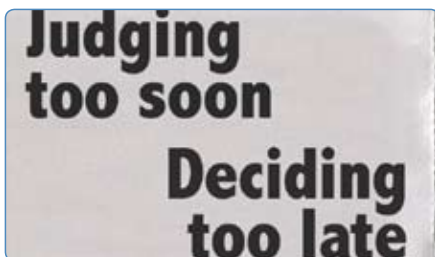
Get There Early forecasts that many people will not be able to cope psychologically with the VUCA world of volatility, uncertainty, complexity, and ambiguity. They will crave reassuring answers, even when confronted with situations that have no answers.

Religion and reason can coexist, but there should be a creative tension. Faith is subject to reason, but faith can also transcend reason. Faith that ignores reason is blind.



DISCERNING QUESTION(S):

- How might Episcopalians engage constructively with extreme religious groups? How could your church contribute to finding common ground across religious differences?
- How does faith differ from rote belief? For example, do true believers in self-righteous and extreme religions (suicide bombers, for example) have faith, rote belief, or both?
- What is the task of a thinking religion in a VUCA World?
- What does “progressive religion” mean in a VUCA world?





Even in the United States and other parts of the so-called developed world, where the health care system is highly advanced, concern about health is growing. In addition, for an increasing number of people, concerns about health and concerns about environment will be linked. The health care crisis is likely to grow, in all parts of the world. In parallel, a global health economy will become a major economic and social driver.

*Health is the bottom line of the Forecast Map because, without health, the future becomes irrelevant. The future is only important to those who are healthy enough to enjoy it. (See *Get There Early*, pages 40–44.)*

The good news: 50% of whether or not you are healthy will depend on your behavior, things such as what you eat and drink, how you exercise, whether you smoke, and how you live your life.



DILEMMA(S):

Get There Early forecasts that concerns about personal and family health will increase, even though our abilities to prolong healthy living continue to improve. The health economy will include not only health care (response to disease), but also all contributors to what people perceive as health, such as nutrition, exercise, beauty, wellness, building materials, security, electronics, and fashion.

While there is more to worry about (legitimate health fears such as pandemics, bioterrorism, food safety, extreme weather events), there is also more clarity about what you can do to improve your own health. Not surprisingly, many people will want to be both more healthy and more indulgent. Health in the future could be a rich person's luxury. The rich/poor gap will be correlated with the gap between the healthy and the unhealthy.



DISCERNING QUESTION(S):

- If your “body is a temple,” what can Episcopalians do to help people decide upon appropriate care and nurturing for your body or the bodies of church members or community members? For example, *Get There Early* describes a prototype hospital room of the future in Omaha that has the sounds of nature to speed the healing process (see pages 224–226). What might an Episcopal branded therapy program to speed healing look like? Some Episcopal congregations already have health professionals on staff. How might health professionals enhance the stewardship of your congregation?
- What roles could your congregation play in helping more people be healthy? For example, how might you help more poor people afford to be healthy?



Mix personal empowerment, medical technology breakthroughs, and health insecurity and you get body hacking, where individuals take control over their own bodies in radical ways:

... The next ten years will see new approaches to extending what the body can do in ways that have been difficult to imagine before. IFTF has identified these styles of creating an extended self:

- *Identity switchers: those who strive to change their identity through mental and social disciplines.*
- *Medical modifiers: those who use medical or surgical methods to change their bodies in ways that they find positive.*
- *Body builders: those who use exercise and other disciplines to alter their physique.*
- *Death defiers: those who stretch the limits of what is possible and what is safe.*
- *Super connectors: those who use networks to amplify their sense of self and essentially develop a more connective definition of self.*

These real life “X-Men” and “X-Women” are expanding the limits of what is possible, what is healthy, and—in some cases—what is human. (See *Get There Early*, pages 41–43.)



DILEMMA(S):

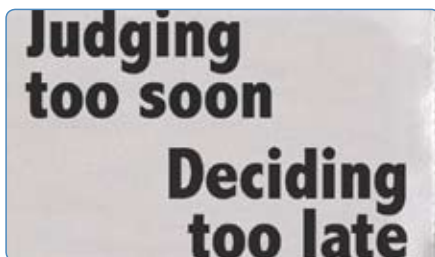
Get There Early forecasts that more people will become “extended selves” and use technology to modify their bodies in ways that extend the notion of what it means to be human. The term “hacking” is used to describe how users modify computer systems in unintended or illegal ways. Might a similar term be applied to how people “hack” their own bodies?

Extreme body hackers may make themselves better than a normal human physically, but with human needs nonetheless. Body hackers will have more sense of control over their own bodies and more feelings of vulnerability.



DISCERNING QUESTION(S):

- How can Episcopalians help people make spiritually informed choices regarding the repair, extension, and adornment of their own bodies?
- What roles might Episcopal churches play in inter-faith discussions about the role of science in modifying and possibly extending notions of what it means to be human?
- At what point does body hacking shift into “playing God?” How might the Episcopal Church play some role in facilitating conversations around questions like this?





boomers reinvent aging

digital youth



The baby boomers will change both health and perceptions of aging.

*The aging baby boomers are determined to change the aging process, just as they have changed everything else as they have matured. Many baby boomers seem to view death as an option that they are not planning to take. They are extremely concerned about their own health, and the wealthy among them are going to be the richest “retirees” in history. (See *Get There Early*, pages 40–41.)*

DILEMMA(S):

Get There Early forecasts that the concept of “retirement” as we have known it in the last 50 years or so will become obsolete and that the term retirement will be replaced by a baby boomer term like “regeneration,” “redirection,” or “refirement.” Many boomers need help planning their own retirement, since they really don’t want to retire at all—and many could not afford to retire even if they wanted to do it. Retirement is a big dilemma for many boomers: they want it but they don’t. As the popular 1960’s song by The Who taught the boomers when they were rebellious youth: you should “die before you get old.”

While many aging people will struggle to live a decent life, others will embrace extended longevity and feel younger than their chronological age. In the future, long life will only be an attractive option for rich people.

DISCERNING QUESTION(S):

- How can boomers encourage younger generations to be good stewards?
- What responsibility does your congregation have for engaging with boomers who have special needs that are not being met?
- How might your congregation help people create life legacies (dedicating your life to special causes or impacts) in the later years of life?
- What might the boomers in your congregation offer that is not yet realized?

Young people will grow in power as they age, with their own unique approaches to life.

*Baby boomers tend to see technology as either tools or toys or both. Digital youth see technology as an extension of themselves, and they often don’t see technology much at all. (See *Get There Early*, pages 179–183.)*

Gen Y and Millennials tend to be more family oriented and many of today’s young fathers are spending more time with their children than did their boomer parents. Fewer in this generation are willing to make the sacrifice needed to seek a promotion—even if the higher-level job pays more money. Many of these new workers don’t seem to want to work as hard as their boomer parents, unless they are motivated by a compelling “why?” that is often not evident to their managers.

For people aged 25 or less, the definition of a “generation” will be about six years. If you are 25, you will feel hopelessly out of touch with a 19 year old; if you are 19, you will feel hopelessly out of touch with a 13 year old, and so on. The real “digital natives” are those children who have grown up with networked media from their earliest days.

Boomer parents think of kids as being able to “multi-task,” but in fact they are developing new lifestyle skills of “continuous partial attention.”

DILEMMA(S):

Get There Early forecasts that digital youth will challenge many of the accepted patterns of family, work, and community life as they age. Many boomers will consider these cross-generational challenges “problems” that need to be solved, or think that the digital youth will “grow out of” their behavior patterns as they age. Digital youth are not a problem that can be solved, however. Rather, they will present their elders with dilemmas that contain both threats and opportunities for established ways of living.

DISCERNING QUESTION(S):

- In what ways is your congregation “hopelessly out of touch” with the digital youth in your community? How might this situation be improved?
- In what topic areas might young people mentor older members?
- How might your church nurture public generosity and stewardship among digital youth in your community? How can you help create a constructive, healthy relationship between the wisdom of age and energy of youth?

ARTIFACTS



ARTIFACTS





Extrême urban living will increase in the next decade, adding new challenges as well as new opportunities for innovation.

*For the first time in history, during the course of this decade more than half of the world's population will live in cities. The shift will be greatest in developing countries. Megacities (cities with over 10 million people) will bring growing economic value and urban destitution in developing nations (e.g. China). Megacities will constitute a new kind of wilderness resembling the most extreme ecologies in nature and eliciting adaptive survival strategies. At the same time, small cities with populations less than 50,000 will be among the fastest growing in both the developing and developed worlds. (See *Get There Early*, page 39.)*



DILEMMA(S):

Get There Early forecasts that as the world's urban population surpasses the rural population, rapidly growing cities will face increasing social, economic, and political stress. Many of the megacities and moderate metropolises don't have the infrastructure to support the swell in population, contributing to challenges such as social unrest, poverty, compromised water supplies, and declining public health.

Most of the massive urban centers are in the developing world while growth in the United States will be in medium-sized cities, which will still present bundles of dilemmas. Urban wildernesses also will become hotbeds of innovation as people find creative ways to live in extreme conditions. Some of these developing world innovations will leapfrog the developed world, as we are already seeing with cell phone technology where the United States is well behind in quality of phone service.



DISCERNING QUESTION(S):

- How can Episcopalians engage with and support vulnerable populations in urban areas, building on or going beyond what you are currently doing?
- Where does the Episcopal Church look for its innovation and new ideas? How could you learn more from the lessons of innovation growing out of extreme urban areas?
- What is a workable strategy for your own activities in the urban wilderness that is closest to you (or perhaps an area far from you that you have chosen to engage with)?



The virtual and the physical will come together over the next decade, with new opportunities to link virtual resources to specific geographic locations.

*[We are] moving toward continuous connectivity where network connections are always on. Online identities will become increasingly important as people learn to express themselves—and leaders learn to exert leadership—in new ways that are consistent with the new media but are still linked to old media. (See *Get There Early*, page 26, and pages 33–38.)*

ITF researcher Alex Pang has referred to the digital physical blend as the “end of cyberspace,” since the physical and virtual worlds will be linked. In a world where sensors are everywhere, you can be both online and in person simultaneously. The place where you go when you are “online” will be the same as the place where you can be anytime.



DILEMMA(S):

Get There Early forecasts that the physical and digital worlds will be mixed. On the good days, they will be seamlessly mixed, working in concert and on behalf of humans. Sensors, embedded in physical objects, will communicate with other sensors and with online information. The Internet will be accessible anytime, anyplace. People will maintain digital identities, ranging from personal online presence that reflects real-world personality to newly created digital avatars. People will struggle to create new ways of navigating this always-on world, so they can maintain a sense of individual choice and (maybe) serenity.

This shift will cause discomfort and tension for some. Young digital natives will feel far more at home in this world than will the older digital immigrants.



DISCERNING QUESTION(S):

- How might you re-imagine your congregation as both a physical and a virtual presence in the lives of your members and in the life of your community—beyond your church buildings?
- How might you help people navigate their personal dilemmas caused by always-on lifestyles where there is no quiet place to focus attention on family or your own personal reflection?
- How would you describe the online identity of your congregation? What would you like to become?





dilemmas of difference

Differences of almost all kinds will grow in the future. Difference will often be linked with privilege, as in the rich/poor gap, which also tends to be linked with racial and social class differences.

*Organizations must prepare for an increasingly heterogeneous workforce in terms of age, nationality, race or ethnicity, and lifestyle. Immigration is changing the ethnic composition of the country, particularly in the western and southern regions. Women are having children later in life, and the number of traditional households is declining. Many of the aged will live and work longer, with a strong sense of empowerment. (See *Get There Early*, page 31 and pages 164–199.)*



DILEMMA(S):

Get There Early forecasts that diversity will increase, on many fronts. As we become more diverse, we as a people will show signs of being both less understanding of our differences and more able to bridge them. The VUCA world will be a world of intense and confusing diversity—of ideas, of people, and of approaches to living. More diversity will mean more dilemmas. More diversity may mean less tolerance. It could also mean more creative synergies.

New media allow differences to be amplified, but they also allow us to create new social commons that help mediate the tensions of difference. As we become more different, we will also have new opportunities to understand the things we have in common. While new media allow more access to different points of view, they also allow people to listen more exclusively to only those people with whom they agree.

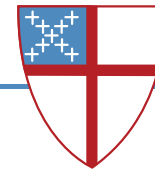


DISCERNING QUESTION(S):

- How might Episcopalians help people engage constructively with dilemmas of difference within and around your community?
- How can Episcopalians encourage people to consider developing new social commons that provide “win/win,” rather than “win/lose,” strategies? How might Episcopalians identify new and emerging dilemmas of difference that are not yet recognized?
- How does God’s grace apply to *everyone*, even those who are very different from what most people perceive as normal?
- Is your church actually making life more difficult for the diverse populations around us? How can your congregation engage with the new lifestyles that are emerging?



What Provocations From The Future Would You Add?



What Discerning Questions Would You Add?



It takes a story to engage with a dilemma from the future. A homily is a kind of story, for example, to help people discern what’s going on and what needs to be done. Artifacts from the future offer examples of “human-future interaction,” where the forecast is brought to life for your consideration. These artifacts include both digital and physical media that you can use in your local parishes, as well as with your family and friends.

SUNDAY BEST

Greening Our Church

Constantly peaking oil prices and carbon taxes have hit working people the hardest. Slowly at first, Cindy’s parish stepped up to support the community as people saw the need for personal sacrifice. Cindy has become an active member of her parish, for support of the spirit and—increasingly—support for her pocketbook.

Economic support comes in the form of a church-facilitated local economy—now called the Sunday Best Club—to share supplies, barter services, and consolidate orders for the necessities. Parishes around the state are even linking up to form an alternate supply network. Almost overnight, her distant neighbor became the best deal in town.

But moral support to weather these times is just as important. Hers is a parish where ‘Your Sunday Best’ has been redefined as an offer of help for a neighbor, community, or planet, in need—not a new outfit. Cindy’s neighbors of other denominations hear that boundless personal wealth is God’s will, but her own Episcopalianism is strengthened by this new role taken on by her parish.

Related artifact from the future: Accompanying this story is a poster from the future announcing the formation of a Sunday Best Club and describing the ways that parishioners can participate. Think of displaying this poster on a bulletin board or communal space to provoke thought about what role the Church could play in supporting sustainability efforts.

This story particularly embodies Extreme Climate Change, Grassroots Economics, High-Impact Religions, and the Rich/Poor Gap.



TRAVELING BOOMER

Reinventing Stewardship

When the Episcopal Church of the United States started G-Corps, Mike knew he wanted to participate. Mike is an avid photographer, social justice activist, and, after an auto accident, does all of this from a wheelchair.

The G-Corps, which stands for grace, gratitude, and generosity, is an ambassador travel program for Episcopalians over 50 designed to foster cross-cultural global dialogue, particularly in times that are seeming ever more fractured. The program isn’t about proselytizing. It is far more about understanding new people than changing them. Several hundred donors throughout the country, using a microfinance model many individual people contribute to, are funding Mike’s Ambassador Grant.

Mike has now traveled to several countries, blogging his trip as he goes and sometimes streaming his experience in real-time, all to document aging from an international perspective. His photo essay, “Im-Aging Grace,” is a commentary on the need to honor the wisdom, experience, endurance, and survival of elders. Mike explained: “As a person in a wheelchair, I have first-hand experience with people looking past me, thinking that I don’t matter. I wanted to create something in which I intentionally stopped to pay attention to another person’s life. I didn’t look past them. For a moment, I was focused completely on their importance.”

Related artifact from the future: Accompanying this story is a postcard-from-the-future sent back from people enrolled in G-Corps programs around the world. Think of giving out these postcards, in mail slots or handed out, to provoke thought about the global future of the Episcopal Church.

This story particularly embodies Boomers Reinvent Aging, Dilemmas of Difference, and Personal Empowerment.





DIGITAL LABYRINTH

Seeing with New Eyes

We each see the world with through our own lenses, and Irene’s lenses are more discerning than those of most teenagers. She’s become a frequent walker of her neighborhood’s “pervasive labyrinth,” an 8-block journey not marked by lines in granite but lines of code visible only through those popular, new augmented-reality glasses.

A digitally adept young priest at the local Episcopal parish started this labyrinth. Wanting to build on the success of the parish’s physical labyrinth, and particularly to reach people who are put off by visiting a church, he partnered with local coders to build a digital version for the neighborhood that plays meditative sounds as users walk the labyrinth.

Digital natives like Irene took this beginning and ran with it, using locative messaging services, like messaging a place instead of a person, to create ad-hoc salons of conversation at key points on the path. Irene herself recently posted a problem she’s facing (about whether to use performance-enhancing drugs to ace her SAT’s) at the corner of 14th and Mission, along the route of the labyrinth, and received a lot of helpful thoughts from other walkers. Irene hasn’t quite increased her attendance at Sunday services, but walking this pervasive labyrinth of discerning questions has helped her navigate the wilderness of 21st century teenage life.

Related artifact from the future: Accompanying this story is a sticker describing the pervasive labyrinth and prompting people to ask discerning questions of themselves and others. Think of putting these stickers in the neighborhood around your church, to provoke thought about reaching new audiences in the future.

This story particularly embodies Digital Youth, Urban Wilderness, Digital/Physical Blend, Smart Networking, and Body Hacking.



JUDGING TOO EARLY, DECIDING TOO LATE

Investing in Both Faith and Reason

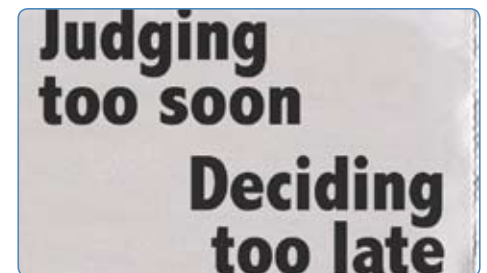
“In our ethical considerations around medical advancement, notably stem cell research, we have tended to judge too early while deciding too late about how to move the conversation forward.” So says Elizabeth, a life scientist and an Episcopal priest of an endowed parish. “My challenge, role, and contribution,” she continues, “is to act as a guide in the conversation about ethics while investing in the potential of science and medicine to transform our lives and the life of the church for the better.”

In 2015, stem cell research in the United States continues to be slowed by ongoing ethical and religious debates. Although many states in the United States have passed legislation to support stem cell research, appeals from Christian fundamentalist groups have constrained the funds from being allocated to research laboratories. Even more moderate Christian congregations have been embroiled in conflict around limits on stem cell research, with some favoring restrictions or outright prohibitions on embryonic stem cell research and cloning. The role of the United States as an intellectual and investment center for stem cell research has diminished significantly. Through both theological inquiry and economic trend analysis, Elizabeth and others noted that locations like Israel, Iran, and Dubai were emerging as epicenters of stem cell research advancement.

Despite some vocal protest from parishioners and others within the United States Episcopal Church, Elizabeth and the investment board at her parish made a bold decision to invest a portion of funds in biomedical companies in the Middle East. About the decision, Elizabeth reflected, “It was a decision that made sense to us financially, intellectually, scientifically—and spiritually. We were powerless to stop others from developing stem cell therapies, no matter how fervent the protests. The best thing we could do was to involve ourselves, to understand this conversation in a global context, and to invite our parishioners into an ongoing dialogue about the dilemma of being right and being aware. This was a decision about investing ourselves more deeply in community-building and church-building—in all senses.”

Related artifact from the future: This story is accompanied by a newspaper article from the future describing this tension. Think of this as a newspaper clipping you’d cut out to share with someone, and pass it along to others to provoke discussion.

This story particularly embodies Health Insecurity, Body Hacking, High-Impact Religions, and Polarizing Extremes.





HOW TO USE THE BOOK OF PROVOCATION TO STIMULATE FAITH IN THE FUTURE CONVERSATIONS

To some extent, human life has always been a VUCA experience, with the volatility, uncertainty, complexity, and ambiguity that every human faces during his or her life—even in calm historical periods. But as we think about our prospects for the future, the stakes are up for us as a planet, with global climate change looming, the rich/poor gap growing, global terrorism threatening, and amplified everything. Still, even in the VUCA World, there is strong reason for hope. Dilemmas hide opportunities.

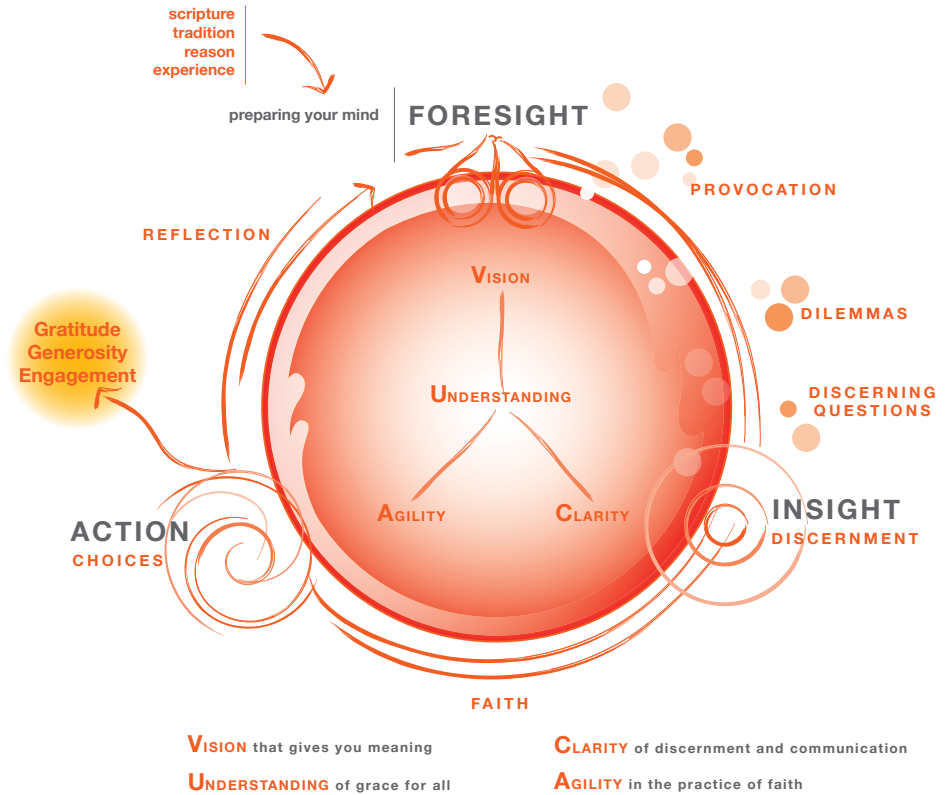
This final part of The Book of Provocation focuses on ways to turn around the frightening aspects of the VUCA world, to engage with the future in constructive conversation. In *Get There Early*, the basic elements of a VUCA turnaround are introduced with these principles:

- Volatility yields to Vision
- Uncertainty yields to Understanding
- Complexity yields to Clarity
- Ambiguity yields to Agility

Faith in the future will call for:

- **Vision that gives you meaning**, with intent that articulates a meaningful future—beyond the polarities of the present.
- **Understanding of grace for all people**, with a sense of empathy that grows with the differences all around us.
- **Clarity of discernment and communication**, in the fog of disbelief and the fog of the VUCA world. Clarity of discernment leads to faith. For some, discernment means discerning God’s will for your life or discovering your own calling. Clarity of communication means stating clearly to others what you think is going on and what needs to be done. Clarity is required to create an effective strategy for change. Clarity is needed so that others understand your strategic intent.
- **Agility in the practice of faith**, since predetermined action is brittle in a VUCA world riddled with surprises. An agent of change must be both practiced and agile. You need to prototype your way to success and fail in constructive ways.

The Book of Provocation gives you resources that will help you engage with and turn around the dangers of the VUCA world, using conversation as your friend. Faith in the future begins with conversation.





Faith in the future conversations are very similar to the Foresight to Insight to Action Workshops described in Chapter 7 of *Get There Early*, a chapter called “Sensing and Sensemaking.” Small group conversation has great potential to kindle creative thought about the future—especially when positive futures can be made more likely by actions in the present.

Foresight to Insight to Action Workshops are being used in corporations, schools, and community groups with a goal of using the future to provoke better decisions in the present. *Get There Early* includes a series of tips and guidelines for workshop leaders. These approaches will also work well for faith in the future conversations.

Discernment is all about sense making: how to sense, what to sense, what to conclude. People of faith have an advantage because they are already tuned to mystery.

People of faith sense deeply what others fail to see. People seeking faith ask discerning questions as part of their quest. People of faith continue to ask discerning questions, but on the side of belief—rather than the side of atheism or agnosticism.

Faith is a centered stance toward the future, a personal strategy for dealing with the dilemmas of life.

Dilemmas are mysteries for which there is no solution. Faith helps people sense what’s really going on, discern what is important, and decide what to do. Faith seeks the truth, but it doesn’t have to find absolute answers in order to thrive.

Faith in the future conversations nurture both sensing and sensemaking, for those who are seeking faith and those who have faith already. Small group conversations have tremendous and even magical potential for making sense out of the future.

The polarities of the present create blinders for us all, but thinking about the future can open your view, unglue your thought process, and suggest new ways of acting in the present. A ten-year view toward the future is far enough out there to provoke thoughts about basic change, but close enough to be realistic.

You can use one or more of the 15 Provocations from the Future to stimulate faith in the future conversations. The goal of this futures guide is to provoke people, without turning them off.

Faith in the future conversations can help people grow new faith, as well as hone their own actions for family, church, community, and society. People of faith have hope for the future—even in the face of danger and fear. Our intention is to stimulate engaging conversations through provocative presentation of future threats and opportunities. Faith in the future conversations encourage greater mindfulness, as well as better decisions about what needs to be done in the present in order to make the future a better place.

The Book of Provocation contains Institute for the Future’s forecast of external future forces that will affect church life in North America, thinking ten years ahead. We hope it has been engaging for you and we hope that it will provoke new thought.

In conclusion, consider the following forecasts regarding faith in the future—given the external future forces we have been exploring. Do you agree with these forecasts of faith in the future? Where do you disagree? What other forecasts of faith in the future would you add? Try making your own “Faith will ...” and “Faith will not ...” forecasts. Use these forecasts as conversation starters in your own groups.

Faith Will ...

- Faith will resist making judgments about others.
- Faith will be attracted to reconciliation.
- Faith will forgive.
- Faith will be patient.
- Discerning questions will inspire faith.
- Faith will be inspirational.
- Faith will come in many flavors.
- Doubt will be necessary for faith.
- Faith will question absolute answers.
- Faith will trump fear.
- Faith will be a relationship with mystery.
- Faith will be a bridge from insight to action.
- Faith will seek truth and may yield glimpses of truth, but won’t need to find truth.
- Faith will be deepened by reason.
- Faith will have a sense of humor.

Faith Will Not ...

- Faith will not be simple.
- Faith will not be easy.
- Faith will not be certain.
- Faith is a process: it won’t happen all at once.
- Faith will not be complacent.
- Faith will not be nervous or anxious, but it could be urgent.
- Faith will not be exclusive or excluding.

Parting Forecast

- Faith will live in the space between judging too soon and deciding too late.



