Provocations from the future

Today's leaders must be forward thinking. By projecting changes in technology, environmental conditions, and the social/political landscape 10 or more years into the future, leaders gain perspective to aid decision-making in the present.

Provocations from the Future consider 15 changes external to the church that could provoke some kind of change within the faith community. Please note that forecasting the future differs from predicting the future in that it explores what *could* happen rather than declaring what *will* happen. Even if one does not agree, the forecast can still be useful to stimulate thinking that enlightens decision makers.

Adapted from: *The Book of Provocation: Faith in the Future*, 2008. Institute for the Future and the Consortium of Endowed Episcopal Parishes. Palo Alto, CA: IFTF.

Provocation # 1 **The VUCA World**	**Volatility, Uncertainty, Complexity, and Ambiguity (VUCA) increasingly characterize our existence. Will people turn to religion for stabilization?**
Provocation # 2 **Extreme Climate Variability**	**Environmental, social, and health concerns generate changes in public policy. Will proposed solutions unite the nation or reignite culture wars?**
Provocation # 3 **The Rich/Poor Gap**	**Media images of global economic differences create a major source of social unrest. Will we find innovative approaches to level the playing field?**

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Provocation # 4 **Personal Empowerment**	**Engaged consumers are the norm and they force producers of goods and services to accommodate a high degree of personalization. Where is the line between authentic personalization and narcissistic customization of faith?**
Provocation # 5 **Grassroots Economies**	**Emerging business models of competition such as e-Bay and Craig's List drive the future. What does bottom-up consumer control mean for the church?**
Provocation # 6 **Smart Networking**	**Web 2.0 technologies enhance social connectivity, creating a sense of community. Will pervasive electronic networking occur in (or replace) physical gatherings?**

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Provocation # 7 **Polarizing Extremes**	**Extreme views are easily proliferated on the web, assisting extremists in finding others who share their strangeness. Will valuing of diversity result in increasing social polarization?**
Provocation # 8 **High-Impact Religions**	**Religions that promote fundamentalism appeal to people distraught over ambiguity. How can Christians share their faith without being dismissed as intolerant?**
Provocation # 9 **Health Insecurity**	**Health concerns are growing and health care is a major driver of the economy. Will society hold people accountable for personal behaviors like smoking or obesity that impact health costs?**

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Provocation # 10 **Body Hacking**	**Invasive body modifications to control one's physical, mental, and social well-being are routine. Will this create social barriers between 'enhanced' and 'non-enhanced' people?**
Provocation # 11 **Boomers Reinvent Aging**	**The concept of retirement will morph into "redirection" as Boomers resist aging and work longer. What else might be affected by large numbers of boomers living and working longer?**
Provocation # 12 **Digital Youth**	**Rapid technological changes are re-defining generations so that those under 25 feel out of touch with someone 6 years apart in age. How will this affect relationships between older and younger people?**

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Provocation # 13 **Urban Wilderness**	**Cities grow so rapidly they are unable to build infrastructure fast enough. Swelling populations contribute to social unrest, poverty, impure water, and health problems. What might people do to survive in extreme conditions?**
Provocation # 14 **Digital Physical Blend**	**We live in an always-on world where the virtual and the physical are linked. Continuous connectivity causes people to mix their online identity with their real-world presence. What social and spiritual opportunities will this create?**
Provocation # 15 **Dilemmas of Difference**	**We live in an increasingly heterogeneous world with growing diversity of age, income, ethnicity, and values. Will awareness of our differences contribute to an appreciation of things we have in common?**

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