

Planning Adult Christian Formation Programs

Key Content areas for Faith-Building Adult Christian Education

1. *Biblical knowledge and understanding*
 - a. Bible Study
 - b. Application to daily life
2. *Moral decision making*
 - a. Interpreting new situations in light of our faith tradition
 - b. Ethics
 - c. Issues we face in our lives: illness, death, cultural pressures, etc.
3. *Multi-cultural awareness*
 - a. Learn to appreciate the artistic contributions of others
 - b. Study people from other cultures that have influenced our faith
 - c. Arrange cross-cultural exchanges with congregations of other faith traditions or ethnic heritages (may be within your own congregation)
 - d. Listen to the stories of people from other backgrounds
 - e. Use resources from other faith traditions or cultural perspectives
4. *Global Awareness*
 - a. Environmental issues
 - b. Ecology
 - c. World hunger
 - d. Political oppression
 - e. World debt

Six “Types” of Adult Audiences

- Fellowship – informal discussions with topics relevant to today – relationships are valued
- Traditionalists – Bible oriented; lecture-style; specific curriculum to follow
- Neo-traditionalists – “returnees” in search; looking for a mentor; influenced by culture
- Study – want faith & life application; see teacher as co-learner
- Social Action – faith is private; view church as a launching place for action
- Multiple interest – combination of several of the above

Ten Top Interests of Adults*

- 77% The Bible
- 75% Developing a personal relationship with Jesus
- 74% Improving skills at showing love and concern
- 74% Learning how to be a good spouse, partner or parent
- 73% Applying my faith to daily living
- 69% Making more friends at church
- 62% Learning how Christians make moral decisions
- 62% Getting help with my spiritual journey
- 62% Having greater sense of community at church
- 59% Helping members who are experiencing hardship

Five elements of an effective educational process for adults*

1. Create a sense of community in which people help one another develop faith and values
2. Use life experiences as occasions for spiritual insight
3. Apply faith to political and social issues
4. Respect the importance and uniqueness of each person's faith journey
5. Encourage independent thinking and questioning

*from *The Teaching Church: Moving Christian Education to Center Stage* by Eugene C. Roehlkepartain

Three Steps to Better Adult Education

Step 1: Assessment

- What have we done in the past?
- Who are we trying to serve?

Step 2: Vision

- What do you want adult education to accomplish in your congregation?
- Why do you want to do adult education?

Keep in mind:

- Who is the intended audience? Who do you want to reach?
- What kinds of topics do the adults want to study?
- Where and when will you offer opportunities?
- What teaching / learning methods will you recommend that the various teachers / learners use?
- Who will lead and how will they be equipped to lead?

Step 3: Plan

- Encourage long range and short range planning, as well as planning in the midst of the experience
- Allow multiple points of entry – invitation and hospitality are essential
- Include fellowship, worship and food
- Make it relevant
- Evaluate, evaluate, evaluate

Categories for Adult Education during Adult Forums

Christian Life (can tend to exclude single adults)

- Spirituality
- Prayer
- Family Life issues

Theology & Ethics (make sure it does not become to “high hated” and theological)

- Environment
- Medical
- Cultural
- Church History
- Book of Common Prayer

- Faith in the Workplace
- Church & State – Faith in the Political Process

Bible

- Lectionary study
- Specific theme or book

Tracks offered simultaneously (for the larger church)

- “St. Swithen’s Church” each week a “meet the . . . “ rector, wardens, outreach ministers, pastoral care team, etc.
- Bible 101 (Old Testament)
- Bible 201 (New Testament)
- Book of Common Prayer 101
- Theology 101 (each week: basic terms of faith, sacraments, creed, etc.)
- Episcopal Church History

More Topics

Aging
 Aging parents
 Baptism
 Bible study
 Bible background
 Correlate with children’s study
 themes
 Covenants
 Crime / violence
 Death
 Evangelism
 Faith in the workplace
 Faith stages
 Holy Spirit
 Human rights
 Denominational comparisons
 Health & wholeness
 Life management

Marriage
 Mission
 Nature – creation and God
 Parenting
 Pluralism
 Prayer
 Servanthood
 Sexuality
 Sharing faith with children
 Singles
 Spiritual gifts
 Spiritual life
 Spiritual practices
 Stress
 Pop Theology (TV/movies)
 Environment
 Developing one’s own theology
 Worship

Yearly Study Planning Calendar

Month / Day	Subject
January New Year's Epiphany Martin Luther King, Jr. Week of Prayer for Christian Unity	Goal setting / God's plan for my life Personal discipline / Stewardship of time Magi's visit / Gift giving Call to prayer and self-denial Status of minorities Christian heroes Jesus' attitude toward Gentiles Other denominations and faiths
February Theological Education Sunday Valentine's Day Human Relations Sunday Brotherhood Week Ash Wednesday Lent	Friendships / Relationships Races & cultures Peace Repentance Reflection on Christ Self-denial; fasting; Jesus' sacrifice
March World Day of Prayer Holy Week Confirmation	Prayer Events of Holy Week The Disciples Study of membership vows / Baptism
April Easter Heritage Sunday Spring Earth Day	Resurrection; personal renewal Past Christian heroes Hymnology God in creation Stewardship of the environment
May National Family Week Mother's Day Rogation Days Ascension Day Memorial Day Pentecost	Family relationships Parenthood Family financial planning Christ's Ascension God and nation Pentecost / Early Church / Peter Peace

Month / Day	Subject
<p style="text-align: center;">June</p> General Convention (every 3 years) Father's Day Graduations Vacations	Structure & Polity of the church Parenthood (see August)
<p style="text-align: center;">July</p> Independence Day Vacations	God and nation (see August)
<p style="text-align: center;">August</p> Vacations School begins	Re-creation Stewardship of time New beginnings; God's gift of intellect Sabbath
<p style="text-align: center;">September</p> Labor Day Rally Day (Program year begins)	Job vs. Vocation as a Christian Personal spiritual development History of Sunday School Family as teacher Aims of Christian education
<p style="text-align: center;">October</p> World Communion Sunday Harvest time All Hallows' Eve Stewardship	Eucharist / Holy Communion Stewardship of time, talent, treasure Christian financial planning Funeral planning
<p style="text-align: center;">November</p> All Saints' Day Election Day Veteran's Day National Bible Week Thanksgiving	Early Church saints Contemporary saints World peace How the Bible came to be / Bible study Giving thanks
<p style="text-align: center;">December</p> Advent Christmas Watch Night (December 31 st)	Preparation / Waiting Christmas traditions & symbols Dedication of a new year