

A Process of

Educational Inquiry

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Preface

Welcome to this resource. This resource is created to facilitate the development of the ministry of Christian Formation and Christian Education. You might wonder what is this process of Educational Inquiry? How does it work? Why was it developed? What are the assumptions?

Educational Inquiry has been created and adapted and tested in the context of congregational development in the area of Christian Formation for over six years. It is a resource that focuses attention on the entire life and mission of the congregation in the context of catechesis. Thus it is a tool to support the people of God as they continue to be formed as Christians, as they prepare, create and develop theological education opportunities.

Educational Inquiry includes the use of resources from the national Episcopal Church Center, *Called to Teach and Learn*, *Discovering Called to Teach and Learn*, *The Children's Charter for the Church*, along with The National Training for the Catechesis of the Good Shepherd 1992-1995, and *Appreciative Inquiry*, a process that captures the life giving spirit of an organization, written by David Cooperrider. See Appreciative Interview Protocol appended with the handouts.

Educational Inquiry is a resource that provides the church with an opportunity for a congregation to evaluate its formation and education opportunities, to develop leadership, to create new programs in relationship to the context of the community and to serve the mission of the congregation.

Assumptions for Educational Inquiry:

1. History of formation and education is important to the identity and mission or vocation of the congregation.
2. Leadership development is based on the gifts found in the community, not just trying to create another program.
3. The life-giving spirit of congregational ministry is found where passions serve God in the church--using a language for transformation rather than a language of complaint.
4. The path for future planning for formation in a congregation is found where the history of the past meets the hopes for the future in the context of a God centered relationships in community. Thus Scripture, Tradition, Reason and Theological reflection on experience is vital to this process.
5. Lifelong learning is our goal.

The steps taken to work at the axis point include:

- Prayer
- Taking History
- Scripture study
- Theological Reflection
- Mission imperative statements and realities in the congregation or in the diocese.
- Evaluation

Thus each one of the sessions will include a time for worship, a time to dialogue with questions that probe into the history, to learn of the identity and mission of the congregation. It will also include time for sharing Scripture and Theological Reflection that brings a depth of understanding to the mission of the church as reconciliation. Each session will have an opportunity for evaluation.

Planning for Christian Formation and Education takes time. The assumption made in this resource is that planning needs to happen in the context of an intergenerational community. How can we make decisions for and on behalf of children and youth if we do not listen to them and know their sacred stories.

Educational Inquiry uses concepts from *Called to Teach and Learn, discovering Called to Teach and Learn, Appreciative Inquiry, Authority of Generations, and The Catechesis of the Good Shepherd*, Training Level I 1992 (specifically for the Liturgy of the Light and the Pentecost Presentation).

Facilitator's Notes:

- **Clearly define your role as either a facilitator of this process or as a member of the community in discernment for the very heart work of the congregation that is Christian formation and education.**
- **Read all hand outs and be prepared to work with them as needed. Remember they are provided for support of your ministry work. It will be helpful to have a copy of *Called to Teach and Learn, Discovering Called to Teach and Learn, and Authority of Generations*. These materials available through Episcopal Parish Services at www.episcopalparishservices.org or 800/903-5544.**
- **Most important are the relationships you are building, the community you are creating in the context of prayer, Scripture and theological reflection in the area of Christian Education and Formation.**
- **Remember that when you hear "complaints," there lies a real commitment to something important underneath the complaint. Work to discover the commitment, the values and the life-giving spirit.**
- **You are working in the context of narrative theology. The stories you hear are sacred stories and are important to the creation of vision. Allow for time to hear the story. Allow for time for reflection on the stories. The stories are a part of salvation history. Keep the stories in tension with the call to form Christians who are known as Anglicans.**

➤ Session 1

Visit with Leadership (Rector, Congregational Leader, Vestry Member, or Diocesan Leader)

Identity

This visit begins with an invitation from a community to discern new resources, possible curriculum changes, schedule changes, development of retreats, and /or new programs. The location for this session usually works best away from the church building. This is a time for exploration as to who the congregation is in terms of Theological Education and how decisions are made. The final decisions for location and the persons attending the meeting is up to the Rector or congregational leader.

Goal for Session 1:

To share the best stories from the past through a process of guided questions and reflection.

Purpose: To gather information and discern that which is life giving and mission focused for the congregation.

Facilitator's Notes:

Some suggested questions which are to be set in a context of "What is giving your congregation and/or diocese its life giving spirit? What are the core values?"

Invite them to:

Share best stories in the areas of: theological education leadership, the design and use of the building and how it relates to education, stewardship as it relates to education, and theology of worship and how it relates to the teaching for life long formation.

- Describe leadership changes over the past 25 years.
- Discuss whether there has been an increase or decrease of participants in program/worship area lately. Why?
- Discuss space/design concerns of rooms and location for the Christian Education ministry.
- Discuss the theology of stewardship and the definition of educational ministry through budget support.
- Develop a mission statement or goals and objectives of the congregation or program in relationship to life long learning.
- Discuss liturgical theology and core value of worship. Ask: "What Scripture holds the most meaning for the congregation?"
- Discuss hopes for the congregation or program.

➤ Session 1

- Discuss the theology children, youth, young adults, and adults. Define the congregation. What is the purpose and focus of catechists who do all in their power to support each child in their life in Christ?

ACTION STEP: Create an agenda with the leader which will be used during Session 2, the visit with the congregation.

Note:

This part of the process is focused on the best stories of congregational life. It also reveals the perception of the leader in their relationship to the congregation. During the discussion ask open ended questions or questions that do not limit the responses in order to encourage critical thinking.

Entering into an Invitation to Transformation:

Helpful Information for the facilitator of Session 1:

- Invite the Rector or leader to share their own experience, even if it is a different perspective from the congregation.
- Share the suggested agenda and be flexible to let their needs inform it.
- Listen and take notes.
- Reflect and share your perceptions and invite them to respond to what they are saying.
- Share your own experience in relationship to those perceptions.
- Include the leaders' concerns for ministry development throughout the next steps.

Suggested Agenda:

Information gathering around the identity of a congregation in relationship to its Christian formation and education ministry.

1. Begin the session on history-taking with prayer. Suggested prayers include the Collect for Education, Mission of the Church, or Christian education propers such as Psalm 78:1-7.
2. Share a favorite Scripture passage of the congregation, a reading from the daily lectionary, or use the propers for Christian education.
3. Engage in questions through casual conversation while reflecting on Scripture.
4. Listen for the joys and celebrations while in dialogue with the clergy, congregational leader, or vestry member and give feedback such as: "I have heard that over the past five years you have worked hard to develop ministry with children that includes liturgical celebrations."
5. Encourage discussion around the mission statement and goals, if they are relevant. Include in the discussion a review of the budget for Christian education or Christian formation as it reflects the

mission and goals. It is at this juncture that you learn much about the self-definition of the congregation and the willingness to grow.

6. Inquire into the hopes and dreams of the congregation from the perspective of the clergy, congregational leader, or vestry member. Share information about this process and seek confirmation of its appropriateness for the ministry that is to be developed.
7. The theology of children, youth, young adults, or adults is often difficult to determine. However, use this opportunity to learn about the clergy's or leader's interpretation of the relationship of the community to God and to children, youth, young adults, and adults. Ask how does this particular congregation view children in their relationship to God and in relationship to the Eucharistic community? This may include viewing the child as an empty vessel into which facts need to be poured or understanding that the child has a full and complete relationship to God from whom adults need to learn or that the child is made in the image of God and is a co-creator with God. Often the theology of childhood will emerge through the pedagogical approach, style of teacher training and even the kinds of resources used in the past. The use and design of space will also reveal the theology of childhood.
8. Decide which of the next sessions are possible. Plan another history-taking session with a group from the congregation. This group should include adults, young adults, youth, key leaders, clergy, vestry members, choir members, teachers, parents, and elders (a group of about 12-18 people).
9. Come to closure on this part of the process, weave, or integrate, and reflect on what you have learned with clergy or leader.
10. *Note: Here is your opportunity to gently speak the truth of what you are hearing in love. This means reflecting through the prayer, scripture and information that you have shared together. Take time to create the next agenda with the leader and ask them to invite necessary persons to the next gathering.*
11. Close with prayer.

➤ Session 2

Community of the Congregation

Identity

Facilitator's Notes:

What is the purpose of this visit?

Purpose:

To learn how the way of life in a congregation is organized around Christian formation, in its identity, in its mission, in its future.

Following Session 1, schedule a history-taking with a group from the congregation, representing people of a variety of ages and ministry experiences (try to include someone who has been involved in the congregation for at least 20 years). It is important to include clergy and lay leaders of the congregation in this gathering because this work will affect how the life of the congregation is organized around Christian education and formation opportunities. Also, this work has the potential to develop new ministry.

Who:

Adults, young adults, youth, children, key leaders, clergy, vestry members, choir members, teachers, parents, and elders (a group of about 12-18 people). These will be divided into small groups.

Who does the selecting:

Encourage the lay leader or the clergy to invite participants.

Where:

Church building, and if possible, gather in a Christian education room.

What:

Gather for a four- to five-hour process. Include food, if possible, and always provide time for worship. Build the agenda for this meeting after the history-taking in Session 1 with the Leader.

Materials:

Newsprint, markers, Bibles, Prayer Books, Hymnals, copies of the kinds of resources that the congregation has produced--bulletins, mission statements, and budgets. Designate a recorder for each small group and record values and wishes on newsprint.

Suggested Agenda:

(Begin with introductions and hopes for the meeting.)

1. Prayer.
2. Share Scripture, meditation on Psalm 8. See **Handout A**.
3. Use *Authority of Generations* as a way to enter into questions of identity. The God question could be: "Share a story of something wonderful in the ministry of this congregation 5 or 10 years ago." Ask, "What is most important to you in the story?" (You will need a copy of **Handout B**.)
4. After completing *Authority of Generations*, talk about the history of formation in the congregation. Listen closely for the joys and sorrows. Focus on the joys; what gives this group energy in their story-telling? For example; Name your best stories when learning was exciting. Name your best stories about Christian education, a time when joy was brought through teaching or learning.
5. Invite a recorder to write down what she or he has heard expressed in the stories.
6. Have the group reflect on the core values expressed in the stories. What are they and where are the commonalities?

List the core values

- A. Ask, "If you had three wishes for your congregational program in Christian education, what would they be?"
 - Write the wishes on index cards.
 - Post them in the wall.
 - Read them aloud together.
 - Organize them into three or more categories (there could be as many as five categories if necessary).
 - Reflect with them on what they see, have heard, and look forward to.
 - [Note: This is the starting place for the next session. Record this information for future use.]
- B. Prepare the congregation to meet by themselves for the next session(s).

Note to the facilitator:

The goal of the next meeting is to take the categories of wishes, combine them, and place them in present tense language, as if they have already happened. This will also be the time for them to bring the resources they are using for church school, confirmation, baptism, adult education, youth ministry, or whatever areas of ministry are being evaluated. Ask them to look at their resources in relationship to the core values they named and the categories of wishes they hope to have happen and provide a written observation or reflection at your next visit with them (if you are working in your own congregation, stay with the whole process).

7. Designate leadership and define roles and responsibilities for the next meeting.

Suggested agenda review for next session:

- Invite participants to bring to the next meeting the kinds of resources they are presently using for faith formation and Christian education.
- Share *Discovering Called to Teach and Learn*, Practical Application #2b. This will be a focus on Baptism. (**Handout C**)
- Name the time, place, and who will provide food.
- Name the person responsible for the reporting, collecting, and setting up the environment for the next meeting.

Remember that preparation time will be needed before the next meeting to:

- Place the categories of wishes back up on the wall
- Share resources already being used in the congregation
- Look at resources in relationship to the categories named
- Develop worship opportunity for next meeting

Close this time with them with prayer, inviting participants' favorite prayers.

➤ Session 3

Self-Directed Congregational Gathering

Identity

Ask the designated leadership to call together as many of the same people from the second session. This process is focused on building community relationships as well as clarifying identity and mission. The clergy or lay leader selects three people to be in charge of this session. The Leader provides and leads the meditation; the Coordinator provides materials and hospitality for the gathering; and the Recorder keeps the minutes to share with the congregation and be ready for Session 4. See list of responsibilities below.

Purpose:

1. To categorize the wishes placed in the present tense statements
2. To look at the resources being used in relationship to values and wishes
3. To create a time-line for next steps
4. To build leadership within the congregation

Coordinator Responsibilities:

1. Create an environment of gathered resources
2. Create an environment of hospitality
3. Contact the people who will be attending the meeting and extends an invitation
4. Post the work from Session 2, values and wishes

Leader Responsibilities:

Materials needed are the Practical Application #2, *Discovering Called to Teach and Learn*, page 8 (Handout C).

1. Create a Baptism environment for the participants by displaying a bowl and pitcher with water. Using a guided meditation ask the group to imagine a baptism as if it were happening in front of them, or share images of the Easter Vigil (if it is an experience of the congregation).
2. Ask:
 - a) What is the role and responsibility of the congregation?
 - b) How do you communicate the participation and practice of the Christian life of faith?
 - c) What resources have you chosen? Criteria for choosing resources may be needed. (e.g. page 40 of *Discovering Called to Teach and Learn*.) (Handout D)
 - d) How do the resources (people and material) we have chosen fit with our values and wishes?
3. Appoint a reporter for the next session.
4. Determine time and location and persons to invite to the next session.

Recorder Responsibilities:

Takes notes, especially concerning resources, and discussion and evaluation.

Prepares values and wishes as hand outs for the next meeting

Prepare the discussion of resources as a handout.

All of the above information could be recorded on newsprint, and then transferred to computer.

The leader might need to create small groups for discussion on resources (those used for children, those used for youth, those used for young adults and those used for adults) and ways to evaluate them. The discussion would include: Do the resources meet our expectations for what we are trying to accomplish for lifelong learning? Are the resources appropriate for our folks? Do the resources help members of our community to deepen their awareness of God and/or support the mission of the church?

This meeting gives a way to assist the congregation to look at its values and wishes in the context of its present work: "Are the resources we have chosen appropriate and are the people in leadership able to carry out our mission in relationship to fulfilling our wishes for the congregation?"

The work of the recorder is vital for the next session.

➤ Session 4

Second Congregational Visitation

Authority

Purpose:

- Review history, Session 1.
- Recall core values and wishes from Session 2.
- Look at the resources being used and listen to report of the evaluation.
- Look at the timeline in relationship to ministry action.

Explanation for each step of the agenda (**Handout E**)

1. Prayer and guided meditation: *Discovering Called to Teach and Learn*, page 11. Using the eight areas of formation, picture a variety of church activities, from Sunday morning coffee hour to the church school schedules.
2. Construct "Provocative Propositions" from the present-tense statements of the wishes while meeting in small groups (see **Handout F**).
3. Appreciation Define this.....is demonstrated for every ministry.
4. Choose and prioritize the "Provocative Propositions," or present-tense statements, of the wishes.
5. Report "Provocative Propositions."
6. Discuss propositions as a whole group.
 - Prioritize propositions, discuss agreement or disagreement.
 - Where is there passion for the work? In what area?
 - Choose the work, and list resources that will be used to accomplish the work.
 - Create a timeline for accomplishing the work.
 - Plan for communication with the congregation. How will this be accomplished?
7. Review time line with the provocative propositions
8. Close with prayer

➤ Session 5

Congregational Work Between Visitations

Authority

The following is a suggested outline of leadership development for a shared ministry of Christian Formation. Leadership is a behavior, not a role. It is shared among adults, children and youth.

1. Lead into the heart of the education and formation programs chosen by the congregation (include discussion around schedule, time, leadership, materials, focus, and values).
2. Consider their emphasis on context. That is formation and education in the congregation, in the home, or in the community. See page 50 in *Discovering Called to Teach and Learn (Handout G)*.
 - Look at the reality of the church schedule and liturgical cycle.
 - Identify the formation/education leadership.
 - Contextualize the theology of the congregation and its educational philosophy. What is the authority by which they see their very identity? How do they make their decisions? How is worship related to their Christian education and formation opportunities?
 - Ask focus questions.
 - a. From the youngest child to the oldest adult, what would you want them to experience in faith formation?
 - b. What is the greatest gift that you bring to the altar every Sunday as a community of educators?
 - c. How do you share with others the core values of Christian education and Christian formation?
 - d. What are the core ethical and moral values that your environment conveys to children? Parents? Newcomers? People who have no faith affiliation?

In small groups:

1. How much experience and knowledge do the teachers and other education leaders need to use the resources that have been chosen?
2. Develop position descriptions/parent guides/hopes statements for education in your congregation.
3. Share a bibliography of resources (**Handout H**) with the entire congregation.
4. Invite each person to define his or her call to ministry in the context of this work. What are your best gifts in relationship to Christian formation?
5. Close with "Liturgy of the Light" (see **Handout I**).

➤ Session 6

Third Congregational Visit

Mission

Note: (introduction)

If you are facilitating a congregation other than your own, it is important to keep in touch with the congregation as they journey through the previous sessions.

Suggested Agenda:

- Bible Study: *Acts 2:1-13*
- Reflect with the group on what has happened to date. Use the "Pentecost Presentation" (see **Handout J**) to integrate the Pentecost Story and Christian education work.
- Review the timeline and "Provocative Propositions."
- Review the use of resources. Include a list of national, provincial, diocesan, or congregational events that will support the ministry of education and resource choices.
- Define roles and responsibilities (See *Called to Teach and Learn*, Chapter 5).
- Is the congregation prepared and educated for change? Will the change be transformational?
- Joe's Russell's handout for change in *Awake My Soul* and other text
- Are education, advocacy, liturgy, and formation integrated in your plan? Use the *Children's Charter for the Church* as a tool for evaluation (see **handout K**), and use *Called to Teach and Learn*, Chapter 4, as a guideline.
- What is next for this group? How will they facilitate the "Provocative Propositions" they have developed? Timeline and roles and responsibilities.
- Close with "Pentecost Presentation" (**Handout J**).

➤ Session 7

Congregation Continues Its Work

Mission

Time for accountability:

We offer you this grid as a way to facilitate the evaluation of the work that is being accomplished in Christian formation and education. You could begin using this grid to record some findings at session 2. The grid could be the organizing structure to be able to see the work that has been accomplished and what still needs to happen according to the timeline. Please create your own grid or evaluation method if that is more helpful to you and to the group with whom you are working.

Encourage the designated leaders in their educational/formational ministry to develop leadership and parent involvement in issues of identity, authority, and mission as they have defined it through their sessions.

Use the following guide to chart progress in all four quadrants:

Tradition

What has happened in the past?

Example: Strong church school 10 years ago

Transcendence

By what authority are decisions made?

Example: Resources focused on Scripture, Old and New Testament

Context

How does the congregation define itself?
What is its identity?

Example: As disciples, we reach out into the community to build the church.

Program

How do the resources: people, curriculum, Bible, Prayer Book, relate to the mission?

Example: Develop an after-school safe-space with resources from the Children's Defense Fund and the Department of Public Education.

Thousands of years ago, a shepherd stood high atop a hill, looked up into the sky, and wondered about God in all God's creation. Specifically, "What are human beings that God is mindful of them, mortals that you care for them?" This question, which reaches into the very heart of human identity, is set in a context of a song of praise. The proclamation that all in God's creation; the heavens, moon and stars, sheep and oxen, birds and fish, it is humanity that is crowned with glory and honor.

We too wonder about our identity. Is our identity placed in the context of praise? Is it placed in the context of God's created order? How do we proclaim, how do we live out our response to God, just as the psalmist did so many years ago?

PSALM 8

O Lord Our Governor, *

How exalted is your Name in all the world!

Out of the mouths of infants and children *

Your majesty is praised above the heavens.

You have set up a stronghold against your adversaries, *

To quell the enemy and the avenger.

When I consider your heavens, the work of your fingers, *

The moon and the stars you have set in their courses,

What is man that you should be mindful of him? *

The son of man that you should seek him out?

You have made him but little lower than the angels; *

You adorn him with glory and honor;

You give him mastery over the works of your hands; *

You put all things under his feet:

All sheep and oxen, *

Even the wild beasts of the field,

The birds of the air, the fish of the sea, *

And whatsoever walks in the paths of the sea.

O Lord our Governor, *

How exalted is your Name in all the world!

The Authority Of All Generations

Process:

Each person in the group will be asked to answer a question about their faith journey. After each story is offered, the group will sing a hymn in response.

The God Question:

- Bring a holy object from your home and tell a story about it.
- When was God present in your life?
- Draw a picture of when you first knew God.

The Weaver:

This person welcomes the group, listens to the stories, theologically integrates the stories, and prays. At the end of the storytelling and singing, this person weaves all the stories to reveal the unity of the group. At the end of the process the weaver asks the question: What shall we do for next year in . . . (name the area of ministry that the group is seeking to define)?

The Discerner of Song:

This person listens to each story, and invites the group to sing a hymn or song that theologically reflects the story. A song will be sung after each story.

Steps:

- Identify a purpose for the meeting.
- Call the meeting, allow two hours.
- Gather.
- The Discerner of Song leads a hymn.
- The Weaver prays.
- Scripture is read.
- The Weaver asks the God question.
- A person shares a story and a hymn is sung. Repeat this until all have shared.
- The Weaver links the common threads from the story.
- A question for the future of the ministry is asked. Responses are recorded.

From *Awake My Soul*, pages 15-26.

The Experience of Baptism

Practical Application #2b from *Discovering Called To Teach and Learn*, published by the Episcopal Church Center, 815 Second Avenue, New York, NY 10017

To enter into the experience of baptism through meditation as a way of understanding the meaning of our baptism.

Create the environment of baptism with the gathered community. Sing a baptismal hymn and gather around the baptismal font using a guided meditation:

Ask the people to imagine a baptism as it is happening.
If the gathered community is familiar with the Easter Vigil, use that experience.

What do they see?

What do they hear?

What are the prayers or some words of the prayers that are remembered?

Wonder: what does it mean to be marked and sealed as Christ's own?

Listen to the water being poured into the font

Listen to the conversation with God and the person being baptized

In the Name of the Father
and of the Son
and of the Holy Spirit

Imagine what it was like for you to be baptized:

Who was with you?
What happened? What is the story?
What does it mean to receive the light of Christ?

Look at the Baptismal rite from the *Book of Common Prayer*

What do we discover about being Christian?

Bring the group to closure with this question: "How does the baptismal rite shape our faith?"

How To Choose Resources

*from **Discovering Called To Teach and Learn**, published by The Episcopal Church Center, 815 Second Avenue, New York, NY 10017*

Teaching can involve hearing, seeing, simulation and direct experience. Some children and adults learn better through the visual, others through hearing, and even others through direct application. It is important when choosing resources or materials that we remember the variety of needs in each learning community.

Consider the following questions when choosing a curriculum or a resource:

- How compatible is the material with the congregation's mission?
- How clearly and accurately does the resource provide information?
- Will this resource match the learning goals and objectives you want to accomplish?
- Are the biblical, theological, and ethical assumptions of the material consistent with our tradition?
- Is the resource sensitive to the development needs of the learning community?
- Is the resource sensitive to gender, race, ethnicity, age, class and culture?
- Does the resource connect the Church and daily life? If so, how?
- Does the resource connect the church and global issues?
- Does the design of the resource enhance learning or even support learning?
- Is training needed to use this resource? If so is there an explanation or guide for training needs?

Eight Areas of Formation

from *Discovering Called To Teach and Learn*, published by The Episcopal Church Center, 815 Second Avenue, New York, NY 10017.

Educational Inquiry looks at the whole life of the congregation in relationship to Christian formation. Congregations have the capacity to form Christians either positively or negatively. The following areas are components of Christian formation, and may be helpful to the facilitator and to the gathered community.

1. **Participation in the communal rites of the church.** *Worship is the primary responsibility of the church. It is essential for all persons to participate, regardless of age.*
2. **The Environment.** *All that we see, taste, touch, smell and hear, as well as the arrangement of the space in which we gather and live, influence us. We shape our space and our space shapes us.*
3. **The Ordering of Time.** *The Church has a calendar based on a story. Our faith and character are shaped by the ways we follow the liturgical calendar.*
4. **The Organization of Our Life.** *The question for us is: How does our life together respond to the Love given to us by God? How are we equipped for ministry in daily life and work?*
5. **Communal Interactions.** *Life in the congregation is a sign to the world of what life in the triune God looks like.*
6. **Role Models.** *Role models are those persons, past and present, whom we raise up to be examples of some aspect of the Christian life.*
7. **Disciplines.** *We learn to be virtuous by practicing the virtues. We learn to pray by praying. We learn to care for others by caring for others.*
8. **Language.** *When we listen and respond we need to be intentional about how we talk and write.*

Use the above eight elements of formation as a way for reflection and discussion. Have the group imagine a variety of congregational activities from Sunday morning coffee hour to the content and conduct of meetings. Discuss what happens at those gatherings and how faith is being formed there.

The purpose is to look at how intentional, inter-related, lifelong processes for formation are integral to formation, education and instruction, or training.

Constructing Provocative Propositions

A "Provocative Proposition" is a statement that bridges the best of "what is" with our own hope or intuition of "what might be." It is provocative to the extent that it stretches the bounds and limits of the status quo, challenges our common assumptions or routines, and helps suggest real possibilities that represent desired futures for the congregation.

After the stories have been gathered that describe who we are as individuals and what we value as a congregation, the group can develop Provocative Propositions from the wishes. State the wishes in the present tense, as if they have already happened.

A Provocative Proposition is:

- **provocative.** It stretches boundaries, challenges assumptions, and interrupts routines.
- **grounded.** Examples have been identified that illustrate that the ideal is a real possibility.
- **desired.** If it could be fully actualized, would we want it?
- **bold.** Is stated in affirmative and bold terms.

What would our congregation look like if it were designed to preserve the values that the group identified as life-giving?

The following elements are included in Provocative Propositions:

- Authority
- Communication
- Constituent relations
- Culture
- Leadership
- Mission
- Strategy
- Staff/people
- Structures
- Systems

Determining the importance of context for formation

Some points to raise in this discussion:

1. The primary context in which our formation ministry occurs is in the home. How do the decisions we make in terms of resources, schedules, etc. affect and support the home?
2. How do the resources chosen affect the context of worship and education within the congregation?
3. How do the resources chosen affect the participation in the context of mission. That is, how we are sent out to do the work God has given us to do no matter what age?

It is important for the congregation to recognize context in its critical reflection of choice of resource, schedule, location, leadership of education and formation opportunities. It is important that every member of the congregation be involved in acquiring the knowledge and skills to be faithful Christians in their daily life and work. Most important to remember:

The congregation is the primary carrier of the Christian faith and the primary context for the forming and transforming of persons in the life of faith.

The congregation is an intentional community of faith, an intentional teaching community, that is focused on ways to support persons to live into their baptism.

Invite people to consider the variety of contexts in which we learn and share our faith and how are the resources, materials, schedules. . .that are chosen affect each context and facilitate all ages in their journey of life long formation.

Resources

Bibliography for Theological Education For All Ages

Bunge, Marcia J. (editor). Title? Eerdmans Publishing Co. Grand Rapids, Michigan. 2001.

Summary: A collection of essays of childhood in Christian theology in the past and present. In this book theology has found its voice for children and families.

Cully, Iris V. and Cully, Kendig Brubaker (editors). *Harper's Encyclopedia of Religious Education*. San Francisco, CA: Harper and Row, Publishers. 1990.

Summary: A one-volume reference to faith development, classroom management, the Bible and curriculum, contemporary social issues and child and adult development.

Eibner, Janet Marshal and Walker, Susan Graham. *God, Kids, and & Us: The Growing Edge of Ministry with Children and The People Who Care For Them*. Etobicoke, Ontario: United Church Publishing House and Toronto, Ontario: Anglican Book Centre. 1996.

Summary: Describes Children's Ministry with suggestions on how to get organized, recruit volunteers and offers a series of reproducible Resource sheets, Worksheets and Questionnaires for the parish.

Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. The Learning Ministries Series. Chicago, Illinois. 1995.

Unit One

Creating A Central Purpose For Your Christian Education Ministry-A Workshop Design. (Ted Schroeder)

Volunteers: At The Heart of the Church-Identifying, Recruiting, Training, Recognizing and Keeping Them! (Phyliss Castens Wiederhoeft)

Evaluating Your Confirmation Program (Kennith Smith)

Unit Two

Hats Off to the Sunday School Superintendent-A Practical Guide for the Sunday School superintendent or Administrator (Miriam Dumke and Diane Monroe)

How to Help Children Take Over the Church: Involving Children in Ministry-A tool for Congregational Evaluation and Action. (Mary Ingram Zentner)

Gardner, Howard. *The Unschooled Mind How Children Think and How Schools Should Teach*. New York: Basic Books, 1991.

Lawson, Michael S. and Robert J. Chooun Jr. *Directing Christian Education: The Changing Role of The Christian Education Specialist*. Chicago, IL: Moody Press. 1992.

Summary: Discusses current issues in directing Christian Education programs in nine chapters with different authors, includes a bibliography, resource list and sample planning sheets for job tasks.

Palmer, Parker. *The Courage to Teach*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1998.

Stephens, Lois A. *I Love To Tell The Story: An Episcopal Handbook on Christian Education*. New York: Center for Christian Formation. 1994.

Summary: Handbook on designing and implementing a Christian Education program in an Episcopal Church. Subject matter includes the content, process and resources for learning and teaching,

Stubbiefield, Jerry M. *The Effective Minister of Christian Education: A Comprehensive Handbook*. Nashville, TN: Broadman and Holman Publishers. 1993.

Summary: A handbook for Christian Educators from the perspective of reformed and/or non-denominational churches and the subject matter is divided into four parts: Who is the minister of education? What does the ME do? What are the ME relationships and How to get started.

Theological Education for those who Teach

Chism, Keith A. *Christian Education for the African American Community: Teacher Training in the Black Church*. Discipleship Resources. 1995.

Summary: Teacher training for African American Sunday Schools.

Davidson, Robert G. *Growing With Discipline*. Educational Ministries, Inc. 1987.

Summary: Classroom management.

DeGrote-Sorensen, Barbara, *Teaching Young Stewards*. Augsburg Fortress. 1993.

Summary: Stewardship Study and teaching, includes teacher training.

Ellis, Susan J. *The Volunteer Recruitment Book*. Philadelphia, PA: Energize Inc. 1994.

Summary: Written to aid programs which recruit volunteers for various assignments. Preparation for recruitment, techniques of recruitment, and quest for diversity are the areas addressed.

Fowler, James W. *Stages of Faith: The Psychology of Human Development and the Quest for Meaning*. New York, NY: Harper San Francisco, 1981.

Summary: Fowler discusses the various ways human beings find meaning and purpose in their lives. He describes this as faith and it is not necessarily religious or equated with belief. He draws on Piaget, Erikson and Kohlberg for defining the six stages of faith.

Harris, Maria. *Fashion Me A People: Curriculum in The Church*. Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox Press. 1989.

Summary: Harris offers an artistic approach to Christian education through using the image of clay; the form embodied in the clay is there for the people of God to fashion a people. She sets for the following five principles of curriculum design: curriculum of education vs. Curriculum of schooling, curriculum education ministry is multiple, subject matter has many layers, curriculum must be priestly, prophetic and political and curriculum must take in to account three forms, explicit, implicit and null.

Juengst, Sara Covin. *Equipping the Saints: Teacher Training in the Church*. Westminster John Knox Press. 1998.

Stott, John R.W. *Christian Basics: A Handbook of Beginnings, Beliefs and Behaviour*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House. 1991.

Summary: This book outlines the basics of Christian beliefs and is divided into three areas of study: Beginnings-how to become and grow a Christian, Belief-explains Christian doctrine for the Holy Trinity, and Behaviors-describes the moral life, prayer and study life.

Stokes, Kenneth. *Dynamics of Adults Faith Development: faith is a verb*. Mystic, CT: Twenty-Third Publications. 1989.

Summary: A book written for people seeking to enrich their faith life and those who are leaders in faith communities.

Westerhoff, John H. *Will Our Children Have Faith?* New York, NY: HarperSanFrancisco. 1976.

Summary: Westerhoff, describes his vision of an alternative to the typical Christian education program. He discusses the reason the church must look for alternatives to current programs and that faith is expressed and taught by people who live out their own faith convictions.

***The Scope of Our Art: The Vocation of the Theological Teacher*. Eerdmans, 2001.**

Liturgy of the Light

Adapted from "The Catechesis of the Good Shepherd" Training Event, Level I, Camp Allen, Texas 1993.

Gather:

Gather everyone in a circle. In the center of the circle, place a candle on a small table. Each person also has a small candle. Invite those present to remember baptism.

Meditation:

Isaiah 9:2

A long time ago there was a very special man who listened closely to the Word of God. Because he listened so closely, he was called a prophet. His name was Isaiah. Once Isaiah heard God say, "the people who walk in darkness have seen a great light."

Isaiah told the people what God had told him, "the people who walk in darkness have seen a great light." The people wondered, what is this light Isaiah is speaking about? They watched, they waited, they wondered for many years.

Then one dark evening many years later, there was a giant comet star in the sky. It lit up the whole night sky. (Light the candle in the center of the circle.) The people wondered, is this the light that Isaiah spoke about many years ago?

On that night a very special birth happened, the birth of Jesus. As Jesus grew, he spoke many wonderful words about God, healed many people, and people often wondered, "Jesus, who are You?"

Once Jesus said, "I am the Good Shepherd," another time Jesus said, "I am the bread of life," and another time he said, "I am the light of the world." As Jesus continued to do so many wonderful things from God, some people became very angry with him. Some people were so angry that they took him and beat him and nailed him to a cross. And the light went out of the world for just a little while.

(Extinguish the candle. After a pause, re-light the candle.)

On the third day, Jesus rose to never ever leave the world again. You, too, received that light the day you were baptized. You were marked and sealed as Christ's own forever.

Remember that time, the people who surrounded you, and the stories you have heard, and remember the light.

At this particular time, we will remember receiving the light.

(Call each person by name and light his or her small candle one by one.)

Remember the light of Christ.

After everyone receives the light, reflect on the fact that when we began there was just one light, now there are many. Remember that light, remember how it grows, and take the light wherever you go.

Invitation to Sing

Invitation to Pray

Close with "Go in peace to love and serve the Lord."

Pentecost Presentation: The Gifts

Preparation:

Set up seven red candles and place a card in front of each candle with an explanation of the gift for each candle. (See below.)
Begin with prayer.

Read the Scripture:

Isaiah 32:15-20, Isaiah 61:1-4, and Acts 2:1-4.

Create a meditation about the presence of the Holy Spirit as the gift that created the church, and that has been given to each of us at the moment of our baptism. Reflect on the light of Christ that each of us has received and the light that came into the world with the Spirit to carry forth Christ's work in the world.

Goal:

The goal is to strengthen the gifts of the spirit that we have already received.

Create the Cards:

A card printed in bold type is placed in front of each candle.
Name the candle, share the definition of each, and light the candle after each definition is shared.

Fear of God:

To place ourselves in the right perspective with God

Knowledge:

So we know God more and more each day

Understanding:

To see God more clearly

Fortitude:

So that we are strong in God

Counsel:

So we know what should be done and how to do it

Proclaim:

To listen to God to be able to teach the Word of God

Righteousness:

To live right with God

Invite each person to enter into silent prayer and then, when they are ready, to come forward to light their own candle from the named candle that represents the gift they would like strengthened in themselves. In response to the gift strengthened or received, sing or pray.

Children's Charter for the Church

An Evaluation Tool

	Nurture of the Child	Ministry to the Child	Ministry of the Child
Church School			
Worship			
Outreach			
Stewardship			
Evangelism			

Invite the congregation to consider its ministry and program areas and how effective each area is in relationship to the nurture of children, ministry to children and ministry with children. For example one question to ask might be, "How in your stewardship programs are children part of the leadership (ministry with)?" or "How does this congregation allocate money that nurtures children or provides direct advocacy with Children?" Use the chart as a way to keep track of the anecdotes. Come back to the chart one year later.