

In Praise & Thanksgiving of Noted Christian Educators

The Reverend Joseph P. Russell was known for his special gift of using storytelling to shape a sense of identity and the power of worship to form Christians in every generation. He served in the Diocese of Oregon and was Canon of Education & Program in the Diocese of Ohio. Among his many books were “Sharing Our Biblical Story,” “The New Prayer Book Guide to Christian Education,” the study guide for “Called to Teach and Learn” and the popular “Aslan on the Move” curriculum.

Ms. Flower Ross, M.R.E., retired Professor at Seabury-Western Theological Seminary was one of the creators of the Education for Ministry program. Now in the Diocese of Western North Carolina, she has provided educational expertise for the Diocese of Alabama, The Episcopal Church, Loyola Institute for Ministry and the Diocese of Atlanta for raising up new Christian educators for the Church.

Ms. Verna Dozier was devoted to biblical study and the ministry of the laity. Author of “The Authority of the Laity” and “Equipping the Saints: A Method of Bible Study,” she was an inspiration and supporter of teachers, storytelling and knowledge of the Bible calling the Church to “The Dream of God.”

The Reverend Robyn Szoke is currently Assistant Rector at St. John’s Episcopal Church in Carlisle, PA. One of the founders of “The Children’s Charter for the Church” she is a trained Catechist and teacher at Moravian Theological Seminary. From 1999-2003 she was Staff Officer for Children’s Ministries & Christian Education for The Episcopal Church, advocating for lifelong formation.

The Reverend Dr. John H. Westerhoff III is known for his passion for catechetical teaching and formation in The Episcopal Church. Noted author of “Will Our Children Have Faith?” & “Bringing Up Children in the Christian Faith” he was a key contributor to “Called to Teach and Learn.” He continues to proclaim the ministry of all by virtue of our baptism through his teaching and speaking.

Theological Education Sunday



Celebrating the Ministry of Christian Educators

The Lord God has given me the tongue of a teacher, that I may know how to sustain the weary with a word. Morning by morning he wakens — wakens my ear to listen as those who are taught. Isaiah 50:4

Theological Education Sunday has been broadened in the last six years to recognize the importance of theological education, lifelong learning and Christian formation in many venues of the Church's life. Theological Education Sunday provides an important opportunity to renew the vision of this work and to share resources to strengthen the church in its educational and formational ministries. This resolution continues support for designating the first Sunday in February to highlight this critical ministry of the Church (*Explanation of Resolution 2006 D008 to “Reaffirm Theological Education Sunday”*)

What is a Christian Educator?

Educators serve as directors of Christian education, directors of children's, youth and/or adult ministries, seminary faculty, day school directors & teachers, resource center directors, church camp directors as well as in a variety of other educational positions. The ministry of education encompasses roles that help to shape an educational vision, establish goals, evaluate, plan & arrange programs, recruit leaders, define & select curricula. It involves engaging others with the Biblical story.

A great Christian Educator:

- Engages people of all ages and helps them see themselves as Christ's beloved
- Is one who reflects Christ's beliefs and actions
- Is more concerned with what the eyes, ears, nose, mouth, hands & heart know than what is understood; they are patient because they know, share, and live waiting on God
- Has a clear sense of their own spirituality and a joy in awakening the spirituality of others
- Is a great storyteller who can help people of all ages be with God rather than know about God

Some of the rewards of being a Christian Educator:

- Hearing the love of God in a child's voice
- Knowing that seeds are being planted, whose blossoms you may never see, yet you know they are there
- The privilege of being with people during special times in their lives: baptism, marriage, grief, joy, struggles, celebration . . .
- Learning more than you teach

How can we continue to support Christian Educators?

Provide intentional support, including opportunities for regular continuing education as well as respect, understanding & appreciation. Educators need time away to be with

colleagues for learning and nourishment. Hold your Christian Educator in prayer regularly and encourage them to have a Spiritual Director.

How does a congregation know it needs to call a Christian Educator?

- You have just a few volunteers doing all the work and are experiencing burnout
- Your teachers need assistance in finding curriculum or additional resources
- Your congregation seeks an understanding of the relationship between worship, mission, stewardship & education?
- Parents who want their children & youth to be more active in the worship, mission and educational ministry of the congregation
- Your congregation desires to have mission goals to strengthen the parish's education program

Links to more information:

- *General Convention Resolutions* regarding Formation & Education
www.episcopalchurch.org/48931_48961_ENG_HTM.htm?menu=menu489955
- *National Association for Episcopal Christian Education Directors* (NAECED)
www.naeced.org
- *Episcopal Council for Christian Education* (ECCE)
www.episcopalchurch.org/48931_52769_ENG_HTM.htm
- *Resources* to empower Christian Educators
www.episcopalchurch.org/48931_ENG_HTM.htm
- *Theological Education for All* www.teforall.org

Training for Christian Educators:

- Virginia Theological Seminary MACE program www.vts.edu/cmt
- Seminary of the Southwest Certificate program www.ctss.edu/youthdre.shtml
- More professional development:
www.episcopalchurch.org/48931_48954_ENG_HTM.htm?menupage=4895