

Wrestling with the Big Questions **Looking to the Future**

What difference has this consultation made to you or your ministry?

- A excellent beginning – particularly in bringing together folks from across the educational leadership spectrum
- Very little value to my role as an EFM coordinator in my diocese (Idaho), except understanding that many dioceses have geographic issues like Spokane. Distance between small/middle size churches (75-100 members) and over 1- 1½ hours apart makes cooperation difficult. The conference made a HUGE difference to other aspects of my lay ministry. Major impact on outreach ministry at church and role in diocese as member of Council on Stewardship & Finance Committee. Outstanding: networking, network café, Parker Palmer, Juanita Palmerhall
- This consultation has enriched me with knowledge on how to find the resources for my ministry, how to overcome fear of answering big questions from my students
- Our entire church is stuck in the paucity model. We need to call out and celebrate our gifts. We need to feed our people what they are hungry for – circles of trust. I will re-enter my ministry with renewed faith in this – and with good ways to make it happen
- It has reinforced much of what I have already learned about the value of small groups, hospitality and safety/confidentiality. All learning needs to be soulful. Thanks for the Soul Food!
- I appreciated the insights of Parker Palmer and I may try to implement Circles of Trust in our church on various committees and the Vestry. It made me think about being more open in my conversation with people from the “far right”
- It has given me new resources – methods & books
- New and broader perspectives
- Still processing . . .
- Companions on the journey
- Renewed me and affirmed what I already know about the importance of listening to each other’s stories.
- Deepened my passion
- Connected and enlightened me to the broader spectrum of education all across the Episcopal Church
- The opportunity to gather wit so many from so many places on the map of the wide range of theological education / formation / Christian learning communities – this has been important
- I am concerned about how we gather the pieces and weave ourselves together as we move into a new future together. But this was an important step for us.
- It has made me / started me thinking about ways we create / expand our church communities – to be more inclusive
- I have a stronger conviction and feel encouraged – surely the power of the Lord is in this place! I feel such gratitude for this experience. Thank you for helping me feel that our church will be “ONE!”
- The small groups allowed us to “practice” the model of creating safe space
- Many resources / networking opportunities
- Broader understanding of the larger church
- Confirmation of the EFM model of learning
- Resources to take back to my diocese
- Great ideas – practical – for educational opportunities
- Feel good about being a part of a consultation that is making / will make a difference

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- It has clarified some deep concerns I had about our approaches to education. It has given voice to those concerns and given me permission to advocate a more holistic approach to teaching and building community
- Learning about the circle of trust and the way our small groups were set up, makes me want to use this as a model in the future
- To make a resolution not to work in a vacuum
- Good to know the church is working in this way on a project, otherwise too early to tell. I plan to review my notes and confer with colleagues in the diocese and my parish. BIG THANKS to the planners.
- It's too soon to tell
- Met new people; new ideas for teaching; thoughtful reflection on my teaching ministry
- I am encourage that ECUSA is so concerned about education that it went to such lengths to sponsor this consultation. Thank you for all your hard work
- Challenging, stretching, growing
- I leave this conference with a feeling that the church big-wigs have heard the people working in the parishes
- I have met and exchanged info with people who share my concerns
- Introduced me to Parker Palmer, Juanita Palmerhall and some new poetry
- Reaffirmed my plan to start a safe-space type group in my setting
- Gave me a time to reflect on my work, focus and to be renewed by worship – connected deeply with two acquaintances
- It reinforced my belief in the power of stories to inform the heart and mind.
- Parker's book gave me lots of new ideas about discernment
- Not entirely sure – but has something to do with continuing to search for ways of forming and being in community at all levels of my work – congregation and diocese
- Convinced me that using stories is the way to go
- A very helpful reminder of the truth that small groups are where truth is revealed and explored best. A reminder to trust the wisdom of groups.
- Supportive and encouraging; nurturing; intentional diversity of representation was both helpful and hopeful
- I've learned a new way of working together through the circles of trust.
- I made a lots of contacts and felt able to help put a lot of pieces together
- Given me more confidence for speaking my truth – TRUSTing in the deep, inner spirit.
- Affirmation of insights I have but are not articulated.
- Greater emphasis on sharing personal stories
- Affirmed important of mutual trust in “Circles of Trust”
- Encouraged me to seek a “circle of trust” outside the parish for my own spiritual care.
- I have long want the Episcopal Church to hear from and engage Parker Palmer – he has much to teach us. So this has been a hopeful step, very affirming. And the focus on story/Story has been heartwarming
- Reconnecting, networking
- A reminder of the power and grace that is possible when community comes together. The small groups worked.
- The connections have been essential
- Very good; helped set some context for further discussions
- I loved the chance to exchange information with others
- Made me consider what I “kinda / sorta” knew in my heart as opposed to what I “learned.” Hope I'll trust that intuition more.

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- It has brought an awareness to me of the need to find ways to deepen my own faith and transformation in new ways. This was a marvelous experience for me! Thank you so much!
- Confirmed the work we are doing
- It has affirmed that others share my vision of our potential
- It has helped focus some of the frustrations and made them easier to address
- This conversation has provided me with an opportunity to hear and voice --- of the soul in a safe, caring environment. This practice of building caring circles is showing me ways to help others at the parish level be sure to build circles that will support the important work of formation that an individual can do
- Awareness that we need to be thinking of changing the institutional culture of learning – i.e. how can we create it instead of trying to dream up new programs. My awareness is that most I met remain in “program” mode.
- I felt treated more like a professional at this event than any previous gathering I have been to. I know that the registration cost did not fully cover the cost, but I wanted to thank those who made the decision to spend the extra money to make this a first class event.
- I appreciated the intentionality of the make-up of the small groups. As a facilitator, I greatly appreciated having the small group questions and expectations before I got here.
- As one who is under 40, very little of what Mr. Palmer said really resonated with me. I think it’s because he spoke in too many metaphors for my taste. Inspiring stuff, but still not sure how his message goes with our work. While we do need to wrestle with big questions, we also need to ask questions that can be answered. Staying in the heady, academic realm does very, very, very little to help our parishes and dioceses who are struggling with Christian formation. The big question that was never asked was “How is what we are doing going to help the small, medium and large congregations throughout the country?”
- Made me more aware of all the resources available to educators
- Given me a great opportunity to network with others to learn from successes or failures
- Confirmed even more the importance and nurturing of community as the Body of Christ
- Parker Palmer spoke personally to some of current struggles in ministry and vocation

What new learnings have come about due to this consultation?

- Asset mapping technique wonderful and will use in diocese and own church.
- The “Circle of Trust” concept very useful at my church and can help my diocese. I can see opportunities to start circle/s in church.
- Use of storytelling is a good technique to consider for adult education.
- Network contacts extremely valuable to me, particularly at own church
- Big Questions on wall placards unique and powerful
- Choosing curriculum for children and youth Christian formation
- Ways to answer the big questions at church school, etc.
- Networking, sharing ideas, teaching each other
- Providing Christian education for all age groups accordingly
- Asset mapping
- The soul is my inner teacher. I need time to process what my inner teacher is trying to share with me.
- I learned what and how to do “asset mapping”
- I learned how to operate a “circle of trust”
- Experience of a circle of trust
- Reinforcement about the importance of community, sharing of experience and inner teacher
- Not much new, but profoundly deeper understanding
- We have amongst us everything we need – regardless of the group we are talking about. Identifying and using the assets / gifts is the challenge
- The Circle of Trust should be used in all Christian contexts and they can be. We just need to do it – in our individual circles.
- The idea of acting and living out of abundance rather than scarcity
- Affirmation of what I already know; courage to keep on
- There is great pain in the Christian education leaders that all their work can be gone in an instant at the command of a rector or bishop
- From the McMaster Educational Model I’ve learned to keep the recipient/participant of the process ever before our eyes and involved in the planning, execution and review
- How unaware the national church leadership is of what’s happening on the local scene (especially local formation programs for ministry development)
- We must seek ways to build on our common concerns / similarities to create church communities even if uncomfortable – and it will be uncomfortable to many (most?) eg. Ordination of Gene Robinson – our commonalities also separate us as communities
- The conflict within our church regarding Bishop Robinson has been heart breaking for me. This weekend I learned that hearts can break apart like grenades, destroying or wounding what’s nearby, or a heart can break open – allowing the healing light of God to enter. The wounded heart, once it’s healed, can be stronger and of even greater service.
- New hope that our church wants so much to live into God’s abundance and put formation as a priority – to be / give integrity and to interface into the whole fabric of the church
- Asset mapping
- New perspectives on Appreciative Inquiry
- The idea of always staying engaged with the Big Questions, regardless of our place on the theological spectrum. Not a new learning, but I am thrilled that our church supports this, educationally, since it so hard to do!!
- The primary importance of community and relationships; the importance of being rather than doing
- New resources in the church; new ideas for Christian formation

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- Still processing!
- I've learned some new acronyms and the substance behind them
- Have made some new acquaintances / good networking opportunities
- Nothing so much new, but some good reinforcements of what I already knew, experienced and practice – which is good to have
- I've heard Parker Palmer before and he was once again thoughtful, engaging and fascinating in his images and interpretations of scripture. Gave us a good foundation for group discussion. The “circle of trust” image is recycled from his 2003 Chicago speech to ECUSA educators, but was well worth hearing again
- Significant weight and difference given to the words “education” and “formation” – this is key
- How seminary work affects parish work
- There are constructive conversations happening in many parts of the liberal / conservative divide
- I would walk on hot coals to hear Parker Palmer speak!
- Asset mapping
- This particular group formation model (circles of trust) (although I know several similar ones)
- Knowing that this (consultative / PEALL) process is going on in the larger church
- It seems that we are still in a state of transition between a time (when I was confirmed) in which we understood that there was a specific list of things we needed to “know” in order to be a member of the church and our sense now that what is needed is a process of ongoing formation. We've not come up with enough intentional ways to combine both the transfer of information and the transformation of individuals into the Body of Christ
- Affirmation of a growing realization that people ask for and say they want information – but struggle with knowledge that it is in community and stories that we grow. Resistance to being in community. How do we deal with that?
- Using stories to weave meaning
- We are educating in a broken world. Our education must bring healing and hope into that reality
- Understanding what a circle of trust is / feels like
- Listen more and talk less
- Invited and honor others with gratitude
- Circle of trust
- The schedule – it wasn't overloaded (I appreciated that); it allowed for deeper learning
- For deep, deep conversion, circles of trust must be developed within parish structure – i.e. true small group ministry. Not exactly new learning, but key to going deeper
- Risk involved in moving from curriculum (canned) model to truly going for the big questions and trusting that folks will come up with the big questions if asked
- Connection with community organizing model
- Lots of little ideas – too many to list here, but some of which were tuned in via small groups and Sunday evening. I leave even more committed to the work of circles of trust and to listening
- Exposure to asset mapping as a useful tool in working with vestries
- Better listening skills, the value in talking to the center
- Importance of community circles vs. adult seminars
- Maybe not new, but confirmed my suspicions that adult education should be transforming – something we don't do well or enough of. But there is hope! There's also a fire to be fed!
- Circles of trust
- Use of poetry for meditation
- I have learned to look at faith formation as a collaboration between people who need to establish safe space where we can support others on their faith journey. Several key questions need to be answered:
 - Are we offering safe space that supports faith formation?

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- Are we reaching out to the forgotten with acceptance?
- Have we asked what is needed to listen and support the lost find their voice?
- Rather than new learnings, I have been reminded of what I already knew but needed to be reminded of
- Seminaries are struggling (positively) with preservation of the institution and being responsive to congregations. This is great! They could / can be a great resource for congregations and can be most open to the use of technology beyond their own borders; we have to reduce the “distance” between the inland west from seminaries (not just ETSS & CDSP!)
- The circle of trust is a valuable tool for people who work together – needs to be used more in workplace
- Learned about important groups such as PEALL
- Importance of stories being told
- Practice listening
- Networking and relationships outside my current context
- Those who are using J2A (Journey to Adulthood) are finding that young people want to come to church so much that they drag their parents along.
- One person in the small group, in the first session, said she felt intimidated by the “credentials” of the persons in the group because we have (mostly clergy or diocesan educators) knowledge that she does not. By the last meeting of the group this person said, “The discomfort I felt in being among the experts I no longer feel because, after being in the group and after going to the asset mapping session, I now see that I bring my own assets to the conversation.”

What suggestions do you have for how the Church can move forward on this journey of transforming and advancing the educational mission of our Church?

- Missing – representation from the National Association of Episcopal Schools – very important to this continuing dialogue
- Models for all kinds of learning, readily available
- Free curriculum for small churches, downloadable
- Helping us wrestle with “Is Sunday morning still a viable time for education/formation?”
- Better communication re: education resources
- Establish Christian Formation centers at all seminaries with mandatory training for clergy and local training for education leaders and teachers
- Strongly encourage all dioceses to have staff and resources dedicated to education
- One vacuum to me is lack of curricula options between Via Media for “seekers” and the area before people are ready for DOCC or EFM. Need some kind of less intimidating option for interested seekers.
- Creating small groups with list of gifts and talents each individual has to share and to teach one another. Giving out surveys to find out each person’s gifts and talents. Networking sessions and additional training for advancement
- Web sharing – sharing really good, downloadable resources; not too many out there. Diocese of Connecticut does this well – why can’t we do this nationally?
- Could we “do” much of this conference model in our parishes? Can the National Church support some of the work that needs to go on that has been started with NO help from ECUSA?
- We have begun programs that create circles of trust: Godly Play, EFM, Journey to Adulthood. Programs for children and adults have no help from the National Church and need to be further developed
- EFM has components that might be transformed into something that will be less than a 4-year commitment
- We are not utilizing what we have already begun! (Belonging Before Belief describes a way for people to ask questions that build community and Christian education / formation (Diocese of Indianapolis has this work)
- Information from Parker Palmer on “how people learn best” might be really helpful to us all
- Doing regional teacher trainings
- Encourage folks to look at the Sewanee EFM model of a group. Mentors are trained to mentor, not be a fountain of information. The environment of the group allows for deep learning and life changing experiences – hospitality/welcome/safety
- Attempt to get the adults more involved in education so that they could learn more about the church and that they have the church play a more important role in their lives and they would pass it on to their children. Perhaps have the experts from the National Church come into Dioceses and do workshops for representatives from local churches.
- Clearinghouse of resources – materials and people for Christian formation – especially about forming relationships with others, no matter what age
- We might explore the possibility that we have become so enthralled with programs that we are not sufficiently honoring local wisdom.
- Find a way to enable laypersons to find and fill leadership roles – roles that carry authority. We should not have to seek ordination to be heard. The laity is the church.
- Transfer of authority to laity; clergy – let go of power
- Keep the dialogue going all across the spectrum of education – seminaries, dioceses, parishes, National Office, etc.

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- Continue to reinforce the ministry of all baptized and help clergy to dismantle hierarchical mentality although that is our structure (paradox!)
- Deeply disappointed that deacons were absent from the liturgy on Sunday morning
- Our small circle of trust was magnificent, in terms of personal connections, but I did feel that we missed an opportunity to talk about either the Big Questions or on the project of pulling together seminaries, local formation programs, life long formation efforts, and so on. I was also surprised (and a bit alarmed) that the network café offerings failed to include the very extensive development of local formation programs for ministry development – which have emerged all over the country and all around the world. It's as if those responsible for oversight of theological education and formation in the national church have little or no awareness of the shape of theological education and formation is taking on the diocesan, regional and local level.
- We must take this to our dioceses, parishes. We must be risk takers, the uppity ones who effectuate changes in our staid/closed congregations. This must be our new mantle.
- My hope is that our church will move forward as a wounded healer. Let's honor difference, celebrate diversity and accept that God loves all of us and we're all in God's image. We need to get back to our business of loving God and loving one another.
- Please get the bishops in on the conversations.
- What resolutions will go to General Convention?
- Continually offer thanksgiving for everyone in the room and acknowledge who they are and what they bring.
- Make hospitality primary – address hidden rules.
- Encourage multi-generational gatherings and leadership
- Preach and be the truth that the best leadership happens when the leader is primary learner. Lead with questions and hold the space until the Holy Spirit provides the answers.
- We need all of our “leadership” – especially our bishops and seminary professors & deans to MODEL what we have been talking about for 4 days!
- There is a real danger that without continued support and upfront direction, very little of what was discussed and put forward at this conference will result in actual lasting change. Therefore I suggest that (PTO) you:
 1. Select a few centers as represented by people here – a complete cross section
 2. Work with them to create centers of excellence that others can learn from and be inspired by
 3. So create a cascade of good practice, which causes ripples of circles across the Episcopal Church(You will need to keep dropping stories of community relationships and learning if you want this conference and your work to have a lasting effect. Thank you for all your hard work.)
- Keep talking – keep asking the questions
- Include a marketing piece or create a task force to help the church proclaim what we have to offer. It is a difficult task –difficult to do without putting down fellow Christians whose approach is different
- PEALL & MYP should explore ALL the ways to share their findings with the wider church. The thing we do poorly is create ways to share knowledge and do networking. We've got to do this more than every 3 years.
- We had a very good small group with little conflict. Our group dynamics changed when a new person arrived on Sunday ((day 3 of the conference). He is a bishop and the group dynamics changed. People began to defer to him and his authority. He was a bit preachy, with lots of quotes and answers to people's wonderings. I was sad to see this happen, but it is an interesting microcosm of the Episcopal Church.
- I worry about how feedback from this consultation will be used. I hate to sound pessimistic, but I have been to so many conferences that have no discernable follow-up. I was encouraged to hear

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at the closing session on Monday that the PEALL group will report to various agencies, and to su, in the coming months and years

- Our small groups that met Sunday night to focus on one of the nine areas of concern was a great idea. Unfortunately, my group (#6 – common language for theological conversations) was dominated by a few fast-talking, quick-thinking people who overwhelmed me and others with their good ideas and thoughtful sharing. How quickly we can forget the “circle of trust” model! However, I was grateful for a chance to listen to others, even if there was no “opening” for me to talk and share my own thinking. Thank you again for this fine, well-organized consultation.
- Trust
- As I understand it, this is the plan – information about this event and ideas & programs that grow from it must flow through the body of the church. Circulation must continue with knowledge traveling in all directions. If this doesn’t happen it will have been a jolly good party for 300 people and an expensive waste of time for the church.
- Don’t forget to affirm things that are already going on that embody much of what we discussed as far as safe spaces (EFM, Catechesis of the Good Shepherd, group spiritual direction, Shalem/DC groups, etc.)
- Simple is good
- I am so glad that you are interviewing (getting my big questions) from people outside the church. Keep listening to ‘outsiders’
- Use liturgy
- I am wondering about liturgical implications, but I don’t have ideas yet.
- Communication is key
- Need to develop a sense of trust in the process – detect distrust and feelings that this is the same old thing – nothing real accomplished
- Issues of stewardship of our resources – seems a puzzlement. Can’t afford to spend the money and time like this . . . but can’t afford not to???
- Consider real change, not mere modifications of what already exists. Start with a clean slate. Empower the laity in this process!
- Keep listening to stories
- Create safe spaces for real sharing / trust
- Model for others – across the spectrum; Offer training / growing experiences for seminarians who must learn to lead by listening! So they will be better equipped to lead by / with example and as a servant among (instead of an authority from on high!)
- As long as this material is published, and that our contacts don’t break down. The best connections were educators with seminaries. I hope we don’t lose that.
- How to ‘take home’ what we’ve experienced to spread the Good News of this approach to learning
- As vicar of a small mission – how to have more folks in similar situations have this experience
- Where are the youth? Where are the Latinos and support for their being here?
- Thank you for the gift of living into the Communion of Saints
- Use the few people we have we have who are both practioners, but also well trained in the field – i.e. graduate work (Master’s, PhD’s)! We are a good think-tank / dreamers with skills and experience. None of us are part of PEALL but are interested, supportive and passionate. And are potential creators & writers (Lisa Kimball, Klara Tammany, Linda Nichols, Mary Herring, Vicki Hall, Pattie Ames, Sue Singer)
- Using multiple modalities to communicate information making multi-cultural learning a priority. That different aged people may need different ways to express things.
- Use this info. Remember there are a lot of task-oriented DCEs involved here – more were not here. How does what we have done get to them?

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- The church needs to keep this ball rolling by offering up new resources to guide churches in starting a faith-based program with circles of trust.
- This was a discerning / reflective event – now how will you bring us together to create?
- Creating curriculum: What do “we” – the church – believe children and adults need to know and be able to do as they move through their faith journey? Are there points of content or experiences that help educators shape the journey for anyone and everyone?
- We must be authentic and believable when we talk about the joy and value of education
- We must find ways to help people taste education in bites they can swallow and enjoy so that they will ask for more and gradually lengthen their attention and desire for church.
- We struggle with stewardship and wonder why people are not excited about giving money. What would our congregations look like and our giving be if our churches became centers that people turned to just for nourishment and challenge because the opportunities for learning and reflecting and sharing were pertinent, vibrant and safe. People give to places they want to be.
- Begin to develop support and training that empowers the lay person to share their gifts
- Reach out to families and support . . . will help build a culture of caring making all members (children & adults)
- Begin to work to help support and build caring, safe space where we nurture the soul and spirit of all, accepting the gifts that each individual brings
- I would love to see a resource/s from the National Church concerning Discernment for individuals and parishes. A resource that gives lots of ways to do discernment – not about Holy Orders but about life decisions and vocation
- Don’t forget the small church. As you build / create / shape resources – if they’re not free, please don’t make them accessible only to the ASA 100+ church. How can cultures and communities of learning be created without money being a barrier and marginalized so many by assumptions about “standard-sized” communities
- Clearinghouse of resources – materials and people for Christian formation – especially about forming relationships with others, no matter what age
- We must address the need to explore ministry and discernment from the earliest beginnings of Christian formation and continuing lifelong. There is much exposure to our default clerical model to unto its influence once people are in their teens. At the same time discernment ministry and call must be understood thought as “being at that time – the truth of that time.” Otherwise we risk locking people into a path that is valid for them at the time of first discernment but, possibly, not later. We are works in progress with twists and turns lifelong.
- National Church website should have a place for people to upload/trade/share ideas and resources for faith in the home / family / faith development – could other ministry areas do the same?
- More responsibility given to provinces in the field of education
- Create field offices in each province
- Provide more funds for provincial education meetings – these meetings are vitally important
- Work to involve people of all ages!
- More concrete objectives coming out of our work
- More children to help us focus on our ministry with them now and in the future
- More opportunities – guided for folks with like ministries to meet and network
- An opportunity – compelling – be sure the 815 folks (etc.) meet as many of the “grassroots” ministers as possible
- What is key is for “awake people to be awake.” Risk is part of being in the moment. We need to find new ways to transmit education, especially through story e.g. Godly Play or J2A.
- I would like copies of the small group questions so that I can use them in small groups at home in looking to the future.