

## Network Café Sunday morning, following Eucharist

*These ten topics were chosen due to the interest shown on registration forms. Due to space / room availability, those topics that received a majority of interest were offered. Several ad hoc groups also formed independently by participants who chose to network on issues they desired to meet about.*

Adult Education – 69

Asset Mapping – 52

Seminary education – 35

Children’s formation – 35

Family Ministry – 33

Discernment – 30

Young Adult Formation – 28

Cultural Awareness – 26

Teacher Training – 26

Youth Formation – 25

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Feedback from Lynne Grifo, OMD on **ADULT EDUCATION** (group of 7 participants)

Getting people to attend adult ed programs in Anglo parishes is tough, yet in Hispanic congregations people seek out every educational opportunity that is made available. Why and what can be done?

Quote heard at consultation: Every family and household should have a theology. How can the family become a place of learning?

Story: 15 year old god-daughter was invited by her teacher to enter a Rotary Club public speaking competition. The teenager chose to speak on the issue of teaching Intelligent Design in the public schools, a position which she opposed. In preparing to address her parents got actively engaged in the discussion which also spilled over into conversation with her godmother (who is a priest). The latter told the teenager about the Catechism for Creation available from the Episcopal Church and searched the web for what leaders of the Church might have said about the issue. This was a great learning experience for the family.

An educator from a corporate-sized parish in the south described their program: six courses going on a Sunday and all are filled. All demographic groups participate with the exception of parents of young children. There are six EFM groups but some feel that commitment is too long so they have found alternatives that suit older women. They are still looking for programs that would suit the older men in the congregation.

One priest asked his deacon to select a topic for a course and he picked a book by Marcus Borg as the basis for the class. The class was immediately popular and grew so much by word of mouth that even people from other denominations joined the class.

A NC program-sized church asked the parish intern, who is 30+ to lead a class on “Making a Home for Faith” and loads of people came, including parents of younger children. And even after the intern left the momentum for the class continued.

Another NC parish, Holy Trinity, Greensboro, corporate-size, has an active education program with courses that are 6-8 weeks in length. They’ve focused on Celtic spirituality and then offered a Celtic style worship service and 100s came.

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In a Nashville congregation one educator has used the Via Media curriculum and she has been pleased with the result. Since hospitality is part of the message they began with a dinner. People from across the four Sunday services came and many did not know each other because they are never in church together. The videos are very engaging, positive and uplifting. The questions are excellent.

Another parish is planning to use “Living the Questions” video series by Borg, Crossan, etc. There is wide interest in Borg because the questions he raises allows for lots of wrestling.

Determining where people’s energy is around learning is key, e.g. when a family comes for baptism.

One diocesan educator has conducted a survey (Central PA) of 71 parishes and 42 responded. Of those 1/3 did not identify any education programs that they offer. Most had bible study, adult forums, several used Faith Alive, one used Via Media. The diocese then offered workshops where purveyors of the curricula could describe their wares and many parishes indicated interest. He now plans to follow-up with additional workshops. His goal is to increase the number of churches offering education programs.

One educator routinely invited local college professors to speak to her adult education classes.

On-line learning? Mercer School of Theology (LI) is just starting an on-line academic course. They may try to offer Vestry training programs on-line to promote connections between lay leaders.

In one community several very stimulating discussions were sparked around the book, “God’s Politics” by Jim Wallis.

One educator from a Total Ministry diocese says that in education programs he has found that ‘mutual invitation’ works well. (Eric Law’s book)

Creating a process to deepen faith is key. The Diocese of MI has structured a process around formation. It is very effective for faith development – it has helped people turn around their lives.

Remember education happens outside of formal programs in unplanned and unexpected ways.

### **What can seminaries do?**

- Clergy need to know how to identify education programs that will serve their people.
- Clergy also need to learn to listen to laity, especially lay educators
- The Total Ministry community needs video programs (like the Teaching Company courses) especially in the field of Anglican Studies
- Can seminaries invited people around the church to join on-line in seminary courses to de-mystify it? One GTS course will be offered on-line to GTS seminarians – could it be opened up to non-seminary students?
- Could there be easy access to seminary libraries for educators and learners?
- Could connections to faculty members who have written or taught particular subjects be made with local educators who are exploring related topics?
- There are no journals in TEC in applied theology; this is needed
- Encourage clergy-to-be to seek out the guidance of Christian educators
- Post lists of books on the internet in a field and from a range of perspectives
- Can diocesan, parish and seminary educators be on the same page about how to make disciples? How? One visit from a professor to a diocesan event does not result in real engagement.