

# WRESTLING WITH THE BIG QUESTIONS

## SESSION I: SUMMARY

### **Christian Faith & How We Learn to Live It** (Sat. morning).

Tell a story about a moment, an event, a situation or a life-passage in which you learned something important about what it means to live in faith as a Christian, whether inwardly, or in relationships, or in your vocation, or as a citizen, etc. Feel free to draw on any sort of learning experience, whether it was positive or negative, and whether or not it was part of a formal educational setting. After stories have been told by all who wish to do so, reflect on what you have heard via three questions: (1) What do people mean by “faith” or “living in faith”? (2) What are some of the key ways in which people learn to live in faith? (3) What do these stories suggest about how education in the church is both supporting us and failing to support us on the faith-learning journey?

### **What have you heard / learned:**

- Core values for faith formation:
  - Relationships / relational learning
    - Need to move from “program” ministry to “relational” ministry in the church
    - Faith is incarnational – in our relationships with one another
  - Respect / vision of cultural diversity
  - (Theological) Reflection on experience
  - Storytelling
    - The thread of all stories was Christ working in / through us or others
    - Being able to listen to other’s faith stories helps us learn more about our own story and faith
  - Mentors / guides
  - Ritual / liturgy
- Developing circles of trust involve telling our story
  - Leaders/teachers need to learn how to make space for all perspectives and not influence the community by their own needs/understanding
  - The church has wounded many
  - Creating circles of trust / safety / listening / acceptance
- Our tradition as Episcopalians is important
- Formation involves journey in community
- Importance of being open to change
- Living out Baptismal Covenant – put faith and learnings into action
- Formation ministry should be equally shared between clergy & lay
- Liturgy is important for formation – but should not be the sole venue
- “Head” knowledge should become “heart” knowledge – how to live out doctrine in the world

### **Practical implications:**

- Stop using the Bible as an answer book – it is a book of OUR stories and questions
- Education needs to be experiential
- Our curricula needs to
  - Help us articulate our stories as part of the Biblical story

- Support relationships among peers – emphasize process over product/outcome
  - Focus on connecting to life out in the world – not on learning content
- New models for education that are relational – not so focused on content / cognitive level of learning
- Our churches need to be more intentional about being safe places
  - Leadership does not know how to create such places
  - Develop ways to create structures / circles of trust in our faith communities
- Intergenerational learning / experiences / sharing
- Mentors
- Diverse learning styles
- Godly Play as a model for storytelling – putting My Story / God’s Story / Our Story along with safe space and relationships / community
- More focus on formation / nurture in the home – support for parents & grandparents
- Collaboration of ministries is essential in order to move forward
- The voice of children and youth need to be heard as well as millennials
- Leadership training is needed – skill development in patience, compassion, ambience, risk-taking, listening, creativity (“out of the box” learning)
- The old Sunday School model is failing – our Christian education needs to provide a more solid foundation for theological reflection – the secular model needs to be transformed to one of storytelling and experiential learning at all age levels
- Clericalism is retarding the work of formation and ministry – hierarchy in the church is flattening the building of relationships
- Create liturgies and curricula for critical times in our lives
- Embrace life-long learning – from the 1<sup>st</sup> grade teacher to the elderly – it needs to be continual and
- Theological schools need to be more ‘in sync’ with congregations – more collaborative efforts are needed