

Top 9 Areas of Concern – Sunday Evening Exercise

The nine topics were chosen from themes that emerged from the first two small group session scribe reports. Participants chose their groups / topics. In order of interest:

Opening our eyes to:

1. Creating safe space – 15
2. Creating curriculum that addresses head, heart and relationships – 15
3. Creating resources to support the role of parents/s and the home in nurturing faith – 22
4. Creating the opportunities for life long faith development / formation in and through worship – 23
5. Finding common language for deep / challenging theological conversations – 22
6. New ways of incorporating storytelling in preaching and teaching in the church – 19
7. New ways of talking about power and authority in the church – 18
8. New ways of lifting up gift discernment and the ministry of all the baptized (children, youth & adults) – 18
9. New ways of bridging disconnects and making new connections among and between seminaries, congregations and Christian educators – 28

Note: Numbers next to each topic indicate how many individuals ‘signed up’ to attend this topic. These may not reflect the total number of actual participants, as these numbers were used to determine meeting space and chair distribution. Participants were asked to self-monitor and submit any feedback or notes they felt was worth sharing.

Experiential Exercise #1

Creating safe space

15 individuals chose this on the selection form

No notes submitted – observers noted that much of the conversations were focused on how the church did not create a safe space; stories of pain that occurred in the church setting were shared by many.

Experiential Exercise #2

Creating curriculum that addresses head, heart and relationships

15 individuals chose this on the selection form

Group notes:

1. Inspirational teachers and one’s relationship with them
2. Parish responsibility building confidence to make decisions and change direction and grow – to make a commitment to learn
3. Time – start with short manageable sessions which encourage more people to come back for more

4. Adaptable curriculum which take account of different learning styles
5. Flexible resources – things that can be modified to suit the life situation that a participant is in
6. Experiential learning
7. Not good at identifying the natural teachers, supporting and holding them up

There should be a discernment process, a well thought out training and support program. Teachers should be as valued by parishes as organists and choir directors.

Group notes:

National conferences that address these issues regularly

Parker Palmer information on how we learn best

We could benefit greatly from help with:

1. How to craft authentic questions
2. How to listen

Materials for educators – point us, PLEASE, to resources for:

1. How to develop curriculum programs that appeal to a variety of learning styles / personality types
2. Resources on the brain – how we learn

Experiential Exercise #3

Creating resources to support the role of parents/s and the home in nurturing faith

22 individuals chose this on the selection form

Group notes:

Would like to have an Episcopal National Organization for Parent Support & Spiritual Development and Nurture

Family seasonal books with prayers, symbols, activities, music, recipes, etc.

Encouragement from clergy incorporating children and their households into the life of the church

Programs that put grandparents and children together – not their own:

- Pen Pals
- Gatherings
- “Sing for your Supper”

Programs like Close Harmony (movie & DVD)

Group notes:

Need practical, down to earth, easy to understand information and help parenting as Christians
Do “God Talk” in all small groups within the church. To develop a sense of the language – begin saying it’s okay to play with scripture and explore the questions. This may help our parents – give them experience in the process.

Group notes:

Our group shared concerns more than designed resources but here are few things we came up with:

1. We have to teach families – parents, kids and teens – what they are missing if they only come to Sunday services and none of the rest of the programs
2. National Church or Dioceses could send a brief thought on the importance of involvement in the parish church every month. It could go in newsletters as is or be a starting point for the Christian Ed team's (or person's) article in the parish newsletter
3. Have Diocese request that every meeting from Diocesan Convention to 2 Altar Guild members getting together to always begin with a Bible Study (i.e.: African Bible Study of Lectio Divina)
4. Ask the Bishop/s to include in every sermon at a parish visitation the importance of supporting families (households) to do God's work
5. Resources mentioned:
 - a. Child in Our Hands – book (and conference model)
 - b. Faith Life in the Home – Augsburg / Lutheran
 - c. 1st Things 1st – book
 - d. Faithful Families – book & program www.childspiritinstitute.org
 - e. Family Ministries – United Church of Canada

Group notes:

Because it is difficult to get parents to attend Adult Ed classes due to their children's sports activities, and because parents' prioritize the sports activities over church due to the possibility of their children getting scholarship to college – perhaps the National Church should consider scholarships (substantial scholarships) for church attendance, activity, missionary work, etc. Strict standards!

Group notes:

Wish there were a list-serve from 815 and/or the Children's Office that could provide a "monthly" theme or resource / connection / web page / etc. that we could then share through newsletters and groups on our own levels of involvement. This could really help good things that 1 or 2 people know about could be shared beyond the higher levels with the families on the baseline level.

Experiential Exercise #4

Creating the opportunities for life long faith development / formation in and through worship

23 individuals chose this on the selection form

Group notes:

Worship itself is Formation Activity

How do we become more intentional or help people understand they are being formed by worship?

Using the Prayers of the People:

- Cards given to people and then given to the reader of the prayers
- Smaller groups of people to design prayers that fit this parish right now

“Transforming Rituals” → through Alban Institute
Instructed changing of Altar cloth after Epiphany

- Instructed Liturgy
- Bringing things forward at Offertory for outreach emphasis
- Showing how we do what we promise through the Baptismal Covenant
- Alternative Liturgies – New Zealand Prayer Book, Celtic, Hawaiian, Visiting clergy
- Intergenerational events around the seasons and used created images / objects in worship space
- Youth Eucharist – 1 time monthly they are in charge of the entire service
- Open Study Groups – any topic open for discussions – helps to get an idea of where everyone is
- Use preaching to give historical background, “setting the stage” for the Gospel/Readings
- Weekly reflections from “Synthesis” included in bulletin
- Use Rite I for all services (not at all times)
- Use as much of the Prayer Book as possible
- Combining the Rites – not a lot but some
- Godly Play as part of the service (or Catechesis of the Good Shepherd)
- Use Gretchen Pritchard’s flannel board materials (BeulahLand) – have kids tell the story
- Youth group – addressing needs and issues and letting them know they are a vital piece
- Training for lectors – youth – an important part of the life of the church – every Sunday should be youth Sunday
- Beatitude Sunday – 1st Sunday – bring baskets for shelters / food banks
- Carrying candles for Advent
- Making open lines of communication
- Making “learning logs”
- Encourage youth/children to sit with different adults (living into their Baptismal Covenant)
- Incorporating sign language – another modality & enriching
- Using tableaus

Group notes:

Premise – liturgy forms us – constitutes us as a people

- Get persons inside the experience – active engagement
- Ritual in formational context – could be accompanied by engaging questions, raising consciousness and making connections (perhaps in smaller bites) – that engages the person’s participation as both prayer event in present but also preparing them for full, conscious and active participation in Eucharist and other liturgical rites
- Catechesis for the catechumenate illuminating sacramental rites – especially in preparing for baptism, confirmation, reception
- Teaching and engagement from the Book of Common Prayer (use it!) and Hymnal – “LEX ORANDI”
- Creative reflection on the god imaged there
- How our lives are connected to those words, symbols and images and actions – remembering
- Using / engaging the full senses
- A teaching liturgy
- Following events to connect to invitation to another event
- Break open Baptismal preparation – rooted in the baptismal rite in parent / family preparation

- Catechesis for liturgy
- Hands on with the Prayer Book – the whole prayer book as pedagogy & content
- Mystagogy reflection – post rite on the experience and meaning in the lives of participants
- Help in bridging the experience of those who do not come from a liturgical tradition and also who may need to reframe them.

Group notes:

1. Begin to notice / use / promote
 - a. “Liturgical catechesis”
 - i. Liturgy being catechetical
 - ii. Teaching about liturgy
 - iii. Equip people to do liturgy in their lives and live it regularly
 2. Raise the role of cathedrals as places to experiment with liturgy and teach & share how to do it – become liturgical laboratories for their dioceses
 3. Raise quality of preaching and be more creative. Also raise / train preachers and pulpit is shared – not just the clergy preach
 4. Parishes should have liturgy committees – musician, educator, priest, altar guild, some parishioners, etc. together plan it. Wholistic, multi-sensory, creative. “Work of the people” – National Church should provide resources and training to do this. Push seminaries to encourage / teach this style
 5. Bring people’s lives into the liturgy – recognize liturgically things that happen in the life cycle – like divorce, job loss, bless car / help for a new driver, still born, abortion,
 6. Pay attention to the monastic tradition and Celtic ways of daily living prayer. Support people in incorporation of a daily rhythm and every church have an “abbess/abbot”
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Experiential Exercise #5

Finding common language for deep / challenging theological conversations

22 individuals chose this on the selection form

Group notes:

The common language for deep challenging theological conversation may not have to use words. If that’s true, what is that language; what could it be?

Experiential Exercise #6

New ways of incorporating storytelling in preaching and teaching in the church

19 individuals chose this on the selection form

Group notes:

Sharing your own story in your daily life, which is indicated experience the presence of God

Different ways to preach and teach during service:

- Dramatize Gospel or OT lesson
- Read lessons & allow space for community reflection in place of sermon / homily

- Allow room for community reflection / sharing stories after sermon

Try to combine today's story and biblical story together

Group notes:

The opposite of play is not work – it is lack of creativity and emptiness (Jerome Berryman)

Preparing to preach on the Gospel – extrapolate what you need to teach and re-image to fit the audience

People can learn lessons from stories that you did not even know were there

Need to appreciate and value and tell stories from different cultures

Our liturgical seasons are about human growth and development

Stories useful in New Member meetings

- Story of church
- Story of school
- Story of participants

Experiential Exercise #7

New ways of talking about power and authority in the church

18 individuals chose this on the selection form (no notes submitted)

Experiential Exercise #8

**New ways of lifting up gift discernment and the ministry of all the baptized
(children, youth and adults)**

18 individuals chose this on the selection form

Group notes:

Does discernment always mean becoming ordained?

How do we provide assistance to people who feel called to ordained ministry when they may not have the means?

What is real stewardship? Try to incorporate into the worship service

Recognize people's gifts and talents not based on age, culture. Are we utilizing our talents?

Directory of talents and gifts

Teach about how to work or preach in a multi-cultural community – teaching about diversity is not enough

Is there some value in intergenerational programming? We are always trying to separate into different groups.

Group notes:

How can seminaries train leaders who are open to the call of all the baptized to (serve as ministers) ministries?

Relative to church canons: A comment – The need to take seriously the changes in Title III canons on the roles of Commissions on Ministry

Do we need a charter for all the baptized along the lines of the Children’s Charter?

How can we begin to see congregations as ecological systems in which the call & gifts of all people are raised up and provided what they need to flourish?

Experiential Exercise #9

New ways of bridging disconnects and making new connections among and between seminaries, congregations and Christian educators

28 individuals chose this on the selection form

Group notes:

The Episcopal Church needs great interaction between our seminaries – coordinated development of courses to be woven into the “University of Phoenix” model for on-going education of clergy in the field

Group notes:

When we do this again, please make sure it is a full participation with the ELCA. Let’s live Called to Common Mission.

Group notes:

It would be helpful to receive a regular e-mail from one of the seminaries covering what the faculty are excited about and a brief bibliography so we can keep in touch with theological thought

Group notes:

Seminaries consider including Christian formation in current disciplines (i.e. NT class request a project such as outline a 6-week Lenten program for Adult Ed in parish)

Hopes for seminaries to model different methodologies

For GOE questions on Christian formation (so seminarians take Christian Ed seriously)

To help clergy get continuing education that includes Christian formation models/resources (i.e. Diocese of Eastern Oregon)

To offer clergy days by seminary professors – take seminary into the field

Bishops need to be included in these dialogues (they are noticeably absent!) OK 3% very invisible!

Have trained mentors (much like EFM) out in the field for clergy continuing education (a model from Church of England)

Group notes:

- Challenge the seminaries to see themselves as theological resources for the larger church; can they be physically open to people in their region to come and visit, to take a course even if not a full-time student?
- Seminaries, GOE readers, parishes, etc. all need to build stronger relationships to promote the mission of education
- Make the formation process appropriate for persons from other than the dominant culture by entering a dialogue of care and concern
- Diaconal formation tends to take place in isolation from other processes. Deacons function in widely different contexts. How can the CDSP School for Deacons make connections when, even there, the diaconal students don't interact with other students.
- How can dioceses supplement the learning students receive in seminary?
- The Diocese of VA is in the vicinity of VTS, yet there is little interaction other than through the grads. There could be much more done including promoting the use of Episcopal curriculum resources in church schools (vs. those developed by other denominations). VTS has a Fridays at the Seminary program but it is not quite full interaction. What if in the Christian Ed class at VTS the diocesan Christian Ed coordinator was invited to teach? Could this occur in our other seminaries also . . . connecting to the diocesan Christian Educator?
- Universities send students out into the field before they enter the academic context of the course; then when they read the texts they bring the data of their interviews to bear; this is a useful models for seminaries
- Dioceses have potential relationships with universities in their area if the bishop is willing to promote it
- In the story of Emmaus and the Ethiopian eunuch, the learner extended hospitality
- In our diocese, Fresh Start, underway for three years, is having an impact on clergy – making them less competitive with each other and better able to work together