

## **Intentional Faith Formation in the Congregation**

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## **Balloon Theology**

- 1. Blow up your balloon!
- 2. Write on your balloon with marker: a holy moment when your faith in Christ was formed (5 words or less!)
- 3. WAIT for everyone to be done.....

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## **Balloon Theology**

- 4. Toss Balloons wildly about the room.
- 5. Catch one.
- 6. Read another's holy moment.
- 7. Now.....what happened within the life of the congregation to contribute to this holy moment. Share with a neighbor.

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**Everything that happens in a congregation has the potential to shape faith!**

- Like what?

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**Really? Show me!**

- If we say this...we take the step forward of entering into the creative and transformative acts, processes and dynamics by which faith is formed, shaped, nurtured, sustained, deepened, set on fire and turned loose in the furthering of God's Kingdom. Wow!

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**First** – let's have some shared understandings about Christian Faith Formation.

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## Our Commission – Making Disciples

- Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, to the close of the age.

Matthew 28: 18-20, NRSV

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## Think About It . . .

- What does this passage have to say about how we pay attention to disciple-making in our own congregation?

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## What is Christian Faith?

- An *understanding* that God is the source of all life.
- A *conscious decision* to become a follower of Jesus Christ.
- A *personal relationship* with God through Jesus Christ.
- An *active process*, constantly transforming us to be more like Christ.
- *Relational* – we grow in faith within the context of a loving community.
- A *gift from God*, dependent upon the mysterious inbreaking of the Holy Spirit in our lives.

• Gather Round Handbook: Chp. 3: Faith Formation

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### What does *Intentional* mean?

- *Intentional* refers to deliberate effort, purposeful action towards an end and high prioritization.
- *Intentional* highlights the significance of faith development and plans for it with purpose as opposed to churches that....(help me out here)

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### Faith Formation

- Christian Faith Formation is process – not product. However, we must have a plan to provide a safe and hospitable environment where faith formation is invited, welcomed and expected.

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### What is Curriculum?

- Quick! Write down the first 5 words you think of when I say "Curriculum."
- Go!

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### Responses often include...

- Sunday School materials
- Vacation Bible School materials
- Adult Bible Study
- Age-specific
- Intergenerational
- See any of your words on this list?

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### Our Tendencies . . .

- Equate curriculum with print/media resources
- Publishers classify their products as "curriculum"
- If there is a problem in a class, it is easy to "blame" the curriculum.

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### However . . .

- The word curriculum comes from the Latin *curre*: to run the course
- What is the curriculum of the church?
- If it's not the resources, what's left?
- The answer is.....(help me out here)
- Today, let's commit to thinking a bit more broadly.....remember your balloons!

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**The early church's first curriculum: Acts 2: 32,42,44-47**

- Maria Harris, in *Fashion Me a People* identifies in Luke's account the "central elements" of early church life

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**Identify the curriculum in Acts 2: 32, 42, 44-47**

This Jesus God raised up, and of that we are all witnesses. And they devoted themselves to the apostle's teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. And all who believed were together and had all things in common and they sold their possessions and goods and distributed them to all, as any had need. And day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they partook of food with glad and generous hearts, praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved.

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**The central elements of early church life:**

- **Kerygma:** curriculum of proclamation of the word of Jesus' resurrection
- **Didache:** curriculum of teaching and the activity of teaching
- **Leiturgia:** curriculum of prayer & coming together to re-present Jesus in the breaking of the bread
- **Koinonia:** curriculum of community: fellowship that is uniquely Christian
- **Diakonia:** curriculum of service: caring for those in need

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## Fashion me a people . . .

- Using the forms above as a model for the core and scope of educational ministry of the church. (This is a long process!)
- Say this in other ways, with different words....
- What is the relationship of these forms to each other?
- And the crux of the matter is....how can we do this as

***Intentional Faith Formation?***

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## Contemporary Shifts in Teaching and Learning (from Krau, p. 21)

moving from      moving to

- |  |                                   |
|--|-----------------------------------|
| ▪ Programming/Schooling/Activity Model | ▪ Christian Formation Model       |
| ▪ Training People                      | ▪ Learning Together               |
| ▪ Teaching as Instruction / Info       | ▪ Teaching for Transformation     |
| ▪ Focus in Institution                 | ▪ Focus on Living as God's People |
| ▪ One Size Fits All                    | ▪ Building Shared Vision Locally  |
| ▪ Focus on the Parts                   | ▪ Focus on the Whole              |

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## Observations about the Shifts

- What resonates with your reality on the left column, the right column or in the shift?
- Jesus responded differently to each person he met...what are implications for us?
- What vision do you have that will pull your congregation into the future?

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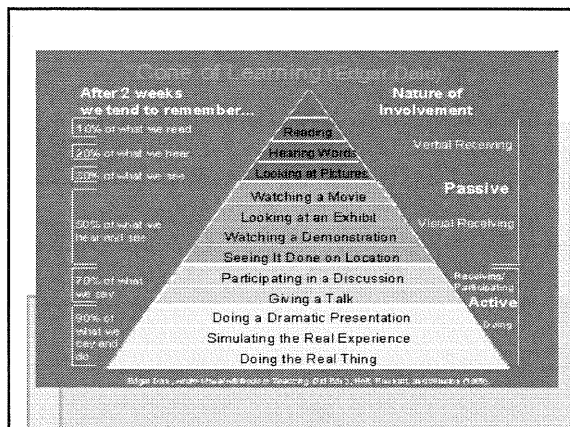
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**Information, Formation, Transformation**  
 - - - a pathway to Christian Discipleship

- 1. Information** –learning the facts of a story; memorizing Bible verses; gaining head knowledge. (head – beliefs - content).
- 2. Formation** - hearing the stories around the verses; understanding the world, history, context of the story; entering into the story, imagining what it was like, wondering where you would place yourself in the story; providing a classroom environment that is conducive to personal spiritual reflection. (heart – attitudes - methods).
- 3. Transformation** –changing and adapting to the ways of Christ; patterns of behavior change so that our lives truly become more like Christ. (hands and feet – action- Holy Spirit at work).

This progression is important and the incorporation of each of these modes is necessary.

**Information** as a conveyor of fact is important for Biblical literacy.  
**Formation** as an invitation to let the story shape our theology.  
**Transformation** as opportunity to let the Spirit shape our lives.

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**Questions to ask of a lesson, activity, event**

1. What is the *information* in this Bible story? List the facts: who, what, when, where, why?
2. How can the lesson be presented so that *spiritual formation* can occur? How will you provide a spiritually nurturing classroom climate/environment? Be mindful of the age level and needs of our group.
3. What might *spiritual transformation* look like? What are the hoped-for outcomes and applications? Imagine what kind of work the Holy Spirit might want to do in your life as a result of dialoging with the Bible story.

**A question for you as teacher:**  
 How might I as a teacher or leader facilitate the progression of information-sharing to spiritual transformation in this lesson?

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**Intentional Faith Formation  
Describes the Practice of  
Churches that...**

- View
- Offer
- Cover
- Support
- Fill the Gaps
- Start
- Pay attention
- Incorporate Models

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**A Little Taste of the Possible  
Exercise**

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**What is Possible in Your  
Church?**

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## Resources

- Faith Formation in Vital Congregations by Marian Plant. Pilgrim Press, 2009.
- Five Practices of Fruitful Congregations by Robert Schnase. Abingdon, 2007.
- Gather 'Round Handbook, Mennonite Publishing Network, 2006.
- Ministry of Christian Education and Formation. Discipleship Resources, 2003
- The Church as a Learning Community by Norma Everist. Abingdon, 2002.
- Keeping in Touch: Christian Formation and Teaching by Carol Krau. Discipleship Resources, 1999.
- Reframing Spiritual Formation by Edward Hammett, Smyth & Helwys, 2002
- [www.gbod.org/education/articles.asp](http://www.gbod.org/education/articles.asp)
- And oh so much more if only you ask, Marlene B.

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# **Intentional Faith Formation**

## **Describes the Practice of Churches that**

- **View the ministries of Christian education and formation, small group work, and Bible study as *absolutely critical* to their mission.**
- **Consistently offers opportunities for people of all ages, interests, and faith experiences to learn in community.**
- **Consciously and deliberately cover the whole age spectrum, fostering faith development (formation) outside of worship during the course of the year for children, youth, young adults, singles, couples, middle-aged adults and older adults.**
- **Support and maintain existing Sunday school classes, studies, choirs, women's and men's organizations.**
- **Continually fill the gaps with short-term, long-term and topical small group ministries.**
- **Start new classes and opportunities especially designed for visitors, explorers and new members.**
- **Pay attention to multiple *Learning Styles* and *Dale's Cone of Learning* to maximize learning, not teaching.**
- **Incorporate models such as the *Faith Wheel*, the *Curriculum of the Early Church* and *Information, Formation, Transformation*.**

From *Marlene Bogard*, Minister of Christian Nurture, Western District Conference, 2009 and from *Five Practices of Fruitful Congregations* by Robert Schnase. Abingdon, 2007.



<p>Kerygma</p> <p>(proclaiming the word of Jesus' resurrection)</p>	<p>Koinonia</p> <p>(being in community with one another in a way that is uniquely Christian</p>	<p>Didache</p> <p>(teaching)</p>	<p>Leiturgia</p> <p>(coming together to pray and to represent Jesus in the breaking of bread)</p>	<p>Diakonia</p> <p>(serving and caring for those in need)</p>
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A Little Taste of the Possible

<p>“We do this well!”</p> <p>Programs, events, activities, ministries going well that are not <i>didache</i> (teaching)</p>	<p>I select this one</p>	<p>How could this one program, event, activity, or ministry be transformed into more intentional faith formation?</p>
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What have I discovered through doing this activity?