

PLANNING DISCIPLESHIP FORMATION/CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

PURPOSE

This workshop is designed to help participants plan for a more effective and comprehensive discipleship-formation/Christian Education program in their churches.

TIME FRAME: 2.25 hours with one 15-minute break

WORKSHOP OUTLINE

- I. Introduction (*15 minutes*)
- II. Explore the Purpose of Discipleship and Christian Education (*20 Minutes*)
- III. Plan for Discipleship and Christian Education (*20 minutes*)

A. Discover Where We Are

Break (*15 minutes*)

B. Dream of Where We Want to Go (*15 minutes*)

C. Design How We Will Get There (*20 minutes*)

D. Determine If We Got There (*15 minutes*)

IV. Closing (*15 minutes*)

PREPARATION AND MATERIALS

1. Read through the entire workshop design.
2. Adapt the design to fit your situation, preparing Power Point slides, if you plan to use that as part of your presentation.
3. Make copies of the handouts.
4. Prepare or secure volunteers to prepare drinks and snacks for break.
5. Gather the following materials:
 - newsprint and markers
 - mission statement from your church (If several churches will be represented at the session, ask someone from each church to bring a copy of the church's mission statement.)newsprint posters (or PPT slides) of the workshop purpose, workshop outline, the sample mission statement provided in Handout A, questions in Step III, the example of a specific goal in Step IV, and sample process ideas in Step V
 - copies of the handouts
 - a loaf of bread
 - snacks and drinks for the break

CONDUCTING THE WORKSHOP

I. Introduction (*15 minutes*)

After all of the participants have gathered, introduce yourself and welcome the group. Review the purpose and the outline of the workshop and note that there will be a 15-minute break about half-way through. Give participants permission to take personal breaks as needed. Allow time for questions.

Ask the participants to get into pairs and, if they do not know one another, share their names and leadership roles in their church. Invite them to share one thing that drew them to the discipleship ministry of their church. Ask each person to introduce his or her partner to the group.

II. Explore the Purpose of Discipleship/Christian Education (*20 minutes*)

Explain that understanding, communicating, and building ownership for the purpose of discipleship/educational ministry is a key task for congregations because:

- A purpose statement reminds us why we have this ministry.
- A purpose statement grounds us in our biblical and Christian tradition.
- A purpose statement provides a guide against which to evaluate our work.

Explain that beginning with the congregation's mission statement can help reduce the risks of seeing the church's discipleship/educational ministry as synonymous with church school and separate from the rest of the life of a church. Discipleship/Christian education is an integral part of the total life of the congregation, and planning needs to reflect that reality.

Distribute copies of Handout A, "Purposes for a Discipleship/Education Ministry," review the instructions, and give participants time to complete the tasks.

After a few minutes, identify the group's (or each church's, if more than one church is participating) top three items and work from these to develop a purpose statement for statement for Discipleship/Christian education in each church represented.

III. Plan for Discipleship Formation/Christian Education (*20 minutes*)

Distribute Handout B, "Plan for Discipleship/Christian Education." Explain that planning involves the following steps:

1. Discover where we are—what is working, what is not working, and what is missing
2. Dream of where we want to go—specific goals based on the identified purposes
3. Design how we will get there—planning future processes, identifying needed resources
4. Determine if we got there—evaluating how close we got to our goals

A. Discover Where We Are

Invite the participants to form groups of 3 persons and respond to the section “Discover Where We Are” in Handout B. After about 10 minutes, invite the small groups to share the essence of their discussions. Together develop a synopsis of where the church is. If you are leading a group with several different churches represented, be sure to have members of the same church work together to develop this synopsis.

Break (15 minutes)

Direct the participants to the facilities and to the snacks. Specify the time for return to the group.

B. Dream of Where We Want to Go (15 minutes) start here

Invite participants look back at the purposes they selected in Step II as they used Handout A. Ask them to select one of the purpose statements and write a specific goal under “Dream of Where We Want to Go” in Handout B. Explain that a goal needs to have a time frame, a defined audience, and a desired outcome. Have posted on newsprint the following example: If an identified purpose for your Discipleship and Christian Education ministry is “*Deepening relationships with God, self, and others,*” then the following specific goal has a time frame, a defined audience, and a desired outcome: “*By the end of the school year, 20% of church members will participate in one or more activities that are designed to deepen their relationships with God.*”

After participants have had some time to write a specific goal, invite volunteers to share either what they wrote or what struggles they felt as they tried to specify a goal. Ask the participants to help one another by making suggestions about how to make each others’ goals specific in time frame, audience, and desired outcome.

V. Design How We Will Get There (20 minutes)

Post and review sample process ideas:

1. Use “The Discipleship Project.”
2. Increase the number of offerings for adult education.
3. Enhance Bible study by encouraging adults to use commentaries or do in-depth study of topics.
4. Have a group read and discuss a classic book of religious writings.
5. Have short-term small groups that focus on spiritual disciplines.
6. Form a group that attends and discusses movies from a spiritual perspective.

Work together as a group to select one specific goal and brainstorm processes that could help reach that goal. Then work together to select one process and map out the implementation of that process: who, when, where, and how. Write your responses in Handout B in the section “Design How We Will Get There.” Determine the resources (leaders, finances, space, supplies) that you will need to accomplish your goal. If time allows, invite the participants to group themselves around similar goals and brainstorm possible processes for each goal.

VI. Determine If We Got There (*15 minutes*)

Explain that an important step is analyzing the process and addressing questions such as those listed on Handout B under the section “Determine If We Got There.”

Explain further that there needs to be an annual assessment of goals and an evaluation of the effectiveness of plans and implementations to meet those goals.

Distribute Handout C, “Workshop Evaluation,” and explain that an evaluation form is one simple way to receive feedback. Invite the participants to complete the evaluation for this workshop and determine whether or not their goals have been met.

VII Closing (*15 minutes*)

Invite the participants to identify next steps they need to take. If this workshop is being used by a group all representing the same church, then specific future plans can be made.

Distribute Handout D, “Resources.”

Place before the group a loaf of bread. Point out that bread both gives physical sustenance for life and is symbolic of spiritual sustenance—and we need both to live abundantly. Invite the participants to reflect on their responsibilities for Discipleship and Christian education in their churches and ask, “What bread do you need to faithfully fulfill your roles?” Invite those who wish to share their answers. Close by inviting the group to pray the Lord’s Prayer together.

NM 201 is a revision of the former Training Time Workshops #s 201, 202, and 203.

HANDOUT A

PURPOSES FOR A CHRISTIAN EDUCATION MINISTRY

Instructions: If your church's mission statement is available, use it for this exercise. Otherwise, consider working from the sample mission statement below. Carefully review the church mission statement and then check the three purposes below that you believe are the most important ways the discipleship/education ministry of your church can help your church achieve its overall mission.

- _____ 1. lead persons to decide to follow Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior
- _____ 2. provide Bible study opportunities for persons of all ages
- _____ 3. prepare persons to respond and witness to God's Word as revealed in Jesus
- _____ 4. train new members for the church
- _____ 5. relate the life concerns of learners to the message of the Bible
- _____ 6. enable persons to use their gifts as church members
- _____ 7. help persons understand and integrate the Christian faith into their lives
- _____ 8. help persons apply the gospel to their social, economic, spiritual, and political lives
- _____ 9. prepare persons to bring justice to the problems of the world
- _____ 10. help persons understand of what it means to be part of an American Baptist congregation
- _____ 11. create an alternative community, which reveals the gospel through its life together
- _____ 12. nurture mature followers of Jesus who are accountable and available to one another
- _____ 13. Other _____

Sample church mission statement:*

The mission of this church is to help people become and grow as Christ's disciples: by deepening relationships with God, self, and others by being equipped in discovering and nurturing their gifts and learning the necessary knowledge and skills by ministering and serving as a part of God's work in creation, both inside and outside the church

*Adapted from *Traveling Together: A Guide for Disciple-Forming Congregations* by Jeffrey D. Jones (The Alban Institute, 2006)

HANDOUT B

PLAN FOR DISCIPLESHIP AND CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

Discover Where We Are

Complete the following statements as an aid to responding the questions below.

- *What I value most about our church's discipleship ministry is . . .*
- *What I think has least value is . . .*
- *What I think is missing is . . .*

What is working?

What is not working?

What is missing?

Dream of Where We Want to Go

Specify goals based on the identified purposes.

Design How We Will Get There

Explore Processes and Implementation: Who, When, Where, and How

Determine Needed Resources (leaders, finances, space, supplies)

Determine If We Got There

What happened? Was it what we wanted? How much of the goal was accomplished?

What worked well?

What do we need to do differently in the future?

HANDOUT C

WORKSHOP EVALUATION

1. I expected to learn the following at this workshop:

2. I feel that I have accomplished my expectations:

0 25% 50% 75% 100%

3. I feel we accomplished the workshop objectives:

0 25% 50% 75% 100%

4. The most valuable part of the workshop was:

5. I would like to work on learning more about:

6. If I could change any part of the workshop, it would be:

7. Comments, suggestions:

HANDOUT D

RESOURCES

Available from Judson Press at www.JudsonPress.com; 1-800-458-3766

Charting Our Course: Renewing the Church's Teaching Ministry, Linda Isham

Christian Education in the African American Church, Lora-Ellen McKinney

Christian Education in the Small Church, Donald L. Griggs and Judy McKay Walther

Christian Educators' Guide to Evaluating and Developing Curriculum, Nancy Ferguson

Embracing the Future: A Guide for Reshaping Your Church's Teaching Ministry, Linda Isham

How to Be the Best Small Group Leader Ever in the Whole History of the Universe, Israel Galindo

The Teaching Church at Work, Kenneth D. Blazier and Linda Isham, eds.

To Know God: Small Group Exercises for Spiritual Formation, Michael Gemignani

Other Resources

Basics of Christian Education, Karen Tye, Christian Board of Publication; 800-366-3383, www.cbp21.com/CE.

Blueprints for Building Christian Education, Douglas D. Cripe, editor, Christian Board of Publication; 800-366-3383; www.cbp21.com/CE.

"The Discipleship Project: a tool for stimulating, promoting, and measuring adult spiritual education." Encourages people to take responsibility and initiative to go deeper in their faith and to do their own harvesting. www.TheDiscipleshipProject.com.

Following Jesus: More about Young Children and Worship. Sonja M. Steward, (Louisville: Geneva Press, 2000), <http://www.ppcbooks.com/wjkmain.asp>

Postmodern Children's Ministry, Ivy Beckwith (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2004) www.zondervan.com.

Renovaré Spiritual Formation Guides, www.renovare.org.

Sunday School: We've Never Done It That Way Before!, Diane Monroe, Augsburg; www.augsburgfortress.org.

Young Children and Worship, Sonja M. Steward and Jerome W. Berryman, (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1989), <http://www.ppcbooks.com/wjkmain.asp>

Traveling Together: A Guide for Disciple-forming Congregations, Jeffrey D. Jones, The Alban Institute; www.alban.org.