

## Keeping Discipleship in the Annual Meeting

January is a season of reflection and goal-setting. It is also commonly the month for annual meetings. Aside from an opening prayer, we often set aside discipleship for “practical matters” in business meetings. Children learn faith by watching and listening. Whether it’s teaching, work projects or meetings, the “how” is as important as the “what” for Christian formation. Conducting meetings in a secular manner will teach children compartmentalized faith, in which what we profess affects only select areas of life. Consider the following suggestions for keeping discipleship in the annual meeting.

- Provide a focus text and devotional prior to the meeting date so members can devote time to spiritual preparation.
- Review reports and plans through the lens of how time, money, energy and facilities further the Kingdom. Where our treasures are invested is the true demonstration of where our hearts lie.
- Remember that angry arguments, power plays and snide whispers readily discredit Sunday school lessons about loving one another.
- Include the voices of children and teens in your deliberations. Faith is not an “adults-only” proposition.
- Lead “The Spiritual Life of Boards and Committees,” #807 from Workshops for Church Life and Leadership, in advance of your meeting. (Download at [abhms.org](http://abhms.org) > Publications & Resources > Workshops for Church Life and Leadership.)

*By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another. —John 13:35*



Good teaching cannot be reduced to technique; good teaching comes from the identity and integrity of the teacher.”

—Parker J. Palmer

**Is the missing patter** of little feet causing church members to ask, “How can we get children into our church?” Well then, it’s time to turn it around! The question, that is. Children need the church wherever they are. The better question to ask ourselves—and children, families and community leaders—is “How can we take God’s love out of our church doors to the children in our community?”



*Parents, don’t come down too hard on your children or you’ll crush their spirits. —Colossians 3:21 (MSG)*

**The experience of church** is not limited to local congregations. Christian families are also Christian communities. The foundation for faith lies in parents and other primary caregivers meeting children’s needs in a gracious way. Consistent care nurtures the earliest milestones of faith development, which are trust and hope. Children constantly observe adults, so life at home, participation in church and any time spent among professing Christians is their religious education program. What children see, hear and experience is much more formative than what they are told. We must model faith to nurture faith. Model forgiveness to teach forgiveness. Model integrity to promote integrity. Model prayer, Bible reading, worship and service to teach spiritual practice. And, most importantly, model love to open the pathway toward relationship with a loving God.



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Unless otherwise noted, Scripture quotations are from the New Revised Standard Version of the Bible.