

Adult Formation Ideas

St. Luke's, Cedar Falls

For the past eight years, I have coordinated Adult Forums at St. Luke's Episcopal Church, Cedar Falls. Our forum is open to everyone who attends the service. This format draws good attendance, but it does not lend itself to book discussions, multi-session curricula or study groups that require preparation by the participants. These are more appropriately done in series, held at other times, for which participants sign up. A list of our Adult Forum topics can be found on this site:

<http://www.iowaepiscopal.org/uploads/pdf/Resource%20CF%20Adult%20Forum%20topics.pdf>

A few things I've learned about designing an Adult Forum schedule:

1. Over the course of the year, the schedule should include programs in a variety of areas (theology, history, spiritual practices, contemporary issues) and presented in a variety of formats (informal presentations, lectures, discussions, videos).
2. The programs should celebrate the various ways in which the congregation's members are contributing to its ministry.
3. Do not expect that those attending will read materials in advance of the session.
4. A topic may be of sufficient scope and interest to merit two consecutive sessions, but interest will not easily be sustained for three sessions.
5. Communicate regularly and often with your rector and senior warden about the schedule. Understand that the schedule may need to be changed on short notice to accommodate other needs of the congregation. So, be flexible -- but emphasize that before you engage an outside speaker, you must be confident of being able to firmly commit a date.
6. Have a video on hand for emergencies.

St. John's by the Campus

In the fall of 2013 some members of St. John's by the Campus, Ames, Iowa, were interested in new options for adult small groups. A meeting was held to gather ideas, and two groups were formed, Exploring Faith and a book club. Both have continued for almost two years. Exploring Faith meets for 90 minutes twice a month. After a quick check-in we have a period for contemplative prayer and a period for discussion of a topic that the group has previously selected. The idea for the group came from "contemplative prayer and indaba:" In contemplative prayer we go before God as we are and listen; in indaba we go before each other and listen. By alternating these, each enriches the other.

The contemplative prayer portion of our meeting differs from a Centering Prayer group in that we do not follow a single method. We usually have a short reading on prayer, say the prayer "For Quiet Confidence " (#59 on page 832 of the BCP), and have 15 minutes of silence. The readings have introduced several approaches and we are each free to use what we like. For the discussion portion we have shared favorite prayers from the BCP, discussed ChurchNext courses on the BCP, Lent, and Easter, and discussed leaflets from the Forward Movement, and the short book "Being Christian" by Rowan Williams. Our discussions often focus on how the readings are influencing our individual spirituality.

We have grown to ten regular members, and everyone who misses a meeting for an unavoidable reason seems to have wished they could have been there.

Potential Adult “Forum” Discussion topics submitted by churches

Wills and Medical Directives - lead by a Lawyer
Financial Planning - lead by a Bank financial advisor
Medical Information and Medication Safety - lead by Parish Nurse
Final Plans - lead by a Funeral Director
IPOST
Hospice
Palliative Care
Home and Care organization
Talking to families
Veterans Affairs and Benefits
Simplify - when to move and where