Shaping the Parish

Developmental Initiative Report

Initiative Title: Adult Foundations Course

Level: A

# YOUR NAME

E-MAIL

DESCRIPTION

This initiative is designed to assist in the development of proficiency in the Christian life by the development and implementation of an adult foundations course program.

From *Fill All Things*

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| A Foundations Course is an adult formation program. It’s a resource for:* People exploring faith and spiritual life
* People joining the parish and/or the Episcopal Church
* Existing members who have not engaged these issues in recent years
* Adults preparing for baptism, confirmation, reception, or reaffirmation
* New comers who want to connect to the parish and meet other people

The course is a tool in creating a “critical mass” of members who have some competence for living the life. So, it’s very important that it be experiential and include skill training along with presentations and group discussion.Most parishes can make good use of an adult foundations program. A Foundations Course is a substantial educational offering that grounds people in the thinking and practices of the Christian faith as lived in the Episcopal Church. It can serve multiple purposes. Use it in place of all “inquirers” classes or adult baptismal or confirmation instruction.A foundations course is a resource for setting loose an energy in individuals and the parish that can stir new thinking and behavior and may help move some people into a more Apostolic expression of faith and practice. There needs to be enough substance to it that it has the potential of taking participants to a new place in their spiritual life. Some parishes have nine or ten sessions. Others have modules that extend over three years.  |

**Two models**

There are two basic ways of approaching this.

1. Visualizing the program as taking place over a 3 – 4 year period with modules of 3 – 5 sessions offered two or three times/year.

2. A course with 9 or 10 sessions that is offered every year. It could be done by dividing the program into two or three segments that are offered over the course of the year (winter, spring, fall). Or it could be offered all at one time each year.

**Assumptions:**

Using a Foundations Course as part of building a critical mass of proficient people is done over a number of years. If you have an average Sunday attendance of say 100 adults and 10 come this year, and 12 next, and 6 the following – over time you build the critical mass.

Recruiting – Requires an active stance. The rector and lay leaders need to approach particular people and say something like: 1) I think you’d find this useful. Please come.” and/or 2) “We need your support to get this off the ground. Will you agree to participate?" Simply posting a notice and hoping is not adequate around any activity related to building the critical mass.

**In the short term** (Over a 2 – 3 month period)

1. Design and implement one module (depends on the model used, see above)

2. Design at least one other module

3. Create an overall program design – name all the modules and write 2 -3 sentences on each. Put this on the parish web site and make copies available to members.

4. Use the Foundations Class for the purposes formally served by inquires classes, adult confirmation programs and such. Discontinue all those programs.

5. Place the course on the parish schedule for the next three years. Include that information along with #3 on the web site.

**In the long-term**

1. Implement a full Foundations Course

2. Learn form the experience in a disciplined process of reflection on methods, schedule, and so on.

**Resources**

*Fill All Things*, Pages 183 – 187. There are also a variety of references to the role of Foundations Courses in that book and *In Your Holy Spirit: Shaping the Parish through Spiritual Practice*.

There is in development a design for a foundations course. We hope it will be available in 2012. In the meantime it’s important for clergy and lay educators/catechists to accept responsibility for designing their own and trusting their ability to do that.

Participant’s additions & changes to the description

If you are revising the above in some manner, note that here. Offer a rationale for the change. Changes may not be so extreme as to change the basic thrust of the intervention description above --

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