

JOHN CALVIN PRESBYTERY

Report of the Executive Presbyter

One of the Great Ends of the Church is The shelter, nurture and spiritual fellowship of the children of God.

Christian education for all is a key component of a healthy church. Since 2020 and beyond many functions of the local church were interrupted, and Christian education was one of those. I know from conversation around the presbytery that some of our churches are restarting/revamping their Christian education offerings, looking for the best way forward. Whether you have a clean slate or just need to finesse some things, now is a good time to begin (or continue) that.

A few principles that are important to me:

I love Christian education that includes food. I like to remember how often Jesus ate with people. Something happens when people eat together. A snack or a meal adds so much to the education experience!

It is a best practice to use Presbyterian curriculum. Other publishers may not be from the Reformed tradition, and since many of our members have come to us from other denominations or otherwise do not have a solid background, it is safest to use curriculum with our theological understanding. And it keeps the money in the family. (Scroll down for specific recommendations, which do NOT require a pastor to lead them.)

Adult education is still one component of a healthy church. It supplements worship, fosters fellowship, and encourages discipleship. With regard to teaching children, adults can best teach what they have learned for themselves. A class covenant might make it easier to find facilitators. Instead of expecting a leader who knows all the answers, the class can covenant to learn together, to speak respectfully, making time for all to speak and supporting the facilitator.

Education for children and youth can be an important ministry in your faith community. Note: Every church is required to have a child/vulnerable adult safety policy. Although the practice of having children leave the sanctuary became popular a few decades ago, this may have contributed to the attendance decline churches are experiencing. Once begun, it is hard to go back to having children present in worship. Some JCP congregations have a Prayground in the sanctuary. If you're restarting your children's ministry, find a time distinct from worship. Some of our churches have an after-school program; some do evenings, and some still do Sunday mornings. It's okay to experiment with times to find what works best.

It is okay to start small. Short-term may work best; consistency is an eventual goal. The JCP Mission & Nurture committee could coordinate zoom trainings/conversations on emerging Christian education practices. I encourage you to speak to me or a member of the committee. We would enjoy hearing what is working, beginning, being hoped for.

Curriculum samples from the PCUSA Store

The Present Word for adults is a nearly seminary level Bible study. Information on that as well as a sample session is at www.pcusastore.com/TPWcurriculum.

There are about 45 topics in the **Being Reformed** series. These are six-session, print resources with a participant guide and a separate leader guide. Each topic has a downloadable sample.

The newest all age curriculum, **Follow Me**, with 27 units, can work for any age group. There are younger children, multi-age, youth, and adult studies built around practices that Jesus taught and did. The Café Discussion guides are very popular and found in the Congregational Guide. They are being used by sessions, councils, campus groups, and some adult groups. Sample studies for each age group as well as a lot of information on the Follow Me curriculum may be found at www.pcusastore.com/FollowMeCurriculum

For children, our newest curriculum is the Growing in God's Love: A Story Bible Curriculum built around the *Growing in God's Love Children's story Bible*. (www.pcusastore.com/StoryBibleCurriculum)

The three year **Growing in Grace and Gratitude** children's curriculum (www.pcusastore.com/GGGcurriculum) is now a permanent resource as is **Feasting on the Word** all age curriculum www.pcusastore.com/FOWCurriculum. They are available in a downloadable format only.

Watch for the print catalogue coming to every church in the early months of the year. See all the available resources at <https://www.pcusastore.com>.

Blessings on your ministry. See you at presbytery!

Malinda