

## Community-Developed

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*Date:* 2014

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## **Christian Formation Ministry Goals** A Congregation's Appraisal

### **The Goal:**

"...to equip the saints for the work of ministry, to building up the body of Christ, until all of us come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the son of God, to maturity, to the measure of the full stature of Christ." Ephesians 4: 12-13

### **Introduction:**

What are the end goals associated with healthy Christian formation at [congregation]? Articulating the end goals the congregation wishes to achieve through programs, activities and experiences is important. The seven areas identified below suggest what the fruits of successful Christian formation programs might look like throughout the congregation. No attempt is made to develop a road map for achieving the goals. Rather the focus is establishing end-goal markers that can be referenced regularly.

### **A. Spirituality**

Christian formation will mean tending to the nurture of children, youth and adults in developing a confident and yet receptive spirituality. Signs of such spiritual growth might include:

- A deepening experience of prayer and encounter with God

- Honest wrestling with scripture, and engagement in the adventure of biblical study and devotion.
- The practice of spiritual disciplines, such as fasting, meditation, journaling, etc.
- The development of spiritual friendships and shared encounter with God.
- The ability to give expression to one's faith and share it with others.

## **B. Theology**

In addition to cultivating spiritual maturity, Christian formation will involve teaching that deepens theological vision and imagination. Elements of this theological formation include:

- Thorough familiarity with the basic storyline of the Christian faith.
- Understanding the structure and themes of the Christian scriptures (both Old Testament and New).
- Experience in biblical study, including the use of supplementary resources.
- A knowledge of the history of Christianity and the major transitions within it.
- Immersion in the Anabaptist story from the 1500s to the present, including a sense of the significance of that historical and theological journey for our current self-understanding as Mennonite Christians.
- Being conversant with the issues and challenges of contemporary Christian life, particularly in the context of our post-modern and post-Christian society.

## **C. Social Justice**

Healthy Christian formation will encourage education, debate and active engagement in the present issues and crises of our time.

- It will keep the faith community informed, politically aware and challenged about justice issues relating to poverty, prejudice, economic disparities, conflict, war, North-South issues etc.
- It will make space for conversation, dialogue and debate around issues that can be extremely complex.

- It will encourage people to become actively engaged in service and justice ministries and make them aware of Christian and church-related programs that address these issues.
- It will help people understand the teachings of the Hebrew and Christian scriptures, including the teachings of Jesus about social injustice, poverty and the domination system of worldly kingdoms.

## **D. Service**

Christian formation will stress the importance of service to each other (washing one another's feet, mutual aid, etc.), service to our neighbours and service to the world. It will create an expectation that every active member of the faith community will see self-giving and volunteer activities as an integral extension and expression of Christian faith.

## **E. Stewardship**

Effective Christian formation will shape people towards an experience of:

- Deep gratitude to God for life, love, time, talents and resources.
- Understanding that a life of gratitude is a life of service and sharing of the resources God has bestowed.
- Gracious and generous living that breaks the cycle of consumerism of our society.

## **F. Milestones**

Christian formation can be enriched by celebrating and ritualizing milestones within the worshipping community as an expression of support and blessing through periods of transition. Milestone celebrations may include, but not be limited, to:

Birth	Beginning School	Puberty/transition to HS
High School Grad	University Graduation	Marriage
Baptism	Significant Career Changes	Major anniversaries
Purchase of first home	Retirement	Death

## **G. Community**

Successful Christian formation will create a strong supportive worshipping community where there are opportunities to:

- Encounter the presence of the living God in music, prayer, sharing and the spoken word.
- Experience rich and meaningful fellowship where people can get to know and appreciate one another.
- Resource families as a primary centre for development of Christian thought and spirituality.
- Share burdens and joys and receive prayer, comfort, confession and healing.
- Teach, encourage, admonish, celebrate and hear the prophetic word.