Curriculum for the Journey

By the time you read this, most of you are well into a new programming year and looking ahead to the coming seasons of the Church Year. In the next few months we will be invited to wait with patience, celebrate new life, look back, embrace the joy of resurrection, and go into the world. While you are on this journey, consider taking time to look at resources and curricula that help you navigate the road that parishioners of all ages are traveling. This issue looks at curriculum in depth from several angles.

We begin with a definition of curriculum from several different viewpoints, both borrowing from the education world and capturing the perspective of Christian formation. From there we dive into finding resources to meet the unique needs of a church.

We share questions we use at the Center for the Ministry of Teaching (CMT) to help clergy and lay formation leaders define the practices, beliefs, and experiences of their congregations. This exercise helps us and them target the resources that best fit their needs for all age groups.

We’ve learned from our travel and experience that worship itself is a powerful teaching tool. We explore different ways to use worship as an intergenerational learning experience with adult mentors working closely with children and youth.

Reviews of several new resources for both adults and the youngest members of our parishes are included, in addition to a thoughtful look at new materials focused on sexuality.

This issue concludes with a description, in español and English, of the Nuevo Amanecer gathering at Kanuga Conferences in August.

*Episcopal Teacher* is moving to three issues a year. Regular features and reviews, including those for Vacation Bible School 2017, will be in the fall and spring issues. The winter issue, which will be expanded in size, will focus on one topic. In 2016, a special issue featured articles about adult faith formation. In 2017, the expanded winter issue will be about youth confirmation.

If you have topics you would like us to consider for the expanded winter issue, please email me at cmt@vts.edu.

Enjoy your journey through the seasons this year!

*Dorothy Linthicum*
Five curricula together comprise the vocation of the people of God:

- **Koinonia**, Greek for community, is the curriculum that gathers us together. "The fashioning of a people," says Harris, "does not occur unless a people exist to be fashioned."

- **Leiturgia** is the curriculum of prayer, both corporate worship and personal spirituality. It cannot be separated from other curricula calling us to action in the name of justice, says Harris. **Leiturgia** is the work of the people.

- **Didache**, the curriculum of teaching, is the doctrines and traditions received and passed on as well as the manner of transmission. Catechesis is a part of teaching, but so is preaching, discussion, reinterpretations, or any activity that critically engages the people.

- **Kerygma** is proclamation, the message of scripture and sharing it with others. Jesus understood his own proclamation, Harris reminds us, while paying attention to "the unheralded, the unsung."

- **Diakonia** is loving service that encompasses caring and gathering, empowering and advocating. It is not by accident Harris names this vocation last, because service for others springs from gratitude.

The power of **Fashion Me a People** is its integrated vision. Harris knew Christian formation isn’t limited to Sunday school; it happens whenever and wherever the people of God live into their vocations. Formation happens better when we name what is going on.

The lasting gift of Maria Harris is her reminder that the most important job in forming faithful Christians is being the church together.◆

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**What Is Curriculum?**

To run the course

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**Latin**

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**Three Curricula We All Teach**

Education theorist Elliot Eisner* and others name the three curricula that we use to teach, even if inadvertently:

- **Explicit Curricula** is the raw content taught to learners with goals and objectives for different kinds of instruction, such as biblical stories and church history. Christian formation leaders provide an educational menu for different age groups that meet developmental needs and the beliefs of a worshipping community. While third-graders are memorizing Psalm 23, adults may be discussing the role of history in the words of the Nicene Creed.

- **Implicit Curricula** takes into account resource materials as well as the structure of the classroom. The prevalence or lack of diversity in images, for example, provide messages, according to Eisner, that “are often numerous, subtle, and consistent.” How we socialize learners to a set of expectations, he adds, “are profoundly more powerful and longer lasting than what is intentionally taught or what the explicit curriculum provides.” (Eisner, 88) Relegating Sunday school classes to the basement sends an implicit, and strong, message about their importance to a church.

- **Null curricula** is the content, implicit and explicit, that is never taught. Eisner believes that what we do not teach may be as important as what we do teach. Ignorance, he notes, is not a neutral void. “It has important effects on the kinds of options one is able to consider, the alternatives that one can examine, and the perspectives from which one can view a situation or problem.” (Eisner, 97) Sometimes the omission of content is inadvertent, while other times it is a product of choice.

When formation leaders select a curriculum, they need to look beyond the explicit content and explore both the implicit and null curricula being offered.◆

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**Curriculum for the Church**

**Fashion Me a People** by Maria Harris has helped us understand that the church itself is an educator, teaching through various forms to shape the people God has made and is making. Harris suggests that the different areas of church life are the curriculum—as both the way we teach as well as the subject matter itself.

Five curricula together comprise the vocation of the people of God:

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**Curriculum Beyond the Classroom**

When we think about teaching and learning our imaginations often default to “school” and yet most learning in life takes place beyond classrooms and outside courses. As leaders committed to teaching Christian faith in diverse settings, is the language of curriculum limiting? It doesn’t have to be.

The work of English educators Tony Jeffs and Mark K. Smith (www.infed.org) is particularly helpful. As scholar-practitioners who focus on fostering learning in informal environments such as community centers, churches, summer camps, or street work with vulnerable populations, Jeffs and Smith offer a theoretical framework to understand curriculum across the formal/informal continuum. They recognize that educators in formal and informal settings have more in common than we assumed.

At the formal end, curriculum is a predetermined body of knowledge or skills established and defined by experts. There are identified “teachers” who oversee the rules of engagement such as attendance or grading, and there are set time frames for learning. The curriculum is content-centered and while the pedagogies to implement it pay attention to the environment (physical and social), the experts control it to a greater extent than is possible in informal environments.

By contrast, curriculum in informal settings is conversation-based. Educators choose places and times that are available to learners, use deep listening and wise judgment to respond to their curiosity or need, and guide the conversation toward deepening understanding of the subject at hand. An attentive counselor at summer camp, for example, can facilitate timely conversations about faith and life to guide campers to a deeper knowledge of Christianity in ways that complement formal instruction.

At their best, Christian formation leaders are agile educators across the formal and informal continuum. At the formal end, curriculum is a predetermined body of knowledge or skills established and defined by experts. There are identified “teachers” who oversee the rules of engagement such as attendance or grading, and there are set time frames for learning. The curriculum is content-centered and while the pedagogies to implement it pay attention to the environment (physical and social), the experts control it to a greater extent than is possible in informal environments.

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**LifeLong, Life-Wide, and Life-Deep**

Thanks to the centrality of the baptismal covenant in the 1979 Book of Common Prayer, four decades of complementary work by liturgical theologians, Christian educators, and researchers in human development, the Episcopal Church has embraced a model of lifelong Christian formation. Becoming a Christian is an ongoing process of experiencing, learning about, and practicing the Way of Jesus in our everyday lives.

This view that began before we were born – “For you yourself created my inmost parts; you knit me together in my mother’s womb” (Ps 139:12) – made explicit in baptism, and completed in the promise of the resurrection, invites an expansive, holistic understanding of the curriculum for Christian discipleship. Building on recent European work on life-wide learning, the CMT has identified three dimensions of human experience that invite different orientations to the common work of forming faith.

- **LifeLong** – Curriculum that supports lifelong learning considers the learner’s age, life stage, and cultural context. It focuses on aligning personal stories with the Christian tradition, marrying the arc of the Christian story with the milestone events of personal experience. Thus the Christian tradition offers a structure with clear benchmarks in response to God’s invitation in our lives.

- **Life-wide** – If the lifelong curriculum sets our eyes on the horizon, the life-wide curriculum equips us to recognize God at work around us. It is teaching attentiveness and modeling practices to strengthen our peripheral vision and to live our faith at home, at work, and in the world.

- **Life-deep** – To sustain faithfulness in active, engaged lives requires us to know ourselves and to know God intimately. The life-deep curriculum teaches spiritual practices of study and prayer to deepen and sustain our faith. It is here that we develop the ability to discern a rule of life.◆
Matching Resources to Our Identity

By Dorothy Linthicum

every year in late summer, the Center for the Ministry of Teaching (CMT) gets phone calls and emails from alumni, clergy, and lay formation leaders who are looking for the perfect curriculum for their children, youth, and adults. We welcome their questions, which give us a chance to make suggestions that are more informed than a Google search.

There is a common misconception, however, about the power of curriculums to solve problems and increase attendance. Many who are seeking our advice believe that there is a resource that is a perfect fit for their setting—if they can just get it ordered and put into place before the programming year begins in September.

Too often church leaders look at formation piece-meal, focusing on one age group at a time. They may have good reasons to target a specific group, but the lack of vision for making disciples through lifelong, life-wide, life-deep formation (see p. 5) results in an erratic process that often leads to uncertainty and a lack of clarity.

Before we recommend curricula for specific age groups, we ask formation leaders to take a step back to look at the church as a whole, its strengths and weaknesses, its character or ethos, its beliefs and faith identity, among other factors. We ask those seeking advice to work with a group of people from their church to wrestle with questions like those found on the facing page.

MAKING DISCIPLES

People enter the church through baptism as an infant, young person, or adult. During a baptism the congregation agrees “to support these persons in their life in Christ.” (Book of Common Prayer, 303) Christian formation is how we make disciples and fulfill our covenant with those we baptized.

Formation needs to occur for all ages and stages of life. The basic messages we give to young children should follow them in deeper and more meaningful ways as they grow physically and spiritually. Adult formation is no less important as people experience different stages and phases of their lives.

The physical space available for formation and internet accessibility will also inform decisions about resources. Practical considerations about attendance patterns and accessibility for those with disabilities also come into play.

LEADERS, MENTORS AND TEACHERS

Before selecting curricula for any age, take an inventory of the gifts of parishioners who will be teaching and leading in different age groups. Resources should complement the gifts people offer, from music and art, to humor and spirituality. If teachers have limited time for preparation, find a resource that will fit their schedule. Films, created for all age groups for storytelling, discussion starters, or basic information, help busy teachers in planning and executing weekly sessions. Those who have more time may prefer other formats.

Teacher training builds confidence of teachers and helps them understand their role in the overall formation paradigm. Training is essential for some curricula, especially those calling for mentorship, while other materials are more self-contained. Consider offering training online or as a hybrid program with both online and in-person options.

BASIC CONTENT

In defining curriculum on page 5, Elliott Eisner's three kinds of curricula are described. Most of the questions in the sidebar list are part of the implicit curricula of our faith. The actual content of a resource and how it is presented are part of the explicit curricula. We agree with Eisner that when we get caught up in the content of what we are teaching, we lose sight of the power of our implicit messages. The empathy of a caring teacher might send a stronger message about the Christian faith than even the most creative content. At the same time, the passing on of traditions and the scriptural foundation of our faith often come from explicit curricula.

FINDING THE RIGHT RESOURCE

After all the prep work is done, curriculum decisions are much easier. Begin by downloading lists of curricula by age group compiled by Sharon Ely Pearson and located on the Building Faith website (buildfaith.org) under the curriculum button. Then make a call or send an email to the CMT, which has curated a variety of curricula for all ages. The Center is in the midst of compiling its findings in a spreadsheet that will be available on the CMT pages of the Virginia Theological Seminary website (www.vts.edu/cmt). Now go make disciples!
Using Worship to Teach Faith and Share Traditions

By Dorothy Linthicum

The church we often attended the year we lived in South Africa, St. Michael and St. George Cathedral in Grahamstown, South Africa, taught us a great deal about diversity, weaving cultural traditions into the fabric of the liturgy, and worship itself. On Sundays during the school year, the church was usually filled with young students attending school in one of the surrounding townships or at a boarding school. I soon discovered that the best layreaders in the congregation were young adolescents who often walked to the cathedral from their township homes. From the moment they stood at one of the front pews in the cavernous space and made their way to the steps of the lectern, they exuded poise and confidence. Even the tiniest youth who had to move a stool into place before she reached the lectern maintained an air of calmness and control.

The scripture readings were almost always in English, the third or fourth language of many of these young people. I rarely heard a word mispronounced, even the more difficult names of places and people we encounter in the Bible. The gifts of these young people were honed through practice, simple hard work, and the vision of a church elder. A retired drama professor at the local university was their guide and mentor. Each week she met with the layreaders to study the scripture passages from the lectionary readings. They looked at both the context of each reading and the themes that pervaded each week’s verses. The young men and women learned how to walk with confidence, with slow, fluid movements. They discovered the importance of pacing, pausing before making eye contact with the congregation. I’m not sure they were told what to wear, but youth participating in worship always looked well-groomed.

Their mentor was already losing her hearing when I met her, but not her authority nor the respect of the young people in her care. I have often wondered if the tools she gave them proved useful in other parts of their lives.

After returning to the Center for the Ministry of Teaching, I soon discovered that the best layreaders in the congregation already had acolyte training scheduled at the beginning of the school year. Consider setting aside time before or after worship to go deeper with that training. Episcopal worship is steeped in tradition, with names for spaces, sacramental objects, and other items around the altar and worship area. Learning about how these names came about and when they were introduced could provide a foundation in church history for more in-depth study later. An inspired teacher could help young people bridge ancient traditions to modern practice and faith.

Choirs The importance of music in the faith of people of all ages has been well documented. Puring music of beauty, hope and inspiration into the minds of young people is a lifelong gift. Coupling the music training with biblical study and the teaching of faith is a natural. Knowing the context of a psalm set to music, for example, makes the words more meaningful and rich.

Hospitality Youth at some churches are actively involved as ushers and distributing worship bags and bulletins to young children. Increase their responsibilities while teaching them the role of welcoming all into the community, using the early church as an example of inclusion.

Layreading Use the South Africa model for Bible study and how to present the Word.

Acolyte Training Learning to set up the altar for different kinds of services at different seasons is another opportunity to learn about Episcopal traditions, being in sacred space, and honoring the rules of the sanctity of the sacraments. This could be coupled with the acolyte instruction. Other experiences and activities could also incorporate a youth presence, scheduled immediately before or after a worship service.

Mission and Outreach Youth could participate both in decision-making and actual work situations. A youth member of the mission/outreach committee can provide thoughtful and realistic input about ways children and youth can fully participate in mission activities of a church.

Gardens and Grounds Youth involvement in the development and maintenance of gardens will help everyone involved remember and celebrate God as creator.

Coffee Hours While preparation and clean up are important parts of hospitality, more important might be a role as greeter, engaging people of different ages in conversation, and providing newcomers with information.

St. Michael and St. George Cathedral in Grahamstown, South Africa

The strength of a worship-based curriculum is the use of mentors of all ages to lead children and youth in different content areas. Depending on the size and diversity of ages within a congregation, leadership could range from adolescents to church elders. A goal of the program would be to foster relationships among active worship participants.

Scheduling Ideally, meeting times for a worship-based curriculum would be set immediately before or after worship, to allow the widest participation possible. Use of the actual worship space could be rotated, depending on the needs of the different groups. The format of the program could be set for a defined period of time or on a monthly or other rotation basis. The goal would be to expose children and youth to different aspects of both worship preparation and execution.

Moving to a Worship-Based Program It may be best to approach a worship-based program in incremental steps. Begin with programs that may already exist, such as acolytes and choir. Build from a strong base into other areas in which mentors have expressed strong interest. Discover how worship can really become the heart of your congregation!
Promote Holistic, Spiritual Sexuality with New Resource

By Kristen Pitts

ike adults, children and teenagers learn about sexuality from many mediums – friends, television, formal sex education, and abundant resources on the internet. Rarely, though, do they have the opportunity to delve into this topic at church. Conversations about sexuality, however, encourage faithfulness in all areas of the Christian life. Acknowledging that these discussions can be, we need to be intentional in guiding children, teens and adults in developing a spiritual understanding of sexuality. All people are incarnational—the experiences of both bodies and spirits are necessarily intertwined. Furthermore, sex connects us to other human beings in deeply intimate ways and invites us to be vulnerable. Showing ourselves just as we are is similar to spiritual practices within communities of faith. We risk damage to ourselves (and others) when sexuality is treated as if it has no spiritual aspects or is an inappropriate topic within church walls.

Despite the many debates on specific topics in the realm of sexuality, Episcopalians seeking to promote a holistic, spiritual understanding of sexuality have had few resources to draw on. While other denominations and faiths have offered systematic formation resources on sexuality, perhaps most notably the Unitarian Universalist series Our Whole Lives, Episcopalians typically have had to modify materials to align them with their own doctrine and tradition.

THESE ARE OUR BODIES

The recently published curriculum These Are Our Bodies (Church Publishing, Inc., 2016) steps in to fill this void. Currently, the Foundations book and the Middle School Module (for ages 12 to 14) are available; curriculum for other ages, including children (ages 3 to 11), high-school age, and adults, will become available over the next 18 months. The resources offered for middle school include a leader book, a participant book, and a parent book. Other modules will include a similar set of offerings. “The Foundations book establishes the intent of the curriculum’s authors, Jenny Beaumont and Abbi Long. The book was designed to serve “as a theological and practical guide to conversation about the complexities of sexuality in today’s world grounded in the Episcopal tradition.” (churchpublishing.org)

The authors have approached sexuality from the viewpoint of a variety of stakeholders—parents are likely to find it as useful as teachers. The book has an appeal for a range of people, from those who are highly sexuality-literate to those who are unfamiliar with the nuanced terminology used today. The book is divided into four parts, beginning, significantly, with “The Theological” and proceeding on to “The Ethical,” “The Biological,” and “The Practical.” Each chapter includes discussion questions to help individual readers or groups delve further into the conversation the book invites. A fifth section has numerous resources that people of any spiritual tradition might find helpful, but that are particularly relevant for Episcopalians. Several pages, for example, are devoted to recent General Convention resolutions that are relevant to sexuality.

Beaumont and Long approach this topic from a more liberal perspective. Justice issues regarding rights for LGBTQ+ people are addressed early on, and they are critical of abstinence-only models of sex education, which have a potential for instigating shame around sexuality. The authors write, “We should focus on helping people develop healthy relationships rather than alienating people because of their sexuality.” The authors advocate repeatedly the necessity of positive conversation around sexuality, encouraging the use of scientifically appropriate terms with infants onward. In giving tips on beginning “the conversation” with kids, the authors note, “When parents use the correct terminology, concepts do not have to be unlearned or untaught. You want your children to have the basics on which they can build their understanding as they grow.”

By approaching sexuality in a straightforward manner, parents and teachers can assemble the foundation from which children and adolescents will form understandings about their own bodies and about sexuality. The curriculum grounds itself firmly in human development theory. The Foundations book includes an overview of many perspectives on the stages of human development, with attention to Marvin Berkowitz’s theory of moral agency in particular. Building on this overview, the authors dedicate a chapter to each major stage of development, explaining what parents and formation leaders should expect to see in youth of each age grouping. They also provide conversation topics for children and youth in terms of their bodies and sexuality.

The practical breakdown of stages of growth could be very valuable to parents and others who have not had much exposure to these ideas or need help in translating theory into actual conversations and situations. Some of the sample conversations are rather stiff, but can still be helpful in identifying “teachable moments” and revisiting conversations around sexuality regularly. The strength of the Foundations book and the curriculum as a whole is how it stimulates conversation about sexuality and bodies among people of all ages. Just as important is the way it grounds that conversation in our identity as Christian. It is tempting to see the curriculum as filling the gaps in formal sex education that often lacks an upfront and honest discussion of sex. This curriculum offers leaders, parents, children and teens—and everyone else with a body—the chance to examine their sexuality in light of God’s immense love and being in communion with God and each other.

Kristen Tassell Pitts is the Assistant for Christian Formation and Pastoral Care at St. Andrews Episcopal Church, College Park, Maryland.

THESE ARE OUR BODIES: MIDDLE SCHOOL MODULE

The Middle School module of These Are Our Bodies starts with the theological—the first chapter is entitled “You are God’s Creation.” This frames the rest of the study in an image Dei perspective that denotes the symbolic relation between God and humanity.

The book uses affirming language consistently and is organized around chapters that uphold some aspect of the participant’s identity: “You are Complex,” “You are Responsible,” and so on.

An emphasis on healthy relationships encourages participants to consider the qualities of strong friendships as well as characteristics of positive or problematic romantic relationships. It provides age-appropriate sex education throughout.

Particularly useful for many will be the section devoted to the many ways to say “no,” whether to romantic partners or friends. Each chapter in the participants’ book includes reflection questions with space to write out their thoughts; many of the questions invite participants to consider a specific situation and apply what they’ve learned.

The curriculum is designed to be flexible. The Leader Guide offers suggestions for using it as a retreat instead of weekly sessions, for example, and includes time estimates for each activity. It also consistently emphasizes the role of parents in their children’s formation regarding sexuality. Parents are invited to learn about the session contents and to have conversations with their youth.

The Parent Book summarizes each session and includes reflection questions for parents to consider around the same topics that their children are engaging. Parents are invited to consider their own understanding of bodies and sexuality, which helps them be better prepared to talk with their children.

Overall, the module is well-designed to inspire conversation around the spirituality of sexuality.

Kristen Pitts
Setting a Course for the Christian Journey

PILGRIM BUILDS SOLID FOUNDATION FOR CHRISTIAN LIFE

Have you noticed a gradual reclaiming of the language of Christian discipleship among church leaders? Perhaps you have observed the delight with which our Presiding Bishop, the Rt. Rev. Michael Curry, talks about Jesus? Or your congregation may have embarked on the Bible Challenge.

There is good evidence that the Episcopal Church is waking from its Mainline slumber. We are talking more about joining God’s mission and following the Way of Jesus. It is no longer enough to just go to church. What do we really believe? Why does it matter? The need and desire for basic instruction in the Christian faith is palpable.

Church Publishing, Inc. was listening and has released Pilgrim, an attractive, accessible, and affordable resource for adults to build a solid foundation for contemporary Christian life. The aim of Pilgrim is clear: to help people become disciples of Jesus Christ. The small group format blends Christian practices of hospitality, prayer, study, and reflection to provide a rich learning environment that welcomes questions and introduces foundational texts and themes of Christianity.

The materials are flexible and adaptable. The range of biblical texts and the variety of contributing authors provide a breadth of theological perspective. The editors recommend that an experienced group leader with theological education facilitate Follow to provide mentoring support for those newest to the Christian tradition. Grow is designed for participants to self-guide the program. Each session can fit into an hour but a more relaxed 75-minute format is preferable.

The greatest strength of Pilgrim may be the Leader’s Guide that introduces the program by rooting it soundly in the catechetical history of our Church. The distinctive Anglican characteristics and instructional methodology of the program are explicit in the Guide, which also includes excellent resources to guide leaders from program promotion through implementation. Pilgrim: A Course for the Christian Journey Leader’s Guide offers any Christian formation leadership team a useful overview of the state of Christian formation in the Episcopal Church, whether or not it is intended to use the program.

Pilgrim was inspired in part by two programs: Follow, for inquirers and those who are new to the faith, are structured around four central texts: The Baptismal Covenant, the Lord’s Prayer, the Commandments, and the Beatitudes. The four courses in Grow provide a deeper response by inviting participants to engage major themes of Christianity: the Creed, the Eucharist, the Bible, and the Lord’s Prayer.

The lessons are short, 15 minutes, and prayers are interactive for even the littlest little. The materials are explicit in what their child is learning, and how it relates to their child’s faith. Even the youngest are encouraged to engage with their child during the activity time. But even more importantly, caregivers are explicitly told what their child is learning, and how it relates to their child’s faith.

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Pilgrim: A Course for the Christian Journey

Foreward, by the Rt. Rev. Michael Curry

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Teaching Toddlers about Faith with Fun and Frolic

How do you talk to your toddler about God? How do you pray with your child? How do you help your child see God in the world around us? Frolic, Sparkhouse’s new curriculum, focuses on tools that help small children become people of faith. Although Frolic is aimed at children up to 3 years old, the real audience of this curriculum is parents and caregivers of very young children.

Today’s churches, like mine, find themselves in a peculiar situation. Some, if not most, of our children’s parents and caregivers have very little religious background, aren’t comfortable talking about their faith, and certainly don’t have any experience forming the faith of their kids at home. While parents want their children to have a meaningful relationship with God, they often don’t know where to begin.

Frolic seeks to help parents and caregivers with monthly, customizable e-newsletters that cover child development and age-appropriate ways to engage with their child about God. Adults participate in the lesson with their child, and the curriculum actively engages both child and adult.

Caregivers read to their kids, answer questions along with their toddlers, and are shown how to engage with their child during the activity time. But even more importantly, caregivers are explicitly told what their child is learning, and how it relates to their child’s faith.

TEST DRIVING Frolic

We’ve been giving Frolic a test drive this summer. The lessons have been engaging, and the activity ideas inexpensive, realistic, and fun. The board books are appealing, and the rituals and prayers are interactive for even the littlest little. The lessons are short, flexible, and well-designed for the chaos that surrounds small children.

My 16-month-old likes the ritual part the best and runs around doing it the rest of the day. What I like best is the engagement with parents that spills over into life at home. I hope that as parents and caregivers pray with their kids, read to them about God, and answer questions about their own faith in the safe space of church, they might be brave enough to talk about God with their kids in the car, before bedtime, or in the grocery store.

USING Frolic at Church

Lessons and supplemental material for Frolic are online via a portal. As a “classroom” resource, teachers are given a username and password, allowing them access to the portal online whenever they want. Some volunteers might find it challenging at first if they are uncomfortable with computers, but my teachers found the site intuitive.

Lesson plans and coloring pages come ready to print. Sparkhouse sells board books as a companion to the lesson plans. At least one copy in the church nursery is necessary for the curriculum. I recommend one per family to encourage formation in the home.

If you’re on a tight budget, I would recommend getting a few of the Frolic story bibles and starting there. I’m looking forward to seeing additional materials that are designed to help make the church nursery less of a mini day care and a more faithfully God-centered place.

To learn more about Frolic, go to http://www.churchpublishing.org/kids/Frolic.

Becky Zartman is Assistant Rector at St. Thomas, Dupont Circle, Washington, DC.
**Latino Gathering Breaks New Ground**

**By Eduardo Solomón Rivera**

A new dawn breaks at Kanuga Conference Center, and indeed the church, as nearly 470 people gathered for the 8th conference of its kind known as Nuevo Amanecer [New Dawn], co-sponsored by Kanuga Conference Center and Latino/Hispanic Ministries of the Episcopal Church. The gathering provided a much-needed space for sharing stories, engaging in leadership formation, and celebrating the Latino/Hispanic presence together and in the wider church.

Beaming with joy, The Rev. Canon Anthony Guillén, Missioner for Latino/Hispanic Ministries, addressed the assembly describing its historic nature and noting that every Province of the Episcopal Church was represented. The group also included members of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA). Additionally, this year the conference introduced live web streaming of the group events.

During the procession of the opening worship, colorful streamers swirled high over the congregation to the sweet aroma of incense and the festive sounds of a piano, guitars, bass, flute, violin, and percussion. Guillén delivered a rousing sermon inviting the assembly to chant with him the conference theme, “Unidos Crecemos, Together We Grow” as he highlighted the accomplishments achieved the conference theme, “Unidos Crecemos.”

Ema Rosero-Nordalm, a deacon serving the Diocese of Massachusetts, delivered the rousing sermon inviting the assembly to chant with him the conference theme, “Unidos Crecemos.”

Panel discussions on the role of the deacon, church planting, and LGBTQ+ people in our communities opened up topics of conversation that are often overlooked in the day-to-day life of a church or too difficult to address locally due to cultural or societal barriers.

Evening prayer was a time for the group to pray for peace and reconciliation. The choir opened the service singing, “By night we hasten, in darkness, to search for living water, only our thirst leads us onward.”

“I was immersed in a spirit of unity and love,” said Ema Rosero-Nordalm, a deacon serving the Diocese of Massachusetts and a joint Episcopal and ELCA Latino mission. She added, “The gym became a magnificent cathedral; we were held in God’s loving arms. The choir blended with the assembly as we raised our hearts and voices in prayer.”

A thirst for community, support, and affirmation led participants to travel many miles by car and by plane in search of Christ, the living water, found among those gathered. The celebration culminated with a “Prayer of Sending Forth” calling the assembly back to the waters of baptism, and sending them out singing the words of the Blessed Virgin Mary, “Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word.”

**Encuentro Latino Rompe la Nueva Tierra**

**By Eduardo Solomón Rivera**

Hoy llegamos aquí a Kanuga
A celebrar un Nuevo Amanecer
Latinoamericano y Episcopal
Pena unidas juntos crecer

Cantando a toda voz, al tono de Vamos Todos al Banquete, se dio comienzo a la octava conferencia Nuevo Amanecer en el centro de conferencias Kanuga en Carolina del Sur. Estos versos nuevos resaltan el lema y el espíritu de la conferencia: Unidos Crecemos.

Venimos de muchas tierras
Atravesando este país
Nos encontramos en esta mesa
Cada cual muy digno y feliz

Abundaban la risa y los abrazos al encuentro de viejos amigos. Los que llegaron por primera vez pronto disfrutaban de esa alegría de conocerse y compartir. Pregonomaban el amor de Cristo y el deseo de estar juntos para celebrar, aprender cosas nuevas y contar historias de éxitos y retos vividos en la labor misionera.

Lleno de gozo y orgullo, el Misionero de los Ministerios Latinos/Hispanos de La Iglesia Episcopal, El Rvdo. Canónigo Anthony Guillén se dirigió a la asamblea dando la bienvenida y resaltando lo histórico del encuentro. Asistieron cerca de 470 personas de todas las provincias de la Iglesia Episcopal y de varios sínodos de la Iglesia Evangélica Luterana en América. Por primera vez la conferencia se transmitió en directo por medio de la internet.

Se ofrecieron alrededor de 30 talleres. Entre la gran variedad de opciones se encontraban talleres sobre el desarrollo de líderes, herramientas para miembros de la junta parroquial, la inmigración, el antirracismo, la espiritualidad, la tecnología en la misión, el ministerio de música y mucho más. Cada día durante las comidas había oportunidad de participar de discusiones sobre otros temas importantes.

Se llevaron a cabo mesas redondas sobre temas como el diaconado, el establecimiento de nuevos e innovadores ministerios y una muy concurrida, llena de emoción y de revelaciones sobre la vida de personas lesbianas, gay, transgéneros y bisexuales de nuestras comunidades de fe. Las plenarias destacaron la importancia de trabajar unidos para crecer juntos con el poder de Cristo y la fuerza del Espíritu. Esta fue la primera vez que tanto la Inmigración como los bisexuales y transgéneros de nuestras comunidades de fe se sintieron representados.

A la luz de velas representando toda la creación, todos cantaban junto al coro, “De noche iremos, que para encontrar la fuente, sólo la sed nos alumbra”. La Rvda. Ema Roser Nordalm, diácona, Diócesis de Massachusetts y plantadora de una misión Episcopal y Luterana compartió, “me sentí sumergida en un espíritu de amor y de unidad. Juntos sostenidos en el abrazo amoroso de Dios; el gánumos, convertido en una magnífica catedral, las voces unidas en oración como incienso ante el altar del Señor”.

El evento culminó con una Oración de Envío recordando nuestro llamando bautismal, cantando las palabras de la Bendita Virgen María y profesando, “Aquí estoy, que Dios haga conmigo su santa voluntad.”

**Photos by Angelica Garcia-Barile, Diocese of Southern Virginia**

**Eduardo Solomón Rivera**

Diocese of Southeast Florida, is a Mission, Worship, Formation and Multimedia Consultant and member of the Forma Board.
The next Special Issue of *Episcopal Teacher* will focus on confirmation for young people. The content was inspired by the Center for the Ministry of Teaching (CMT) involvement in the Confirmation Project, a two-year interdenominational study funded by the Lily Foundation. Lisa Kimball and Kate Siberine, the CMT representatives on the project, “are feeling excited and energized about what this next generation has to teach the church.”

Among other findings, they discovered the positive impact a vigorous confirmation program has on the life of a parish and the importance of a committed congregation to the success of a program. The Special Issue taps into the expertise of parish leaders, bishops, and people of all ages whose confirmation experience formed their faith and discipleship.

The *Episcopal Teacher* Special Issue will be available in late January. Look for it!