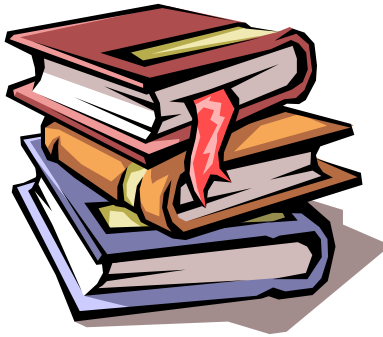


Books and Tools for Educational Ministry



Dynamic congregations explore and adopt a shared vision for the faith community and its members. They evaluate, adapt, and change how they live and minister together. They establish goals for inviting, welcoming, and nurturing disciples of all ages. Through intentional conversations and ongoing mission visioning, vital churches successfully develop the ethos of the congregation. By clearly defining what it means to be a Christian, by communicating the purpose of the church, and creating opportunities to build disciples, essential learning takes place at all times and across generations.

Although there is not a single textbook that provides the broad scope of basics and best practices in Christian education, there are a number of tools from a variety of publishers and sources. This list is not comprehensive, but offers some suggestions for the purpose of defining and developing educational ministries in the church.

Christian Education as Evangelism, Norma Cook Everist, editor, [Fortress Press](#), 2007

The correlation between education and evangelism, explored throughout the book, is an important concept to wrestle with in relation to the work of individuals and the church. The first chapter by Diane J. Hyman introduces Christian education and the variety of terms used to describe the ideas of understanding and practicing faith.

Christian Educators' Guide to Evaluating and Developing Curriculum by Nancy Ferguson, [Judson Press](#), 2008

The author of this book uses the word "curriculum" in reference to a church's total educational ministry instead of a particular printed resource. Although the second half of the book is a guide to selecting and adapting published curricula, part one helps congregations explore the purpose for education in their context. One oversight in the book, of which Ferguson is most apologetic as a certified Christian educator in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), the denominational publishers—Congregational Ministries Publishing (curriculum resources) and Presbyterian Publishing Corporation (theological trade books and small group materials)—are not listed. Find out more about educational materials from the denomination at <http://www.pcusa.org/curriculum> and <http://presbypub.com/>.

Educating Congregations: The Future of Christian Education by Charles R. Foster, [Abingdon Press](#), 1994 (Reprint with preface copyright, 2006)

This classic on educational ministry in the church continues to enlighten and challenge teaching elders, educators, and congregations in their important work of forming and transforming disciples through shared experiences that provide meaning for individuals and faith communities.

Embracing the Future: A Guide for Reshaping Your Churches Teaching Ministry* edited by Linda R. Isham, [Judson Press](#), 1999

This resource guides a congregation through a process for creating educational ministry that is relevant. If used as intended with the commitment to make changes, including celebrating and letting go, a church will discover new life for the teaching ministry and disciple making.

Embracing the Future, published in partnership of Witherspoon Press (PCUSA), Board of Christian Education (Cumberland PC) and United Church Publishing (United Church of Canada) is 14 years old, but still available through Judson Press.

From Generation to Generation: The Adaptive Challenge of Mainline Protestant Education in Forming Faith by Charles R. Foster, [Cascade Books](#), 2012

Foster's newest book explores three tasks for congregations today: reclaiming what Foster calls "developmental, practice, and discovery" learning as interdisciplinary education; revitalizing the relational nature of the church's

education as a catechetical faith communities; imaginatively expanding education from the school model cross-generational, celebratory education through the life events of the church.

God Our Teacher: Theological Basics in Christian Education by Robert W. Pazmiño, [Baker Academic](#), 2001

Pazmiño's premise seems simple, God as teacher, but the depth and richness of his exploration of the Trinity as the organizing theological theme for the theory and practice of Christian education is profound. He identifies seven teachings that are foundational for Christian education and encourages faith communities' "crossing over" to post modernity.

Growing in the Life of Faith, Second Edition: Christian Education and Christian Practices by Craig Dykstra, [Westminster John Knox Press](#), 2005

As Dorothy C. Bass, director of the Valparaiso Project on the Education and Formation of People in Faith, states in the book's forward, "[Dykstra] insists that thinking and doing cannot be separated—and neither can believing and living, education and its content, or theology and the means of sharing it with others." Dykstra explores education as investigative, formative education where people in faith communities helps one another understand their mutual experiences of Mystery and provide opportunities to practice significant faith traditions.

Growing Up Christian, A Congregational Strategy for Nurturing Disciples by C. Ellis Nelson, [Smyth and Helwys Publishing, Inc.](#), 2008

Nelson spends time in part one of his book covering the history of Christian influence in American culture from the 1800s and why the same "Patterns of Influence" will not work today. In the same section, he moves to the main sources for children's God imagery: parents, family, and community. The latter half of the book brings the influence of congregations into the strategy for faith formation. Although some of the references to tools and models for formal instruction in the book are dated, it is worth reading for the insights Nelson shares about the goals of discipleship. This information becomes the framework for planning formal and informal education.

Lifelong Faith Journal, John Roberto, editor, [LifelongFaith Associates](#), LLC

This ecumenical journal contains articles, bibliographies, practical ideas, and planning tips that make this resource a valuable tool for creating holistic educational ministry for the 21st century church. Each volume has a different emphasis and is free online.

Mapping Christian Education: Approaches to Congregational Learning by Jack L. Seymour, editor, [Abingdon Press](#), 1997

Eight educators/essayists, including Seymour, explore four themes in the theory and practice of Christian education: the church's mission, the faith community, individual formation, and religious education instruction. The book provides a useful tool for pastors, educators, elders, and leaders to assess their educational ministry context.

Nurturing Faith and Hope: Black Worship as a Model for Christian Education by Anne E. Streaty Wimberly, [WIPF & Stock](#), 2010 (Previously published by Pilgrim Press, 2004)

Building on the premise that worship is one of the central educational events of a congregation in its role of shaping and nurturing the lives of believers, Winberly explores the unique Christian education model of the black worshipping community.

Starting New Churches, a Process of Discernment, Version 2.0, developed by Brian Clark, Jan Edmiston, Philip Lotspeich and Craig Williams, 2009

This 78-page manual, created as a process of discernment for starting new church developments, is adaptable by existing congregations, seeking to create a new way of being in ministry together, including how they engage in the educational ministry of the church.

Starting New Churches, and the similar *Starting New Initiatives* and *New Beginnings*, are discernment tools from the office of Church Growth. All suggest a discernment team pray and study the Bible in order to seek God's will for the church. The foundational and vision statements that emerge become the basis of what the disciples in a particular faith community will experience together. The *Starting New Churches* process calls for 16 gatherings, but for educational ministry and church visioning purposes, there may be fewer sessions. These sessions would focus on language, experiences, and formative practices for the building up the body of Christ through the discipleship of God's people in their midst instead of seeking to start new faith communities or build physical churches.

Teaching the Bible in the Church by John M. Bracke and Karen B. Tye, [Chalice Press](#), 2003

Bracke and Tye write this book from the assumption that Christian congregations know the importance of teaching the Bible as the authoritative book of faith and the growing reality of biblical illiteracy to help those involved in the educational ministry of the church explore how we learn and teach. The authors explore Bible teaching as an intercultural experience and the importance of intentional biblical interpretation.