

In many of the congregations that I come across, I see Christian education as often not undertaken intentionally and within a disciple making framework. There seem to be many ad hoc forms of Christian education, such as studies of various forms including Bible studies, book groups, prayer and lectionary groups, and other short and long term study material being utilised. The effectiveness of these vary. Anecdotally, these groups are useful for the participants, and have the potential to result in effective disciple making.

However, the communities most effective in disciple making that result in a strong missional orientation are not generally associated with one particular study form or structure. I see in several instances that communities that undertake Christian education as a 'way of being community' to be the most effective. That is, Christian education is not undertaken as a program or a series of programs, but as a community of disciples seriously engaged in a variety of practices that nurture discipleship. Discipleship is owned as an ongoing way of being the Christian community with Christian education an ongoing reflective practice permeating the whole way of life of the Christian community. This includes forms of worship that offer reflective opportunities, intentional reflection in different parts of the life of the community, complemented by different studies including Bible studies, book groups etc. In other words, a program per se does not appear to be the key to effective Christian education, but a way of being the Christian community that may include programs.

This means that the needs of congregations over the next 5-10 years would be more in line with assisting congregations to think about their way of being the Christian community that nurtures discipleship, rather than a program or series of programs. I suspect that part of this is reimagining the different possibilities of being a community of disciples, in which Christian education pervades the whole way of being the church.

...Discipleship and mission are inextricably linked. I see communities that are experiencing growth in discipleship, in terms of people growing in their life of faith, leading to communities that are actively living out the mission of the church. Likewise, communities that are not showing evidence of growth in discipleship, tend to be lacking in mission drive.... The first step, I suspect, is in promoting and resourcing leaders to promote a culture of Christian discipleship.

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