

# Planning for Adult Formation and Discipleship District Workshop

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# Adult Formation and Discipleship District Leadership Development 2-Hour Workshop Model

## Time

## Topic

### Part 1—Introduction (20 Minutes)

5 Minutes

Welcome and Devotions

*(Read)*

Welcome to the \_\_\_\_\_ *(Name of District)* Leadership Development workshop. My name is \_\_\_\_\_ *(Your Name)* \_\_\_\_\_. We are going to spend the next two hours learning more about adult formation and discipleship. As we begin, I invite you to reflect on a portion of the letter to the Colossians 1:9b-10 and 2:6-7. I will read the passage aloud, and then there will be a few moments for silent reflection. As you listen, consider what this passage has to say about adult formation and discipleship.

“ . . . be filled with the knowledge of God’s will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, so that you may lead lives worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him, as you bear fruit in every good work and as you grow in the knowledge of God. . . . As you therefore have received Christ Jesus the Lord, continue to live your lives in him, rooted and built up in him and established in the faith, just as you were taught, abounding in thanksgiving.”

*(Allow for a few moments of silent reflection. If there is time, ask participants to share a highlight from their reflection.)*

*(Read)*

Let us pray: O God, from our birth you have watched over us. Now that we are adults, strengthen our understanding that we have been called to do your will in the world. We pray for the adults in our congregations, and we ask that you help us as we continue learning what it means to love you and to serve our neighbors. Help us and all those with whom we serve to be established in the faith, giving thanks for all that we have received from you. Amen.

10 Minutes

Getting Acquainted Time

*(Read)*

My name is \_\_\_\_\_ and I am a member at \_\_\_\_\_ *(Name of Church and Community)* \_\_\_\_\_. I am looking forward to our time together. I invite you to say your name, the name of your church, and your leadership role in your church.

5 Minutes

## Goals for the Workshop

*(Write goals on newsprint before class session)*

*(Show newsprint and read)*

As a result of our time together, people will be able to:

1. Name dimensions of adult learning
2. Describe a continuum of adult faith experience
3. Assess settings for adult formation and discipleship in their congregation
4. Identify next steps in planning for adult formation and discipleship

Ask participants if there are other hopes they bring to the workshop. Invite them to identify which goals are most important to them and to focus on those goals as they participate in the workshop.

## Part 2—Adult Learning (30 Minutes)

3 Minutes

### Overview of the Brain

*(Distribute hand-outs—Appendices A, B, and C—or identify page number, if hand-outs have already been distributed.)*

*(Read)*

The brain has three main parts, the cerebrum (or neocortex), the mid-brain (limbic system), and the cerebellum and brain stem. Appendices A and C include information about the brain. Briefly, the cerebrum is the largest part of the brain and is responsible for processing information, rational thought, planning, and verbal expression. The mid-brain relates to emotions, hormones, and sensory information. The cerebellum and brain stem are the oldest parts of the brain. They coordinate involuntary reflexes, such as breathing and heart rate, and connect the brain to the body's nervous system. The brain is organized to regulate the body's systems and to respond to external stimuli.

The brain's role in learning includes:

- Processing information (see Appendix B on neurons)
- Making connections
- Exploring meaning
- Considering alternate perspectives

The brain organizes information and experience in ways that help us navigate the world. This organization operates unconsciously for the most part, as a mental model, which helps us:

- Recognize patterns
- Categorize information and experience
- Identify appropriate action in routine matters
- Assign significance to an idea, person, or experience

In other words, mental models become a blueprint for “how the world works.” Mental models offer guidance on how to be successful in any given situation. When we encounter unfamiliar situations, we may try to utilize a current mental model in that situation. Or we may realize that we need to learn something new, which leads us to consider how adults learn.

25 Minutes

### Dimensions of Adult Learning

*(Distribute hand-outs—Appendix D—or identify page number, if hand-outs have already been distributed.)*

*(Read)*

When we think about learning, we often think about schools. That leads to thinking about information, tests, homework, grades, etc. It is not uncommon for adults to avoid anything that reminds them of that experience. However, adult learning is much more holistic than the typical image that schooling brings to mind.

Just as the brain has three major parts with their accompanying functions, so learning has at least three dimensions: cognitive (thoughts), affective (emotions), and behavioral (actions). Learning involves our “heads, hearts, and hands.” Appendix D includes a summary of the dimensions of learning covered in this session.

We have already alluded to the cognitive dimension of learning, and we’ll get back to that. Right now let’s focus on the affective, or emotional, dimension of learning. According to what we are learning about the brain, the brain gives priority processing to emotion-laden experiences. Eric Jensen says that the affective dimension of learning is the critical interplay between how we feel, act, and think. Emotions focus attention, affect decision-making, and strengthen memory formation and recall. Emotions relate to what we value and help us mediate meaning (i.e., why something is important to us).

Learning is enhanced by a positive emotional climate. Let’s name some of the ways that we can create a positive emotional climate.

*(Allow two or three minutes for the group to name activities, experiences, and methods that they have used. Write the ideas on newsprint. Questions for clarification can be allowed; discourage debate or argument.)*

*Body sculpture or thumb lock (See Appendix E for instructions.)*

The behavioral dimension of learning has two aspects. The first is the inclusion of movement in the learning process itself; the second aspect refers to what we do as a result of what we are learning (how we apply what we are learning in our daily lives). Workers with children have always been conscious of children's need to move their bodies; teachers of adults generally include little movement in learning activities. However, brain research shows that healthy brains result from good nutrition, adequate sleep, and physical exercise, just as the rest of the human body does. Growth of new brain cells and improved memory recall have been linked to running and other forms of aerobic exercise. While we may not include aerobics in adult faith formation settings, we can include drama, dance, body sculpture, and other movement.

Additionally, actions that take place outside of the group meeting prompt reflections on our faith and provide opportunities for applying what we're learning. For example, spiritual disciplines (prayer, Bible study, worship, etc.) are specific actions that Christians practice to develop and deepen a relationship with God. These disciplines can be used within a group meeting, as well as by individual members of the group outside of group meetings.

When we put all these dimensions of learning together, we create a rich, fertile environment for growing in faith and discipleship. You can encourage adult learning by providing:

- New experiences
- Relevant content and processes
- Interaction among participants
- Options for exploring
- Safe environment (positive emotions, low stress)
- Time to process and reflect on information

## 10 Minute Break (May Include Resource Review)

### Part 3—Adult Faith Experience (45 minutes)

10 minutes

Entry Points and Adult Faith

*(Distribute hand-outs—Appendix F—or identify page number, if hand-outs have already been distributed.)*

*(Read)*

Adults are not all the same. Each adult, even those who grew up in the same family, has had a different experience of church and has a different interpretation of God and/or what it means to be Christian. Adults also have varying levels of commitment related to participation in a community of faith or to living as a disciple of Jesus Christ.

Congregations that are attempting to develop a comprehensive plan for adult formation and discipleship recognize that they must meet people “where they are” by providing multiple entry points into the congregation. Some settings will be designed for people with little to no experience in church or with faith, while other settings will provide opportunities for adults to deepen their relationship with God and their commitment to following Jesus Christ.

Let’s take a look at the hand-out entitled “Adult Faith and Discipleship.” Across the top of the page you will find a brief description of Wesley’s understanding of God’s grace (prevenient, justifying, and sanctifying). *(Since some participants may not have a United Methodist background, you may need to elaborate on Wesley’s description of God’s grace.)*

In the middle of the page you will find a sample description for entry points into a congregation’s system for discipleship.

*(Using the hand-out, explain each of the categories of experience and/or commitment.)*

The text at the bottom of the page provides an example of how the generic categories can be adapted using a biblical metaphor or visual image.

Congregations that have developed descriptions like these use them to help adults think about their faith experience. Adults choose whichever category best describes where they think they are. Leaders in the church do not use these categories to make judgments about other people’s faith or level of commitment. Leaders can use the categories to reinforce the idea that faith formation and discipleship are life-long processes and to invite adults to consider where God is leading them to grow.

20 minutes

Indicators of Mature Christian Faith

*(Distribute hand-outs—Appendix G—or identify page number, if hand-outs have already been distributed.)*

*(Read)*

Multiple entry points into a congregation’s system for discipleship are important. But what will the system include? What is it that you want adults to know, to be able to do, and to experience in your congregation? I invite you to turn to two or three other people and share ideas about what you think are essential knowledge, skills, and experiences for adults to grow in faith and live as disciples of Jesus Christ? Please identify a person in your small group to report to the total group your main ideas.

*(After about 8 minutes, call the group back together. Ask each small group’s reporter to identify the group’s main ideas. Then ask participants to look at Appendix G.)*

*(Read)*

Down the left side of this hand-out you will find several categories of knowledge and skills. How are these categories similar to what you discussed? Based on your discussion, what would you add to the list?

15 minutes

Putting a System together

You will also note that the categories of cautious, curious, committed, and so forth are listed across the top of Appendix G. This grid is one way that you can think about what your congregation currently offers for adults. What classes, small groups, retreats, etc. do you provide? Who is the “target audience” for each of these settings? Where are the gaps? Is there anything that doesn’t fit anywhere? You are invited to spend about seven minutes listing various adult groups in the spaces on the grid where you think they best fit.

*(After 7-8 minutes, call the group together. Ask for any reflections or insights participants may have gleaned through this process. Discuss how they might use a similar process with a group of adult leaders in their congregation.)*

#### Part 4—Next Steps in Planning (10 Minutes)

5 minutes

Ideas for Back Home

*(Distribute hand-outs—Appendices H and J—or identify page number, if hand-outs have already been distributed.)*

*(Read)*

You have had a chance to do some preliminary thinking about adult formation and discipleship in your congregation. What will you do when you go “back home” to your congregation? I invite you to use Appendix H as a way to focus on next steps.

4 minutes

Evaluation

*(Read)*

As we come to a close of our time together, I ask you to complete the feedback form for this workshop (Appendix J). Your responses will be used to improve this particular workshop and to identify additional support needed for leaders of adult formation and discipleship. Please take about 4 minutes to complete this form. After a few minutes we will close with prayer.

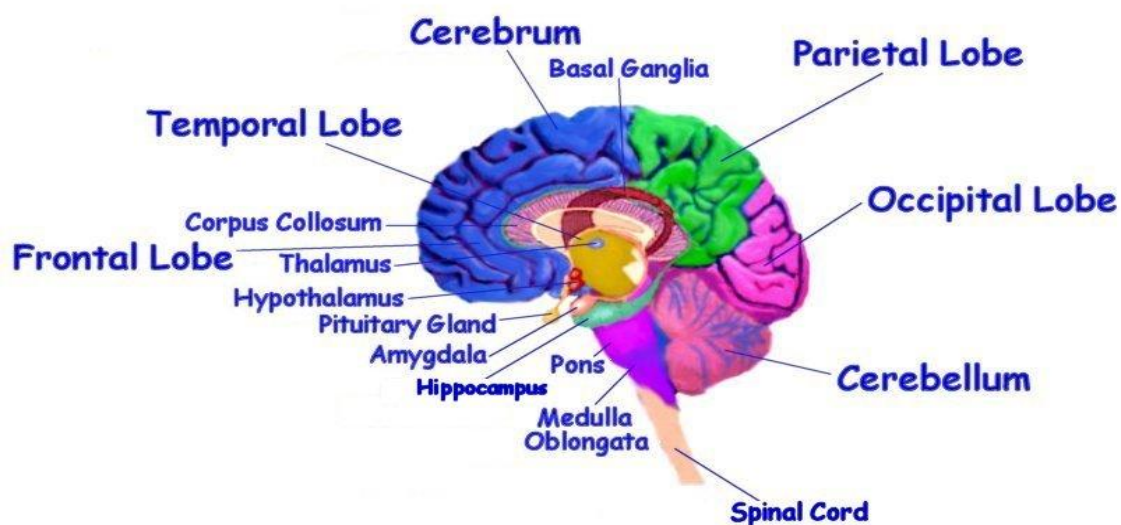
1 minute

Closing Prayer

*(Read)*

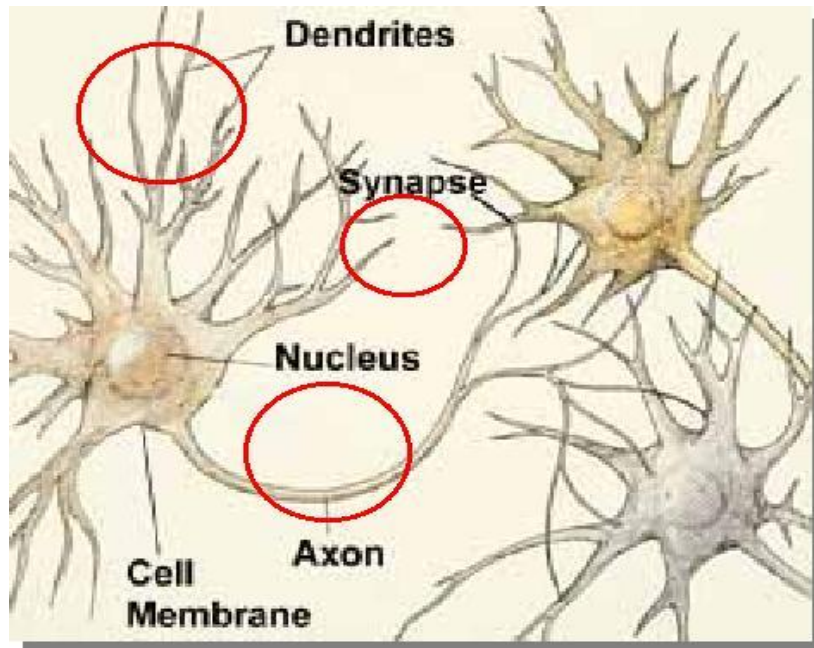
Thank you for your participation in this workshop. As we leave this place, let us pray together the Lord’s Prayer.

## Appendix A The Human Brain



<b>Cerebrum</b>	Largest part of the brain; includes frontal, parietal, temporal, and occipital lobes
<b>Basal Ganglia</b>	Produces smooth muscular actions in starting and stopping
<b>Frontal lobe</b>	Controls planning, verbal expression, voluntary movement
<b>Parietal lobe</b>	Handles reception of sensory information; relates to reading, writing, language, and calculation
<b>Temporal lobe</b>	Relates to hearing, language, learning, and memory storage
<b>Occipital lobe</b>	Processes vision
<b>Corpus Collosum</b>	Connects the left and right hemispheres of the brain
<b>Thalamus</b>	Relays sensory information
<b>Hypothalamus</b>	Regulates appetite, digestion, emotions, sleep, circulation, sexuality, and hormone secretion (the brain's "pleasure center")
<b>Pituitary Gland</b>	Secretes hormones that influence blood pressure, growth, and other body processes
<b>Amygdala</b>	Processes sensory information and relates to emotions
<b>Hippocampus</b>	Influences learning and memory storage and retrieval
<b>Pons</b>	Serves as relay station for sensory information
<b>Medulla Oblongata</b>	Controls respiration, heart rate, and circulation
<b>Spinal cord</b>	Connects the brain with the body's nervous system
<b>Cerebellum</b>	Relates to balance and coordination; now thought to influence cognition and emotions

## Appendix B Neurons and Neural Pathways



**Neuron:** One type of brain cell; responsible for the transfer of information

**Axon:** Sends information and nerve impulses from one neuron to another (each neuron only has one axon)

**Dendrite:** Receives information and nerve impulses from another neuron (each neuron can have many dendrites)

**Synapse:** Junction point at which neurons interact

## Appendix C Brain Functions

Cerebrum/ Neocortex	Mid-Brain	Brainstem/ Cerebellum
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>☛ Rational Thought</li> <li>☛ Choice and Will</li> <li>☛ Conscious Planning</li> <li>☛ Higher-Order Thinking</li> <li>☛ Enlightened Reasoning</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>☛ Feelings &amp; Emotions</li> <li>☛ Play and Bonding</li> <li>☛ Warm Relationships</li> <li>☛ Thinking with the Heart</li> <li>☛ Warm Connections</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>☛ Survival Instincts</li> <li>☛ Automatic Processes</li> <li>☛ Inflexible Routines</li> <li>☛ Reactions without Thinking</li> <li>☛ Cold-Blooded Actions</li> </ul>

## Appendix D

### Dimensions of Adult Learning

#### Cognitive (Thinking, “Head”)

- Capable of abstract thinking (Piaget)
- Capable of examining and critiquing assumptions (Mezirow, Brookfield, Fowler)
- Capable of discerning significance of information and/or experiences (Regan, Vogel)
- Capable of thinking about thinking—metacognition (Brookfield, Kegan)



#### Affective (Feeling, “Heart”)

- Focuses attention
- Strengthens memory formation and retrieval (Jensen)
- Affects decision-making (Jensen, Hawkins)
- Mediates meaning (Regan)

#### Behavioral (Acting, “Hands”)

- Includes observation of others’ behavior
- Includes imitation of others’ behavior
- Includes practice of desired behavior
- Includes behavior becoming a “way of life”



## Appendix E

### Body Sculpture

Tell the group that they are invited to participate in a “body sculpture” exercise. Ask for a volunteer to help you demonstrate the process. You will serve as the sculptor, and the volunteer will be the “clay.” Follow the directions below.

Ask participants to find a partner and to identify one person as “A” and the other person as “B.” State that the “A’s” will be the sculptors; the “B’s” will be the “clay.” Ask the “A’s” to sculpt the “B’s” into a form of your choice. Examples might be celebration, wonder, humility, and/or love. Next ask the “B’s” to sculpt the “A’s” into a different form of your choice.

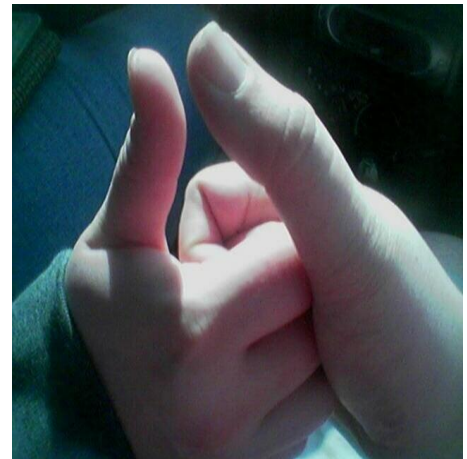
If your group is large, you might divide the participants into small groups of 3 or 4. One person would sculpt the rest of their small group into the form. You can repeat until all participants have been the sculptor.

Give participants an opportunity to view the sculptures. Invite people to express appreciation for efforts by cheering and/or applauding.

### Thumb Lock

Tell the group that they are invited to participate in a “thumb lock” exercise. Ask for a volunteer to help you demonstrate the process. Follow the directions below.

Ask participants to find a partner and to identify one person as “A” and the other person as “B.” Ask “A” and “B” to lock thumbs; tell them that they cannot unlock their thumbs until you call time. When you say “start,” the “A’s” will try to touch their partner in as many places as possible. When they touch their partner, they are “stuck” to them in the place where they touched. The “B’s” should try to keep their partner from touching them anywhere besides their thumbs. After a minute or so, call time. Reverse roles, asking the “B’s” to try and touch their partners, and the “A’s” to avoid being touched.



## Appendix F

### Adult Faith and Discipleship

(JOHN WESLEY)

#### **<sup>1</sup>Prevenient Grace**

<sup>1</sup>God's grace goes before and prepares our hearts for love and acceptance

#### **<sup>2</sup>Justifying Grace**

<sup>2</sup>Leads us to repentance and a sincere desire to change to a Godward direction

#### **<sup>3</sup>Sanctifying Grace**

<sup>3</sup>Shows in a deliberate depth of personal commitment

(SAMPLE DESCRIPTION OF EXPERIENCE IN CHURCH AND WITH FAITH)

#### **Cautious**

Faith / religion are largely unimportant, perhaps unknown;

Some interest shown, but carefully. Perhaps history of pain or distrust; perhaps cautious because of deep unfamiliarity

#### **Curious**

Sufficient interest to merit investigation. Willing to engage some personal experience or experiment, perhaps through a secondary entry point. Perhaps willing because a friend takes interest and involvement by inviting and attending with

#### **Committed (to Something)**

Interested enough for regular attendance at something (may not be worship). Commitment may not be to Christ, but to the pastor, to the person who invited, or to group through which person has entered

#### **Professing**

At a point of personal acceptance of Jesus Christ as Savior; will take some initiative for learning about Christian spiritual practices and involvement in a church community.

#### **Inviting**

Living a life of active discipleship; taking responsibility for being a mentor and model with others to help them develop as Christians; moving toward a life that is entirely within the mind of Christ.

(A HOUSEHOLD IMAGE)

**Across** the street from the house

**On** the porch

**Moving** into the house

**Living** in the house with holiness of heart and life

## Appendix G

### Nurturing Adult Faith and Discipleship

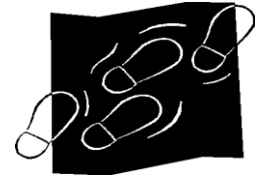
	CAUTIOUS	CURIOUS	COMMITTED	PROFESSING	INVITING
BIBLICAL LITERACY					
PROFICIENCY IN USING SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINES					
REGULAR PARTICIPATION IN SERVICE & OUTREACH					
ABILITY TO ENGAGE IN THEOLOGICAL REFLECTION					
GROWING CONFIDENCE IN TALKING ABOUT ONE'S EXPERIENCE OF GOD					

## Appendix H Now What?



**What was the best idea or insight I got during this workshop?**

**What one step can I take to make the most impact on adult formation and discipleship in my congregation?**



**With whom will I talk about adult faith and discipleship in my congregation?**



**What other help do I need to move ahead with adult formation and discipleship in my congregation?**

# Appendix I

## Adult Formation and Discipleship

### Selected Resources

#### Adult Formation

*Becoming Adult, Becoming Christian—Adult Development and Christian Faith*, (Rev. ed.) James W. Fowler. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1999.

*Keeping in Touch: Christian Formation and Teaching*. Carol F. Krau. Nashville, TN: Discipleship Resources, 1999.

*7 Ways of Teaching the Bible to Adults*. Barbara Bruce. Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2000.

*Start Here: Teaching and Learning with Adults*. Barbara Bruce. Nashville, TN: Discipleship Resources, 2000.

*Toward an Adult Church, A Vision of Faith Formation*. Jane E. Regan. Chicago: Loyola Press, 2002.

#### Brain

*Loving God with All Your Mind*. Thomas Hawkins. Nashville, TN: Discipleship Resources, 2004.

*Teaching to the Brain's Natural Learning Systems*. Barbara K. Given. Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, 2002.

#### Planning

*Guidelines for Adult Ministries, 2009-2012*. Richard H. Gentzler, Jr., Bill Lazor, and Debra Smith. Nashville, TN: Cokesbury.

*Job Descriptions and Leadership Training in the United Methodist Church, 2009-2012*. Betsey Heavner. Nashville, TN: Discipleship Resources.

#### Spiritual Practices

*Devotional Life in the Wesleyan Tradition*. Steve Harper. Nashville, TN: The Upper Room, 1983.

*Eight Life-Enriching Practices of United Methodists*. Henry H. Knight, III. Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2001.

*Soul Feast, An Invitation to the Christian Spiritual Life*. Marjorie J. Thompson. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1995.

