



## Editor's Corner

If your congregation does not have an active program of adult education, your ability to impact the lives of its members is quite limited. Think about it this way – of the 98 hours a week that your church members spend awake you get 30 minutes of their attention during your Sunday sermon. You have 30 minutes every week to influence the other 97 and half hours. Those are not exactly great odds...

This is why pastors of growing or vital congregations develop additional programs to supplement the work they do on Sundays. The work does not have to fit into the old mold of "Sunday School," nor does it have to follow any curricular format. That allows you to tailor programs that fit the personality or spirit of your particular congregation.

For example, one of the Shenandoah Association's most successful congregations has "community" lunches, study opportunities that are open to members of the larger community as well. Folks share a meal at the fellowship hall, while they enjoy a lesson on different aspects of having a Christian life.

Community lunches can be held weekly, bi-weekly, monthly. They do not have to be a big production. People do not come because of the gourmet food. They come for an extra opportunity to spend time with each other. They come for the company. And that gives you a chance to further instruct them.

Another creative adult education program is "soup suppers." Soup suppers are weeknight's community-building events for those who are already members of the congregation. They are usually held in a series of four, five or six (one a week) to help members explore in a deeper fashion specific areas of their faith.

Soup suppers work well for winter months, for instance, when people's options for outdoor activities are quite limited. A rotating number of families can volunteer to bring different kinds of soup on a given night, so that everyone can share in a congregational meal. Leftovers are saved for the church's shut-ins (which also foster community spirit).

Soup suppers are a wonderful forum for spiritual reflection. One Valley congregation held soup suppers during Lent to deepen its members' reflection upon the meaning of the season for them. They can be used to explore the different seasons of a church's calendar that way.

Soup suppers can give you an opportunity to hold a series of talks on important topics, without having to break them down into 30-minute sermons. That same Valley church used a second round of soup suppers to explore Jesus' parables.

The point is – there are ways to build on the sermons that you deliver every Sunday. Creative ways to add, to extend, to deepen the information you bring to your church regularly. This month's newsletter is dedicated to those ways. The hope is that you find in our suggestions something useful to your particular situation.

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This is the last issue of the Ministerium News. I would like to thank you all for the support and suggestions. It has been a privilege to share monthly information about our denomination with you for this past year. My prayers continue with all of you for a fruitful and rewarding ministry here in the valley.

## Education Resources for Adult Study

The UCC has a useful brochure, [Education Resources for Adult Study](#), which lists a number of creative resources for adult program. For instance, there is [What Matters](#), an online series of studies for deepening your church members' faith. [What Matters](#) explores six aspects of our faith as UCC people. The brochure also lists a series of books that can be used for group study in your congregations. It lists resources like [The Thoughtful Christian.com](#) which includes studies about current events, Bible, theology, movies, literature, spirituality, and Christian living for use in a variety of education or devotional settings. There is a list of books on the history of the United Church of Christ that would make a nice supplement to other programs in your congregation. There is the [Kerygma Program](#), a series of studies that has been used by over 16,000 congregations in over 30 denominations. Or [Practicing our Faith](#), a book that explores 12 central Christian practices. These and other resources are readily available when you download the brochure.

## 101 Ideas for Adults to Grow in Faith

Another helpful UCC brochure, [101 Ideas for Adults to Grow in Faith](#), lists books, videos and other materials that you can get from Pilgrim Press to conduct studies with your church members on a series of topics, including: personal growth, the Bible, family life, the Church, spirituality, theology, discipleship, and current issues. A quick survey of the materials listed will give you a sense of the possibilities!

## Older Adult Ministries

A third brochure, [Resources for Ministry with Older Adults](#), gives you a treasure trove of materials that can be used to enrich the quality of life of old adults in your congregation. Books like *A Very Present Help – Psalms Studies for Older Adults*, or *Winter Grace: Aging and Spirituality*, or *The Ageless Spirit – Reflections on Living Life to the Fullest in Midlife and the Years Beyond*, or *Remembering Your Story: Creating Your Own Spiritual Autobiography*. There are useful books to help you set up the programs for the old adults of your congregation as well. Books like *Engaging in Ministry with Older Adults; Aging, Spirituality and Religion, A Handbook* (2 volumes); *Designing an Older Adult Ministry; The Graying of the Church, A Leader's Guide for Older Adult Ministry in The United Methodist Church*; or *Understanding the Senior Adult: A Tool for Wholistic Ministry*.

## Being a United Church Educator

If you want a one-stop-does-it-all website for Christian Education ideas, look no further. The webpage for the [Association of United Church Educators](#) is chock-full of information. The AUCE not only provides ministers with lots of printed materials, but they also inform you of the UCC's standards for certifying ministers or lay leaders in Christian Education (they have an online guide on the process as well, entitled [Called To Educational and Formational Ministries: A Guide for Local Churches, Educators, and Youth Workers](#)). At the AUCE page there are links to faith formation materials, Christian education for children and families, worship resources for Christian Education Sunday, curriculum resources, and UCC materials concerning inclusive language, learning disabilities ministries, open and affirming ministries, and other practices of faith. The thing I found most useful was a brochure on the [core areas of knowledge for local church educators](#). It is a very thorough description of the essential materials needed to equip someone to do the work of spiritual formation and Christian education at the congregational level.