

JBL CASE STUDY FOR ADAPTATION OF THE CATECHUMENAL PROCESS

IN: *ELCA, urban Seattle,*

Background

1. What four characteristics best describe your church community, especially what makes you unique?
 - a. Progressive yet rooted in tradition and Lutheran ethos
 - b. Mid to Upper Class
 - c. Strong presence in neighborhood
 - d. Norwegian roots but WELL BEYOND that. Now the community reflects ethnic and religious diversity. Many have come from variety of traditions (Roman Catholic, Anglican, Presbyterian, Methodist, Nazarene, etc.)
2. What is the biggest challenge facing your community?

How to be an advocate for racial justice in this time and place and learning to be church in an “online, virtual world.”

Pattern of the catechumenal process

3. How does an inquirer connect with your community? How is initial contact made?

Typically, the pastor makes the first contact after he or she has completed a “Count Me In” form from the Sunday worship bulletin. If they don’t fill them out, folks are greeted over a period of time and *become* known and initial meetings are arranged.
4. How do you figure out what their background is? And what they are seeking?

They are asked in the initial conversation.
5. How do they get to know other inquirers?

Invited to an initial gathering to introduce people to the process. Then the inquiry phase begins with all inquirers. We call it the “Front Porch.”
6. What is a typical format for a gathering?? How long does it usually last?

We begin with a shared meal. Dinner for years. Last year we changed to lunch. There is often a brief presentation and then small groups. The entire time is no more than two hours.



7. Who serve as their catechists and mentors through the process? Lay people? Clergy?

Catechists and mentors are all laypersons.

8. When do you provide them with sponsors as companions and support?

Usually near the end of the “Front Porch” just before the process begins in earnest.

Stages of the growth in the catechumenal process

9. When are they ready to be recognized by the congregation as seekers/hearers/catechumens?

At the Rite of Welcome in January.

10. How do your gatherings help them to encounter the Word of God, especially as it is found in the lectionary?

The standard approach is reflection on the Gospel reading for the upcoming Sunday.

11. What additional topics from Christian tradition and practice do you try to share with them in your gatherings?

Shape of the liturgy, creeds, shape of the Bible, reflection on liturgical texts and practices

Lent includes reflection on the gifts that are presented at the rites ... Creed, Lord’s Prayer, Worship Book AND includes reflection upon and spiritual practices around the renunciations.

12. When are they ready to be recognized by the congregation as candidates for Baptism? How do your gatherings use the Word to open their minds and hearts to a deeper sense both of repentance and of Jesus’s love?

Baptismal candidates participate in the Rite of Enrollment on 1 Lent. We’ve asked them to discern what they need to renounce and be in conversation with their sponsors and small groups around that. Also, there is sustained reflection on the rites. The Gospel readings from John (Year A) are critical to this piece.



13. How does the period of intense preparation prepare them to make the Baptismal Covenant/Promises?

Renunciations – personal, communal, cosmic – and accent on the Creed as a statement of trust that connects to the church universal and the Trinity

14. How have you best managed to involve the participants in the life of your community, especially in service to the world?

Mystagogy during Easter reflects upon the Great Vigil and the baptismal promises. Most recently, we've started trying to implement the newly baptized and newly affirmed into a process during Easter to help them develop a "Rule of Life."

15. How have the various rituals of the catechumenate affected your participants?

Extremely positive.

16. How have the various rituals of the catechumenate affected the congregation?

Very positive.

Advice

17. What is the most important bit of advice that you have for another practitioner in your situation?

Get to know this congregation and how they've been doing the Catechumenate. Where I see opportunities for change and growth, I have had to learn to step back a bit and have learned, too, that whatever gifts I bring will be shared toward incremental change. It's a lovely process and this congregation has been doing it a very long time. Shaking some of that loose for something richer and deeper isn't always easy. Likewise, if you begin the process, go SLOW.

