

# **NEW MEMBER FORMATION**

## **BASIC CHRISTIANITY**

---

A MODEL DEVELOPED BY  
BISHOP CLAUDE PAYNE



# THEOLOGY

---

- Spiritual treasure is stored in our souls and encompasses all past encounters or perceptions of the divine from our birth to the present
- Christ is our source of spiritual power and guidance and is the Church's greatest asset
- The Church is God's vehicle for identifying and nurturing this source, blessing those who build upon it and directing them to bless others
- The Jesus Movement is the expression of this mission
- Christianity is caught and then taught
- Many Christians are well-equipped with spiritual treasure, but need nurture for recognition and sharing
- The goal is to equip individual seekers for a pilgrimage through life and into eternity

# CURRENT SETTING

---

- Christianity, especially the westernized part, is in decline in number and influence- offers huge missionary opportunity
- Christian Formation- the formation of new and renewed Christians- is at the heart of recovery
- Team structure- clergy and laity with sharing of spiritual disciplines and faith stories at its core
- Formation is most powerfully done locally and in a team setting, utilizing peer engagement led by a Christian Formation team of clergy and trained laity
- “A team can far better deliver basic Christianity than can a pastor teaching alone, for a newcomer’s needs are on many levels. When they find their longings and needs addressed, their joy skyrockets and their gratitude soars” (Bishop Payne).



# CHURCH OF THE HEAVENLY REST

---

- The model has been tested at the Church of the Heavenly Rest, Abilene in the Diocese of Northwest Texas (2 sessions yearly for 3 years)
- In January, Bishop Mayer hosted a clergy group from the dioceses he leads and the Heavenly Rest Team led them through this formation model
- Team consists of: Co-coordinators (one clergy, one lay), Recruiters, Registrars, Greeters, and Table Mentors
- Team meetings once a week
- Averaging 15 Confirmations/Receptions per semester



# CLASS SESSIONS

---

- Breakfast! Greeting time
- Begin with prayer (we have talked about having table leaders lead prayer at tables) and “the questions” for the day. Examples of questions: What role has the Bible played in your life? How do the Holy Scriptures attract or discourage you?; Why do you pray? What is your experience of prayer?; What is your experience with Holy Eucharist? How does it affect your life?
- 10 minute table discussion
- 30 minute presentation, including the presenters’ sharing of how he or she interprets scripture
- 10-15 minute wrap-up at table



# TEAM STRUCTURE

---

- **Co-coordinators-** one clergy, one lay
- **Recruiters-** usually 2, extroverted, welcoming, willing to coordinate inviting people to class
- **Registrars-** left-brained, enjoys gathering and organizing information, reports to team meeting each week
- **Table mentors-** lay people, trained to facilitate discussion, train more than the number needed to cover absences
- **Greeters-** at sign in table with registrar or near door, help get name tags and find a seat, welcome/hospitality
- **Commitment=** three training sessions (theology, sharing faith stories, nuts and bolts), weekly class participation, weekly meetings



# PARTICIPANT REFLECTIONS- WHAT HAVE YOU FOUND THROUGH THIS CLASS?

---

- “I found love, acceptance, support, peace, community, understanding, beautiful traditions. We are all one body in the love of Christ.”
- “I found real love and acceptance.”
- “I found a family, lots of love, great peace.”
- “The beauty of ancient worship, history, tradition, love”
- “I found beauty- reflects God’s creation, generosity- inclusion of people from all walks, and reverence.”

# TEAM MEMBERS' REFLECTIONS ON TEAM MEETINGS

---

- This time together is a true spiritual blessing to each of us. We prepare for the Sunday topic and pray for guidance and for each of our participants. This time is for discussion and reflection on the topic for the week and sharing our own personal spiritual treasures related to the topic. This enables us to better serve our participants on Sunday as we lead the discussion at the tables. The pearls of wisdom that are gathered at this meeting each week are truly gifts from God. - Kathy Balch
- As a unit this is an opportunity each week to touch base. We give feedback on what works at each other's tables, stories we heard, and if there is concern over any newcomer, we rally to help in any way we can- support, more contact if needed. Having an opportunity to go over the next class ahead of time leaves us all more equipped to answer questions from newcomers and instills more confidence each week in who we are, what we believe in and why we believe the way we do. It's refreshing to also hear our varied upbringings and come to a clearer understanding of everyone's vantage point. – Mary Reyes

# RESOURCES

---

- Bishop Payne's Book *Reclaiming Christianity* comes out this summer at General Convention
- Church of the Heavenly Rest team- available to help with guidance and implementation
- Claire Makins, curate
- <http://newmemberformation.org>