**The Ministry of Adult Spiritual Growth of Forest Hill Church:**

**Mission, Vision, Values, and Responsibilities**

**l. MISSION**

**What is the Ministry of Spiritual Growth?**

The Ministry of Spiritual growth is a group of people, including elected elders and other volunteers, who oversee adult Christian education and spiritual formation for Forest Hill Church.

In the most general sense, adult Christian education and spiritual formation involve all experiences of the congregation that transform it into the Beloved Community, the Body of Christ, displaying God’s love to all both within and outside the walls of the church. “Everything we do as church is curriculum.” (Lee, 2013, p.60)

In a more specific sense, the Ministry of Spiritual Growth at Forest Hill Church designs and promotes learning opportunities for adults to learn the Christian story, both ancient and present, to develop the skills they need to live out their faith as members of a covenant community, and to reflect on that story in order to live self-aware in its truth.” (Aleshire, 1988, p. 701-2)

**What exactly does the Ministry of Spiritual Growth at Forest Hill Church do?**

1. The Ministry of Spiritual Growth is responsible for planning, promoting, providing, and evaluating opportunities for adults to learn and mature as Christians.
2. These opportunities can take many forms. Examples can include:
   * Traditional study and discussion groups, such as those focused on the Bible, theology, church history, or a book.
   * Experiential workshops for spiritual practices.
   * Participation in performing, visual, and musical arts.
   * Field trips or pilgrimages.
3. Learning opportunities at Forest Hill Church can be designed for anyone within the congregation and larger community.
4. The Ministry is responsible for providing opportunities for Christian education and spiritual formation in ALL core areas of content on a regular basis, including:
   * **Bible study,** Bible study skills, application to our lives, theology and history.
   * **Spiritual formation**, i.e., lifelong commitment to spiritual growth through both contemplative and active practice of spiritual disciplines.
   * **Christian discipleship,** i.e., knowledge and practices for Christian living, both for newly baptized and for long-term members.
   * **Leadership development,** such as skills for leading classes, small groups, and ministries.
   * **Public and social witness***,* such as racial equity knowledge and practices; social action background and processes leading to action in our surrounding community; and practices for living in a Covenant Community.
5. *Note*: Learning opportunities may be designed by members who are serving on the Ministry of Spiritual Growth or by the pastors, another Ministry, or any other group in the church. (See Sections IV.2-3 below.)

**ll. VISION**

By the end of five years (i.e., in mid-2026), the Ministry of Spiritual Growth will have:

* Expanded both the number and the types of learning opportunities for adults.
* Implemented an evaluation system for all learning opportunities.
* Increased participation in learning opportunities.
* Increased participation of facilitators from the congregation for a wide variety of learning opportunities.
* Provided education for facilitators and teachers.

1. **VALUES**

We believe that we should:

* **Worship and enjoy God.** The highest purpose of life for humans is to worship God and enjoy God forever. (Paraphrased from The Westminster Shorter Catechism.) Therefore, all who work in the Ministry as Elders, Elected Leaders, Teachers, or Facilitators attend worship services regularly.
* **Learn to be like Jesus.** Jesus was a respected Teacher, and yet he washed his disciples’ feet, an act of servanthood. He taught with compassion, using the scriptures, parables, and clear interpretive statements. His teaching was often linked to healings. We strive to become servant leaders, to embody the love of Jesus and to learn from his teaching methods.
* **Respond to the Holy Spirit.** The Holy Spirit transforms and liberates us. In our teaching, we seek to respond to the Holy Spirit transforming and liberating both ourselves and the learners in our classes and groups.
* **Engage in lifelong learning.** All adult Christians need lifelong Christian education and spiritual formation. Therefore, teachers and facilitators must themselves continue their own lifelong learning.
* **Support lifelong growth in discipleship for people in many circumstances.** People in different age groups and life situations need teaching and companionship for their particular conditions. For example, new parents, people who are seeking jobs, and caregivers for older adults all need education and spiritual formation with a focus on their situations. We provide opportunities for such groups to learn together and share with others in similar situations.
* **Support diverse learning styles and methods.**  A wide range of learning styles and needs typically exists within any group of people. Therefore, we use a variety of educational methods to meet everyone's Christian education and spiritual formation needs. Education for teachers and facilitators will include useful perspectives on theory and effective practices for teaching and facilitating groups.
* **Address the whole range of human existence: spirit, mind, emotions, and body.** All people have many dimensions, including spirit, mind, emotions, and body. Christian education and spiritual formation need to address all of these human dimensions.
* **Welcome and proactively recruit a wide variety of teachers:** We actively encourage many people to use leadership gifts for teaching, and we offer leadership education opportunities on a regular basis.
* **Welcome all people as both teachers and learners.** We acknowledge all teachers and all learners as mutual participants in a reciprocal teaching-learning process.
* **Use technology wisely**. We use technology as a tool to support our goals and values,extend our reach, and fulfill our greater mission. We will offer opportunities to learn how to use technology to enhance learning and build community.

1. **RESPONSIBILITIES**

The Ministry of Spiritual Growth will:

1. Regularly plan, implement, and evaluate offerings for each of the core content areas. (See Sections I.2-4 above.)



1. Facilitate and support educational offerings by other ministries, groups and our pastors.
2. Create a simple, user-friendly process for proposing a new class or group.
   * Create guidelines for proposing and approving new classes.
   * Provide access to mentoring and resources about how to create and run an effective class, small group, Bible study, or workshop.
   * Collaborate with people who have an idea for a new class or workshop, to find resources for designing the class. Resources could include books, prepared class materials (such as those available from PCUSA or Kerygma), or online or community resources.
   * Coordinate scheduling of all educational events to avoid conflicts
   * Publicize the offerings both internally and externally.
   * Track attendance and evaluations that are to be collected by the facilitator of each event.
3. Make recommendations for library purchases.
4. Keep the Ministry’s section of the church website up-to-date.

**The Team** who wrote this statement through a collaborative process included: Leslie Clement, Patricia Jenkins, Jean Reinhold, Mark Wedell, Ann Williams, and Ronald Zimmerman, along with our co-pastors, the Reverend Veronica Goines and the Reverend John Lentz. All had been involved in the past with the former Ministry of Adult Education and Spiritual Formation.

**Bibliography**

1. Aleshire, D. (1988). Finding Eagles in the Turkeys’ Nest: Pastoral Theology and Christian Education. Review & Expositor, 85(4), 695–709. <https://doi.org/10.1177/003463738808500409>
2. Borg, Marcus. (2004) *The Heart of Christianity.* HarperCollins Publishers: New York.
3. Everist, Norma Cook. (2002) *The Church as Learning Community.* Abingdon Press: Nashville, TN.
4. Goto, Courtney T. (2016) *The Grace of Playing.* Pickwick Publications: Eugene, OR.
5. Lee, Boyung. (2013) *Transforming Congregations Through Community.* Westminster John Knoix Press: Louisville, KY.
6. Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). (2016) The Westminster Shorter Catechism, in *The Book of Confessions.* Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.): Louisville, KY.
7. Seymour, Jack L. (1997) *Mapping Christian Education.* Abingdon Press: Nashville, TN.
8. Tye, Karen. (2000) *Basics of Christian Education.* Chalice Press: Nashville, TN.
9. Westerhoff, John H. (2000) *Will Our Children Have Faith, revised edition.* Morehouse Publishing: Harrisburg, PA.