

Forming Disciples: St. Paul's Tradition of Adult Christian Education

By Amy Mangram



For much of its history, St. Paul's has viewed Christian education as an essential part of parish life, helping people connect their faith to the challenges of the world around them. Through a variety of adult education programs, the parish has encouraged both spiritual growth and active engagement with the wider community. Two notable initiatives illustrate this commitment.

In the fall of 1975, under the leadership of the Rev. William Hale, St. Paul's launched an ambitious educational series titled "The Ages of Humanity." The program explored the church's role in the community, its responsibility in addressing contemporary social issues, and the call for Christians to respond with justice and compassion. The series featured speakers from local colleges, nonprofit organizations, the Diocese of Central New York, and neighboring parishes. Through discussion and reflection, participants were encouraged to consider how their faith could guide them in addressing the challenges of their time.

A new chapter in adult formation began in 1999 with the creation of the School of Christian Living, led by the Rev. Canon Martha Metzler. Supported by a grant from the Trinity Foundation of Trinity Church Wall Street, the program was to help people live as active disciples of Christ in the modern world.

Recognizing that living faithfully often meant "swimming against the cultural tide," Rev. Metzler emphasized spiritual growth, mutual support, and service to others. Courses such as Praying the Beatitudes: Learning to Pray with the Poor and Disciples of Christ in Community challenged participants to deepen their faith while responding to the needs of the hungry, poor, homeless, sick, and imprisoned. As Rev. Metzler explained, "The idea is the transformation of individuals to transform the world," a vision that reflects St. Paul's enduring commitment to education, discipleship, and service.