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Cover photo taken by Alexis Fortuna Caoili at Church of the Redeemer in Cincinnati, Ohio.

Stay Connected
Dear Friends in Christ,

When I first started at Forward Movement eight years ago, I spent a lot of time on the road asking the same question over and over again of everyone I met. “What would help you in your spiritual journey?” Again and again, I heard that people wanted to have conversations about faith and practice faith in their homes, but they weren’t sure where to begin. We’ve been working to meet this need for the last several years and are happy to share the results with you in this issue.

You’ll read about Grow Christians, our website for families practicing faith at home. You’ll learn about our partnership with Forma, in an initiative called Faith @ Home, a lectionary-based reading and discussion site for intergenerational conversations about scripture and the liturgical year. And you’ll see the complete set of resources in our Living Discipleship curricula, a collection of free courses for children, youth, and adults for use in congregations.

Most of our new efforts to share the Good News of God’s grace and mercy do not generate revenue, so we rely on donor support to reach people of all ages with the Gospel of Jesus Christ. I hope you’ll be inspired by this issue of Odyssey—inspired in your own faith life and inspired to give generously to support this work of forming disciples of Jesus Christ.

There is so much more we could do. We need your continued prayers and your gifts to expand and deepen our work.

Yours faithfully,

Scott Gunn, Executive Director
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Grow Christians

Allison Liles

Three and a half years ago Forward Movement launched a pilot program with Plainsong Farm entitled Grow Christians. At growchristians.org, founding editor Nurya Love Parish created an “unabashedly Episcopal” online space where parents could reflect on practicing faith at home with their children. She dreamed that it would be a space where authors could share recipes and crafts to celebrate the liturgical calendar from an Episcopal perspective. It would be a place where Episcopal grandparents, godparents, and lay ministers could share triumphs and challenges in their faith formation with children and teenagers.

From Nurya’s very first post in January of 2016, it became clear that Episcopalians yearned for this community. Immediately, people commented on how much they needed Grow Christians. They wish it had been around decades ago and were grateful to find it after years of searching for the elusive Episcopal parenting blog. “I think it’s so important that we have a place where we can gather, share ideas and inspire each other,” current Grow Christians blogger Heather Sleightholm commented in the early days. “I hope that this site continues on a year-round basis so
that we can get inspired through all the seasons of the church calendar!” Thankfully, it did.

I became an early reader and supporter of Grow Christians. I began introducing feast days and commemorations of saints to my young, curious children after reading about them on Grow Christians. I brought my kids with me to Ash Wednesday and Good Friday services that year, after reading encouraging posts from Derek Olsen and Nurya Love Parish. I learned of books and Bibles to share with my children and godchildren, and better ways to welcome and affirm other people’s children while worshiping at church. Grow Christians became my primary parenting resource.

I stepped into the role of editor in May 2018, both continuing and evolving the community Nurya created. During my first week on the job, I spoke with every Grow Christians author to ask three questions.
1. Do you want to continue contributing to Grow Christians?
2. What topics do you prefer to write about for Grow Christians?
3. Do you know Episcopalians who would add a different perspective to our community?
These three questions proved to be highly valuable as I sought to diversify our community. I wanted to Grow Christians to expand its content by offering posts written by parents raising neuro-atypical children and non-binary children and children of color. I wanted Grow Christians to feature more lay authors and male authors and authors of color. And slowly, we are getting there. With each passing month, the Grow Christians community better reflects the beautifully diverse kingdom of God.

Nurya’s dream of an online faith at home community for Episcopalians has come true. We ask difficult questions and receive honest, faithful answers. We are a community connected even though few of us have ever met in person. This ministry of Forward Movement remains an invaluable, unique offering for Episcopalians, and I invite you to join us by following us on Facebook or subscribing to receive posts by email at growchristians.org.

New authors and guest posts are always welcome and also appreciated! If you know someone committed to fostering faith at home, please share growchristians.org with them. If you feel compelled to write yourself, send it my way! Find writing guidelines and submission requirements at http://www.growchristians.org/write-for-us/.

The Rev. Allison Sandlin Liles is wife, mother, peacemaker and priest learning navigate life in the suburban wilds of Dallas. After working as Episcopal Peace Fellowship’s Executive Director for six years, Allison has re-entered parish ministry in the Diocese of Fort Worth. She currently serves as the Priest in Charge of St. Stephen’s Episcopal Church in Hurst, Texas.
I love the blog posts on Grow Christians! They include a variety of voices, share thoughtful reflections, and suggest concrete ministry resources and ideas. Thank you for this great ministry!

I developed a time for daily devotion and prayer several years ago. Grow Christians has been a huge part of our devotional time. As seniors - we’re both over 75 - it’s sometimes difficult to relate to the topic, but it’s comforting to know there exist followers of Christ, who struggle, as did we, raising a family. Blessings to all and may the peace of the Lord be always with us.

A Prayer for Forward Movement

O God, we ask your guidance and blessing for the Forward Movement of your church. Use it, we pray, to open our eyes to your glory and to the opportunities that lie before the church to reach people everywhere with the good news of Christ. Grant that the leaders of Forward Movement may be both wise and daring disciples, and stir up in us the will to share joyfully in this work with our prayers and gifts. Let not our purpose grow slack, that the nations of this world may become one holy people under the kingship of our Lord Jesus Christ. This we ask in his name. Amen.
Grow Christians blog post:
The Miraculous Dinnertime Question Jar

I love how this post shares such a practical, easy to do formation tool for families of all ages. Build lasting memories with your loved ones, youth group, or vestry. -Miriam

Christian Simmers’ recent post, The Prodigal Son at Dinnertime, resonated with me on so many levels. We, too, have experienced more contention, competition, and sibling provocation at the dinner table than almost anywhere else in our daily lives (with the possible exception of who gets to ride ‘shotgun,’ which usually leads to physical blows and wrestling matches in parking lots). Even rolling the prayer cube and reaching for one another’s hands for grace had become a bone over which our two boys could growl and snarl.

Several years ago, the Holy Spirit sent me, via the internet, of course, a simple activity to ease dinner table tension by building relationship through storytelling. A mason jar is minimally decorated and contains slips of paper in three colors. Each miraculous little slip holds one question. The colors instruct who at the table will answer the question. The questions are designed to evoke a story that will further our understandings of one another and deepen our relationships.
Inspired, I bought mason jars and ribbon, brainstormed questions which I typed and printed on their appropriate color-coded papers, copied and cut for what felt like hours. I presented the jars as gifts to the families of our small parish, and they all loved them. I did not bring one home. At least, not at first. I was convinced that this wonderful and cute gift would be a godsend in every home but my own. I was convinced that our boys would never choose questions and stories over the opportunity to tease, accuse, and provoke each other over their tacos.

And then my youngest, having watched me lovingly hot glue the ribbon and the labels on everyone else’s Question Jar, asked if we could have one. And that night he got us to open it. And the world changed – well for half an hour at least – and it was good. I mean, really good...so good...because suddenly we were all talking about things that matter, and listening to each other’s answers, and having a – wait for it – conversation.

Unlike anything else we ever tried to improve conversation and relations between our two very different boys, the questions in that little mason jar created laughter and understanding. We would sit down to dinner, someone would begin to gripe or tease or otherwise misbehave, and a small hand would reach for the jar. Miraculously, NO ONE ever refused to engage.
We are our stories, and we create an understanding of our world and our place in it by telling and hearing one another’s’ stories. Our boys never tire of hearing how we struggled, triumphed, dreamed, failed, and persevered, especially at their respective ages. Answering a question like “What made you laugh out loud today?” brings us together in ways we couldn’t have predicted.

You need:
- A mason jar – we used the 16oz size
- Printer paper in 3 colors, plus 1 page white paper for the label
- Scissors or office paper cutter
- Ribbon (optional)
- Hot glue gun (optional)

Instructions:
- Print the provided questions, using a different color paper for each category. Make a label for the front of the jar because as parents, our memories are totally shot.
- Cut the printed pages so each question is on its own on a slip of colored paper. Mix all the questions and stuff them in the jar. Seriously, you can roll or fold them up all neat and tidy if you like, but no one will care, and they will all end up stuffed in there eventually anyway. Cut several blank slips of paper in each color, because sometimes we think of new questions as we’re answering these questions.
- Cut a length of ribbon and hot glue it to the top of the jar. Or the lid. Or don’t – it’s totally up to you and your tolerance for cute DIY crafting.
- Place the finished jar on the dinner table and open it up whenever mealtime feels like it’s devolving into an episode of bad reality television
- Prepare to be awestruck, now and then, by the depth, humor, and compassion your children hold. Some of your stories will become their new touchstones.

Visit the blog post online for a link to a starter pack of questions. https://tinyurl.com/y57tjdxs
Your Monthly Gift Makes a Difference

Your monthly gift sustains us year-round and helps us send *Forward Day by Day* to all who want and need it. Visit www.ForwardMovement.org to donate, or mail your gift to Forward Movement, 412 Sycamore Street, Cincinnati, Ohio 45202.

All gifts are tax-deductible.

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When I was a child, some of the most potent moments of faith formation happened at home. The conversations I had with my family taught me so much about God, faith, and the Church. These conversations taught me more than I could ever learn in a Sunday school classroom or Confirmation class. Faith formation is not just the task of a parish or Christian educator. Having conversations about faith outside of a worship service or formation class is essential, and congregations need to provide families with the resources to practice having conversations about faith at home.

Faith @ Home is a resource that seeks to provide families with a framework for talking about faith at home. Faith @ Home invites families of all shapes and sizes to make faith conversations a part of
everyday life by reading, reflecting, and responding together to texts from the Revised Common Lectionary. During Lent 2019, we also released a special series of devotions inspired by the practices found in the Way of Love.

Faith @ Home is a free resource, sent weekly by email. Each week’s email includes four devotions that invite family and friends to connect to Scripture by using the mind (reading), heart (reflection), and body (response). Our writers come from diverse backgrounds: clergy and lay, parents, Christian educators, authors and bloggers, and other voices in the Church. Each writer has a different story to tell and speaks to one of four age groups: littles, elementary, high school, and adult.

Faith @ Home launched in 2018 and has grown to reach over 650 subscribers every week thanks to a partnership between Forma and Forward Movement. We share resources, writers, and content to reach as many families as possible with this resource.

Visit our website at www.dofaithathome.org to sign up for the weekly emails or to access our archive of past devotions.

Victoria Hoppes is the Camp Director at Waycross Camp and Conference Center and the Youth Ministry Coordinator for the Episcopal Diocese of Indianapolis. She has ministry experience with youth, family, and camping programs at both the parish and diocesan levels. You can follow Victoria on her website, www.ministryincontext.com, or on social media (@vlhoppes).

Stay Connected

Reflect: Do you have a favorite item? Is there something that feels like a treasure to you? Something that you have that you love, and that brings you joy? What is it? Has anyone ever taken or used your favorite thing without asking?

Almost everyone has had the experience of having a favorite toy when young. Most of us have experienced when someone started to play with it without asking. It feels unfair. We want a teacher or a parent or anyone to come in and point out how wrong it is. And usually, the response is that we should learn to share. Maybe when this happens, we think it would be better never to have to share again. How great would it be if you could keep all of your favorite things in a room where only you could use them! When you are not there, you could lock the room, and no one else could get to them. All of your treasures would be safe.

Jesus talks about the things we treasure. Jesus and God do not think there is anything wrong with having favorite things: pretty things, expensive things, or any other thing we like. But Jesus and God do worry about when we want to keep our treasures all to ourselves. Jesus reminds us in the reading from Luke that treasure is not a thing (like a favorite toy), but it is the love we have for the thing and the joy the thing brings us. The best treasures are more valuable when we share the love we have and the joy they bring with others.

Respond: Share one of your treasures with someone. Tell why you love it and why it brings you joy. Ask what they love and what brings them joy. Offer to share your treasure with them and suggest that they share their treasure with you if they want.
About our contributor: Patrick Kangrga

Patrick Christopher Kangrga is the Associate for Youth Ministries at Trinity Episcopal Church in Menlo Park, California. Originally from Arkansas, he left home to participate in two years of the Episcopal Service Corps in Maryland and Massachusetts. After this came the beginning of his lay-professional journey with positions at parish and diocesan levels in New York and New Jersey. He has primarily served youth, with a foray into children’s ministry.

To read more and sign up to receive weekly reflections, visit https://www.dofaithathome.org/

MATCH THE SYMBOLS

- Baptism
- Marriage
- Ordination
- Eucharist
- Healing
- Confession
- Confirmation

From Stepping out in Faith: Teaching Children Episcopal Beliefs and Practices by Jerusalem Greer
I began working at Forward Movement shortly after the ministry received the Constable Grant for a bold initiative to provide congregations—especially small ones—with tools for Christian formation. As managing editor for the past 6 ½ years, I’ve been a part of the production of these expansive materials. The Living Discipleship curriculum features three full years of formation materials: for adults, youth, and children, in English and Spanish. In addition to the downloadable materials for participants and youth, the development of this curriculum led to the publication of seven books—including Forward Movement’s best-selling and widely used *Walk in Love: Episcopal Beliefs & Practices*. Through our ministry of ChurchNext, we’ve offered online courses to augment and enhance the experience. The Constable Grant also provided the funds for *Transforming Questions*, an adult formation course designed to help us move deeper into life in Christ. An excellent companion book, *Faithful Questions*, emerged from this initiative too.

Whew. That’s a lot of work for our small but mighty Forward Movement team! Sometimes we struggled. But we experienced extraordinary moments along the way. We learned about the remarkable lives of saints and wrestled with profound questions of faith. We engaged in deep listening to the needs of the wider church.

Our amazingly talented and dedicated team presented a body of work that we pray will help form generations of Christians in our beloved Episcopal tradition—and beyond.
CELEBRATING THE SAINTS
Meet the Saints Family Storybook

LIVING DISCIPLESHIP
STEPPING OUT IN FAITH: TEACHING CHILDREN EPISCOPAL BELIEFS & PRACTICES
Adult Facilitator Guide
Jerusalem Jackson Greer
Illustrations by Geri Shields

FORWARD MOVEMENT
VIVIR EL DISCIPULADO:
PRACTIQUEMOS NUESTRA FE
Guía para facilitar clases para adultos
Melody Wilson Shobe
Scott Gunn

EXPLORING THE BIBLE
Adult Facilitator Guide
Melody Wilson Shobe

Anden en amor
Creencias y prácticas episcopales
Scott Gunn y Melody Wilson Shobe

PATHWAYS OF FAITH
AN ALL-AGES COLORING BOOK
ILLUSTRATIONS BY ROGER SPEER

More resources for the journey at ForwardMovement.org
When it comes to our ultimate evaluation of this work, I hope we’ll measure its success through the lens of love and life in Christ: by those inspired to holy work by the witness of the saints, by children who hear and come to love the stories of the Bible, and by congregations newly dedicated to learning and understanding our rich traditions. We’re thankful for the opportunity to create resources that inspire, challenge, strengthen, and nurture disciples as we seek a living, loving, and life-giving relationship with Christ.

Richelle Thompson serves as deputy director and managing editor at Forward Movement.

An adult Bible study class at Holy Trinity Episcopal Church in Swanson, Vermont used *Pathways of Faith: An All-Ages Coloring Book* to enhance their scripture reflections. They scanned each person’s coloring and transferred them onto cloth to make a quilt for their chapel wall. *Pathways of Faith* is an adult coloring book that accompanies *The Path: a journey through the Bible*. We love saying yes to the frequent requests for free copies of Pathways of Faith by incarcerated men and women.
Living Discipleship is a FREE all-ages curriculum series to help each of us follow Jesus and know more fully the hope, joy, and grace of a faithful life.

Living Discipleship offers three years of content—each year can be stand-alone or offered in any order. The materials provide guides for facilitators and participants for 26 sessions. Through teaching, sharing, and exploring, participants learn how the church and its traditions support the journey of every follower of Jesus. Offered in both English and Spanish.

**EXPLORING THE BIBLE** takes participants on a journey through the scriptures, from Genesis to Revelation. By focusing on the vast narrative of the Bible, we can see the great story of God’s love from creation, through the life of Jesus Christ, and in our own time, guided by the Holy Spirit.

**PRACTICING OUR FAITH** offers a survey of the basic beliefs and practices of The Episcopal Church, focused especially on *The Book of Common Prayer* and our liturgical and sacramental traditions.

**CELEBRATING THE SAINTS** shows how Christ’s light has shone brightly in the lives of men and women through the centuries. In our journey with the saints, we also learn something of our history as we look at monks, missionaries, prophets, doctors, evangelists, and more.

*This series is offered as a FREE DOWNLOAD to any congregation.*

Learn more at [www.LivingDiscipleship-FM.org](http://www.LivingDiscipleship-FM.org)
Prison Ministry

Miriam McKenney

Robert reads Forward Day by Day cover to cover. When he sees a book that interests him, he requests it and we send it to him. Robert’s most recent letter reminds me of so many letters we get. The person writing doesn’t want to have to ask and doesn’t want to ask too much. If they have the courage to ask, they have no expectation that they will get what they ask for. They understand if we can’t give them what they want. Granted, there are a few demanding requests, but most of the letters are like this one.

Dear Ms. McKenney,

Thank you for your prayers and for sending me the Forward Day by Day. You have sent me many wonderful things to read, all of which I appreciate. I do not want to ask too much, but if at all possible, I would like to receive Faith with a Twist which I saw advertised in this issue. I taught the Japanese art of Aikido as a ministry at my church (St. George Episcopal) for many years, and used it to teach Christian principles. I would love to see how that is being done using yoga. If you cannot send me the book, I understand, but if you do send it, I will gratefully read it and give it a good home.

I thank you very much for all that you do.

Blessings,
Robert
Practicing the Way of Love means turning toward God each day and asking what we can do to follow God’s call and recognize the spirit moving in our lives. Your generosity means I could send Robert this response.

Dear Robert,

Thank you for your letter! I enjoyed reading about your experience teaching Aikido at St. George.

We would love to send you a copy of Faith with a Twist. The generosity of our donors makes it possible for us to say yes to your request. If you find that others would also like a copy, let us know. We are happy to send them!

Keep us in your prayers, as you are in ours.

Peace,
Miriam

Thank you for hearing God’s call and answering it with your gift to our ministry. Robert and many others appreciate it!

Miriam McKenney serves as development director at Forward Movement and youth minister at Calvary Episcopal Church in Cincinnati.
RenewalWorks started six years ago, using a process to help congregations move forward in the journey of faith. The process begins with a realistic assessment of where congregants are in the spiritual journey because you can’t get from “here to there” without a pretty clear idea of where “here” is. For congregations, that process involves an online, confidential inventory for every parishioner to take. That information is combined to give a snapshot of the congregation. We’ve worked with over 300 congregations, and the work has been rewarding.

But from the start, we heard one persistent question: Can I know what the inventory says about me, about my spiritual journey? We have not been able to provide that individual snapshot. Until now.

We are excited to introduce RenewalWorks For Me, a free resource from Forward Movement. Here’s how it works. An individual takes an online inventory, a shorter version of the inventory offered in the RenewalWorks process. That immediately generates an email which, based on research with thousands of respondents, suggests where a person might be in their Christian spiritual development. Are they exploring the faith? Are they deeply centered in the faith? Are they stalled? With that readout, a person can then opt to receive a series of 8 emails, one a week providing a spiritual plan based on the individual’s spiritual profile. These emails suggest specific practices which might help that person move forward in faith, go deeper in faith. In some ways, we think of it as a spiritual fitness tracker.
We’re excited to offer this free resource as a ministry to the church. It’s all part of our ongoing commitment to spiritual growth. Give it a try and tell us what you think! Learn more at http://renewalworks.org/resources/rw4me/.

The Rev. Jay Sidebotham is the Director of RenewalWorks. He now serves as associate rector at St. James’ Parish in Wilmington, NC.