



LIVING
DISCIPLESHIP
CELEBRATING THE SAINTS

YOUTH/ADULT
MELODY WILSON SHOBE

FORWARD MOVEMENT
CINCINNATI, OHIO

© 2015 by Forward Movement

Forward Movement
412 Sycamore Street
Cincinnati, Ohio USA 45202

Special thanks to Megan Castellan, David Creech, Scott Gunn, Eileen O'Brien, and Tim Schenck for contributing to this curriculum.

The creation of the *Living Discipleship* curriculum has been supported by a generous grant from The Episcopal Church's Constable Fund.

Scripture quotations are from the New Revised Standard Version Bible, copyright 1989, Division of Christian Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the United States of America. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

Permission has been granted for reprinting collects from *Holy Women, Holy Men* and *Lesser Feasts & Fasts* by the Church Pension Fund.



www.forwardmovement.org



Table of Contents

Introduction	1
Class Overview	3
Sessions	
1. Meet the saints	6
2. Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob	13
3. Blessed Virgin Mary	19
4. Mary Magdalene	26
5. Peter and Paul	30
6. Luke the Evangelist	34
7. Perpetua and her Companions	38
8. John Chrysostom	42
9. Patrick and Brigid	48
10. Augustine of Hippo	54
11. John of Damascus	59
12. Hildegard of Bingen	63
13. Francis and Clare	67
14. Martin Luther	74
15. Thomas Cranmer	78
16. George Herbert	82
17. J.S. Bach	86
18. Charles Wesley	90
19. Samuel Seabury	94
20. Enmegahbowh	98
21. C. S. Lewis	102
22. Frances Perkins	106
23. Martin Luther King Jr.	110
24. Harriet Bedell	115
25. Janani Luwum and Óscar Romero	119
26. Celebrate the saints	125
Resources	131
About	136



Introduction

In the midst of Paul's letter to the Ephesians is nestled one of the most beautiful prayers in the Christian tradition. Paul is writing to his disciples, his students, those who have joined him on the path of following Jesus and who are learning how to live in light of Christ's love. To these early Christians, Paul writes, "I pray that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you a spirit of wisdom and revelation as you come to know him, so that, with the eyes of your heart enlightened, you may know what is the hope to which he has called you, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance among the saints, and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power for us who believe, according to the working of his great power" (Ephesians 1:17-19).

This prayer, written nearly 2,000 years ago, resonates through the ages. Now, perhaps more than ever, what individual Christians need, what the Church needs, is to know "the hope to which God has called us... the riches of his glorious inheritance among the saints... the immeasurable greatness of his power for us who believe." These three things represent the content of the Christian faith: the hope of God proclaimed to us in the Bible, the witness of the saints from ages past, and the great power God offers to each of us to live out our lives of faith here and now. These ideas cannot be grasped in a single moment but must be learned and absorbed and made real through a lifetime of discipleship. They are not facts to memorize but realities to encounter and experience.

We can, as a Church and as individuals, live more deeply into the reality for which Paul so fervently prays. Spiritual formation for all ages, adults, youth, and children, is one way we can seek the spirit of wisdom and revelation that God offers.

Living Discipleship is an all-ages curriculum designed to help individuals and communities know more fully the very things that Paul prayed for the Ephesians to find: the God revealed in Christ Jesus. *Living Discipleship* is structured in three years: one year on *Exploring the Bible*, one year on *Celebrating the Saints*, and one year on *Practicing our Faith*.

Living Discipleship: Exploring the Bible takes participants on a journey through the scriptures, from Genesis to Revelation. Our primary revelation of the hope to which God has called us is the gift of God's Word, the Bible. By focusing on the vast narrative of the scriptures, we can see the great story of God's love from the beginning of creation, through the life of Jesus Christ, and in our own time, guided by the Holy Spirit. Through the stories of scripture, we can learn that the hope God offered to the faithful in ages past is the very same hope to which God is calling us today.

Living Discipleship: Celebrating the Saints is a year-long exploration of the riches of God's glorious inheritance made real in the lives of the saints who have gone before us. The saints witness to us what the life of faith looks like, lived out in real time, and they challenge us to live out our own discipleship more fully and fearlessly. In our journey with the saints, we also learn something of our history as we look at monks, missionaries, prophets, doctors, evangelists, and more, and learn how dozens of different people in different places and times, with different gifts and backgrounds, have taken their place in proclaiming the kingdom of God.

Living Discipleship: 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. These beliefs and practices remind us that we are the inheritors of the immeasurable greatness of God's power that transforms each of us and strengthens us to serve the world in Christ's name. In practicing our faith, we learn how to live as disciples, not merely one day a week but every day of the week.

Living Discipleship is a tool for churches and leaders who have the same prayer for their communities that Paul prayed so many years ago. It is, we hope, a resource in helping Christians come to know more fully God in Christ: the hope, the glorious inheritance, and the immeasurable power.

OVERVIEW

Welcome to *Living Discipleship: Celebrating the Saints*. This curriculum is a year-long study of the lives of the saints, with twenty-six sessions that explore different named saints in The Episcopal Church's calendar. Designed for use in weekly Sunday formation time, each session is approximately an hour long. With twenty-six sessions, this means that *Celebrating the Saints* can function as the Sunday formation curriculum in a church for an entire program year. Yet the lessons are also easily adaptable: each class stands on its own and can be used independently or rearranged in any order. Thus your parish could choose to use only a selection of the lessons, engaging in a study of the saints for a semester or a season. Alternatively, you could use the sessions as a summer curriculum or even at a time outside of Sunday morning. The possibilities are endless.

Celebrating the Saints is offered as an all-ages curriculum, so it contains corresponding lessons for adults and children on the same topics each week. This all-ages format allows families to come to church and learn about the same general thing, each in their own class, and have a shared starting point from which to go home and talk, discuss, and debate about "what they learned in Sunday school." If you choose to change the ordering of classes, be sure to consult with all of the course leaders, so that everyone will still be "on the same page."

Through *Living Discipleship: Celebrating the Saints*, you will meet thirty new saintly companions over the course of the year. You will learn about church history, as we trace the development of the Church over time through the lives of some of its most faithful followers. You will learn about the spread of the Church around the world, as you study saints from near and far and see the faith that unites them all. You will learn about all the different ways that the love of God in Christ has been made manifest in different times and places by vastly different people: in martyrs, monks, and musicians; through peasants, poets, and politicians.

You will learn, as you meet the saints on this journey, that they are not the stained glass figures you might imagine them to be. Every single one of the saints was a living, breathing, flawed human being, not so different from you and me. And yet, these saints managed to allow God's grace to work in them such that Christ's light shone brightly in their lives. They were witnesses to the world of the transforming love of Jesus Christ.

Perhaps the saints you encounter will inspire you to follow Jesus in new ways, so that you can be a witness of the Good News of God in Christ. Perhaps you will invite the saints to pray for you and with you, for they are companions with us in our earthly pilgrimage, the great cloud of witnesses surrounding us even now. Perhaps you will come to know Jesus more deeply, as you see him reflected in the lives and witness of those who have gone before us in the faith.

Welcome to a year of *Celebrating the Saints*.



Class overview

With the exception of the first and final sessions, each class of this curriculum follows a similar structure:

OPENING COLLECT

- * For each week, the opening collect is the one appointed for the assigned saint from the liturgical resources of The Episcopal Church. These prayers are rich with tradition, connecting us to the prayers of the Church through time.

ENCOUNTER THE SAINT

- * The materials for each week include an outline with a brief biography, as well as suggested resources to find more information about the assigned saint.
- * The leader of formation may choose to present this information to the class this week. Another option is to have individual members of the congregation sign up in advance, so that a different person presents each week. The person presenting should be given the brief biography and bibliography of possible resources. They could also be encouraged to do some research on their own.
- * There are also three to five images provided for each saint. One or more of these could be displayed during the presentation (electronically or via print), or could be used as the basis for some discussion. Links to these images are available on the *Living Discipleship* website at www.livingdiscipleship-fm.org or can be displayed in the PowerPoint (also downloadable from the website).
- * When practical, the materials also contain an excerpt from writings by the assigned saint, or writings about the saint by a contemporary.

ENGAGE THE SAINT

- * Each week there is at least one suggested activity to engage some aspect of the assigned saint's life and witness. Additional suggestions for generic activities are included in the appendix; these can be substituted for any given week. This allows the leader to adapt the curriculum to the context in which it is being taught.

EXPLORE THE CONNECTIONS BETWEEN THE SAINT AND OUR LIVES

- * A list of reflection and discussion questions is included for each week, with some general questions and some questions specific to the saint assigned.
- * These questions are designed so that the class can discuss them all together or break up into small groups for discussion.

EXPAND

- * Each lesson also includes a list of suggested resources for those who are interested in learning more about the assigned saint.

CONCLUDING COLLECT

- * Each week you are encouraged to close with the collect of the assigned saint that began the day's session.

ORDER OF THE CLASSES

The saints are listed in this curriculum in chronological order, both for ease of access and because that ordering allows a parish to use the curriculum to trace the development of church history and theology through the lives of the saints. But, of course, that is by no means the only possibility for how to encounter the lives of the saints. A few other possibilities are suggested below:

- ✿ You could study the saints as grouped by theme (artists, prophets, teachers, missionaries/martyrs, etc.). This could allow for greater comparison and contrast among the weeks, giving room to explore how people have lived out similar vocations in different places and times in the life of the Church.
- ✿ You might choose to reorder the saints so that they coincide with seasons and events in the church year. Saint Francis could be studied on the Sunday closest to his feast, the Blessed Virgin Mary during Advent, or on a Sunday close to one of her feast days, and so on. This might be especially appropriate in parishes that observe some or all of the lesser feasts and fasts in their weekday worship.
- ✿ Choose the ordering of the saints in consultation with the children's leaders, so that the interactive aspect of the curriculum, where all ages are studying the same thing, is not lost.

DISPLAY POSSIBILITIES

This curriculum includes an image of each saint that is studied, for reference and for fun. These images, or others that you might find and use, allow for a variety of display possibilities. This is a wonderful visual reminder of the journey that the congregation is on as they engage the lives of the saints week by week. You can invite students to put up the saints one by one as they study them, either in the parish hall, in another central location, or in classrooms. This serves as a visual reminder that can be helpful, not only to children, but also to those of all ages. It allows you, either individually or as a group, to occasionally go back and look at the saints you've studied and remind yourselves about their stories. It also might encourage you to make connections that would otherwise be missed or raise questions that would be helpful to explore. We include a variety of display possibilities that you can adapt to your situation, but the options are limitless. Links to further images are available on the *Living Discipleship* website, under the *Celebrating the Saints*, then Resources tab. You may also view them by downloading the PowerPoint for this curriculum (also available on the website).

Some possible suggestions:

- ✿ Timeline: Make a timeline along one wall (or even around the entire room). You can put in a beginning date and end with "today." You can leave the line blank, or select some big historical events as time markers. Each week, as you study the assigned saint, put the image up at the appropriate place on your timeline. Take the opportunity periodically to trace the movement of the saints through history and see where you are headed.
- ✿ Cloud: Scripture describes the saints as "a great cloud of witnesses." Use that image for your saintly display. On a prominent wall, make a big cloud out of paper. Each week, you can add the picture of the assigned saint to the cloud. You could choose to place them randomly or to group them by theme.
- ✿ Stars: Another image often used for saints is "stars shining in darkness." Put up a dark blue or black backdrop on the wall. Cut out a variety of star shapes and put an image of a saint in each one. Each week, add the assigned saint's star to the wall. Watch over time as the lights come to fill in the darkness.
- ✿ Map: The saints studied in this curriculum come from all around the world and are representative of the saints recognized by the Church. Put up a world map somewhere in your church. Make pins with the names or small pictures of the saints on them. Add each week's saint to the map as you study them. Notice the spread of Christian witness around the world.



Class overview

ADDITIONAL CLASSES

This curriculum is designed to cover twenty-six weeks: an introductory class, twenty-four saints, and a closing class. In the Appendix, we include suggestions for a few additional classes, which might be appropriate for certain contexts. These could be used in addition to the existing classes, lengthening the curriculum, or could be used as a substitute for one of the twenty-four saints classes. Additional classes might include:

- * All Saints' Day class
- * Saint of title (guidelines for designing a class about your church's name-saint)
- * Art and iconography of saints: learn about some of the visual symbols used to designate certain saints. Explore your church buildings to see what saints are depicted and how you recognize them.
- * "Patron" saints: have each person discover who their patron saint is (Were they born on a saint's feast day? Do they share a name with a saint? Is there a saint with whom they identify?) Challenge each person to learn something about their saint and then come back and share with the group.

RESOURCES

This curriculum is designed so that it can be led by any member of the congregation, clergy or lay. Most of the class sessions are discussion-based and require no special knowledge beyond what is provided. If, however, the person leading the class would like some further information for background, the following resources could be helpful:

Websites

- * www.livingdiscipleship-fm.org: the *Living Discipleship* website published by Forward Movement includes many resources, including links to images and PowerPoint presentation.
- * Lent Madness, www.lentmadness.org, a fun and engaging program to learn about the saints sponsored by Forward Movement.
- * For those saints who are also honored in the Catholic Church, information can be found at www.catholic.org/saints
- * Wikipedia (en.wikipedia.org) is often a surprisingly reliable source on the saints. Because it is an open source website that anyone can edit, you should be careful to verify what you read there before you share it as fact.

Books

- * *131 Christians Everyone Should Know* by Mark Galli. Includes some of the major historical saints.
- * *Brightest and Best: A Companion to Lesser Feasts and Fasts* by Sam Portaro. Cowley Publications, 2001.
- * *Lesser Feasts and Fasts* and *Holy Women, Holy Men* are publications of The Episcopal Church that include a very brief biography of each saint.
- * *The Oxford Dictionary of Saints* by David Farmer. Oxford University Press, 2011.
- * *Stars in a Dark World: Stories of the Saints and the Holy Days of the Liturgy* by Fr. John Julian OJN includes a more in-depth biography and reflection on each saint. It is an excellent resource.