

2025-2026 ADULT CHRISTIAN FORMATION

Introduction - Adult Christian Formation

Adult formation is foundational to our spiritual journey. It offers the invitation to study, reflect and have conversation to explore who we are and who we are called to be. The models for this type of discovery are numerous and varied – study of scripture, investigation of our Anglican faith and theology, looking at our common history through the ages, discussing the context of our families in light of our faith, exploring art and music as reflecting the divine, sharing different methods of prayer, just to name a few. It is in the gathering together, the sharing of fellowship, and always opening ourselves up to exploring and learning about our faith, that we further strengthen the blessing of our relationships with our Creator and each other. This is more about formation than it is simple education; our lives especially during this time are always changing; we are constantly forming and reforming what it means to be a disciple of Christ. St. Michael's is committed to providing ministry opportunities and meaningful programs which will help support and guide us in our journey together.

Sunday Formation Program

The curriculum runs from September through May. Formation classes are held each Sunday from 9:00-9:50am in the Parish Hall. Each summer, based upon Father Andrew's discretion and the suggested topics submitted by parishioners, the curriculum is set for the following formation year. In fact, almost all of the topics this year came from you! It is important to remember that this is your parish, and this is your formation program; please do not hesitate to contact Father Andrew with any ideas or suggestions for future classes!

2025-2026 Calendar and Curriculum

September 7, 2025: Conversation with the Rector: Welcome back! This is the first day of the new Adult Formation year and, after the summer break, this is an opportunity to check in with Father Andrew and each other. Bring whatever comments or questions you have for Father Andrew – worship, scripture, theology or perhaps something related to our parish life and ministries. We hope you will join us this Sunday and throughout the formation year!

September 14, 2025: Episcopal 101 – The Origins and Identity of the Episcopal Church. We typically begin our formation year with an exploration of one of the foundations of our own faith tradition, and we start with this from the suggestion box. What exactly is the Episcopal Church and where did we

come from? How are we alike, and different, from other orthodox Christian faiths and other traditions in the protestant family? We take this first session for conversation about the origins and identity of the Episcopal Church.

September 21, 2025: Episcopal 101 – The Theology of the Holy Eucharist.

Another “introductory” exploration request from the suggestion box. All Christian traditions, in one form or another, and at one time or another, share communion as part of worship. It is universally recognized as a sacrament or “sacramental rite” in the Christian Church. What is the basic, underlying theology or meaning behind this practice? What is the theology of the Episcopal Church regarding Holy Eucharist, and how is it similar, and different, from Roman Catholic and other Christian traditions?

September 28, 2025: Who is St. Michael? The Feast of St. Michael and All Angels annually falls on September 29. So, we take this time to look at who St. Michael was in scripture and how his identity has evolved over time as faith communities around the world have developed certain beliefs, traditions and customs attached to him. And why/how has St. Michael often been associated with “All Angels?” We take this session to explore our patron saint and what our identification with St. Michael might have to say about our presence and ministry in this place.

October 5, 2025: Introduction to the Psalms. Written and composed to be part of worship, the psalms have been at the center of both Judaic and Christian faith and piety for centuries. The breadth of the theology and meanings of the psalms are expansive, including creation, the nature of God and humanity, and both the trials and joys of a life of faith. We take three sessions as an introduction to the basic origin, composition, nature and various meanings contained in the psalms. Along the way, we will have time to explore any specific psalms which might be offered during our time together.

October 12, 2025: Introduction to the Psalms.

October 19, 2025: Introduction to the Psalms.

October 26, 2025: No Class – Diocesan Convention.

November 2, 2025: The Gospel of Mary Magdalene. While many scholars believe that the New Testament (the four gospels and various letters and writings by the apostles) was set or “closed” by the Council of Nicaea in 325AD, there were other writings, some purporting to be gospels, present at the time that were not included in the canon. These were excluded for a variety of reasons. We will spend a couple of sessions looking at one of the excluded texts which tradition holds was authored by Mary Magdalene. We will explore the origins and nature of this writing, its unique perspective of Jesus and the disciples (particularly Peter and Andrew), its relationship with the canonical gospels and the likely reasons for its exclusion from the final set of scripture.

November 9, 2025: The Gospel of Mary Magdalene.

November 16, 2025: No Class – K&E Celebration

November 23, 2025: What Happened to Job and Why? From the suggestion box, we take a couple of sessions to explore the Old Testament story of Job. What happened to him? Why? Many theologians focus on the suffering of Job and the testing of his faith, but the story is actually quite complex and lends itself to several understandings, thoughts and reflections. We will take the opportunity to revisit this story and have conversation about what it might be saying to our own faith and life experience.

November 30, 2025: No Class – Thanksgiving Holiday

December 7, 2025: What Happened to Job and Why?

December 14, 2025: What the heck is “premillennial dispensationalism?” This is a “holdover” from last year – we did not get to this topic and agreed to take it on this year! Just as Advent is the anticipation for the birth of Christ, it is also looking to the second coming of Christ, and that is what premillennialism is all about – the beliefs and ideas surrounding the second coming, what it might look like and its underlying meaning.

December 21, 2025: Exploring Christmas: We customarily reserve the formation gathering before Christmas simply to reflect upon the meaning of the Feast of the Nativity. Everything from exploring the historical background of Christ’s birth to chasing down St. Nicholas, this is simply an open forum for us to share our thoughts and insights.

December 28, 2025: No Class – Christmas Holiday

January 4, 2026: What Paul Meant. Paul is the author of the earliest Christian writings we have discovered to date; he is widely regarded as one of the most influential figures in the early Jesus movement. At the same time, Paul and his writings have often been the center of controversy and even division in the church and beyond. Thomas Jefferson ridiculed Paul as “the first corruptor;” George Bernard Shaw labeled his writings as “a monstrous imposition;” and Nietzsche simply called Paul, “the Dysangelist.” We will spend three sessions looking at Paul and his writings in an effort to sift through some of his more controversial writings and discover the overall meanings and messages contained in his letters. We will be basing much of our discussion on Garry Willis’ book, *What Paul Meant*. This is suggested reading only; an outline of his main points and arguments will be provided to help guide our discussions!

January 11, 2026: What Paul Meant.

January 18, 2026: What Paul Meant.

January 25, 2026: No Class – Annual Meeting

February 1, 2026: Why Do We Pray? Prayer is one of the foundations of the Christian faith. But why do we do it? Is the answer as simple as Jesus tells us to do so? And the truth is that while prayer is central to our faith, Christians certainly did not invent it! Where did it come from? Better still, what is prayer? We will take three sessions to explore the possible origins and nature of prayer, first in its broadest context (all religions throughout time have some element of prayer!) and then in our Christian context, leaving room for conversation about our own prayer life and its meaning in our faith journey.

February 8, 2026: Why Do We Pray?

February 15, 2026: Why Do We Pray?

February 22, 2025: Death and Dying in the Christian Faith. With Lent upon us, we encounter the reality of our own fragility and mortality, and inevitably, our death. Despite this inevitability, many avoid confronting it! We take two sessions to focus on two main points (and there are many issues, perspectives and topics to choose from!): We will briefly start with the first - What is the Christian theology behind our mortality and death? In other words, in the Christian faith, what does it mean to die? With that in mind, we move to the second - How do we, as Christians, prepare for it? Is there any such thing as “preparing for a good death?” As part of our discussions, we will draw upon Dr. Lydia Dugale’s book, *The Lost Art of Dying*. This is suggested reading only; an outline of her main points will be provided to help guide our discussions!

March 1, 2026: Death and Dying in the Christian Faith.

March 8, 2026: The Life and Theology of John Calvin: Each curriculum year, we reserve time to explore an influential theologian that has had a significant impact upon the Christian faith. Last year, we had John Calvin on our list, but scheduling changes prevented us from getting to him – so we will try again this year! Calvin was a French pastor and theologian who was one of leading voices during the Protestant Reformation. We will take a look at Calvin’s life and background, the doctrines and views for which he advocated during the reformation movement and his lasting legacy in the Presbyterian and Congregational churches of today. Along the way, we will investigate what relationship, if any, the views of Calvin have with our own Anglican/Episcopal faith.

March 15, 2026: The Life and Theology of John Calvin

March 22, 2026: The Life and Theology of John Calvin

March 29, 2026: No Class – Palm Sunday

April 5, 2026: No Class – Easter Sunday

April 12, 2026: The Peace: On the evening of the resurrection, Jesus appears to his disciples offering his first words as the risen Christ, “Peace be with you.” What exactly did he mean by these words?

Easter tide is a perfect time to explore this greeting by Christ, both its Judaic roots as well as what it means in the context of the resurrection. Each week, we exchange “The Peace” during our worship; we will allow plenty of time for conversation about what this ritual, and the words offered by Jesus to his followers, mean to our faith journeys.

April 19, 2026: The Peace.

April 26, 2026: The Gospel of Matthew: On the First Sunday of Advent, we began a new liturgical year, and with it, Lectionary Year A (The readings in our worship follow a three-year cycle – A, B and C). Year A emphasizes the Gospel of Matthew, especially during the season after Pentecost, so this is a good time to explore his gospel. We will take several sessions to do so, including a look at its origins, context and its likely intended audience. We will also discuss Matthew’s unique view of Jesus and how his gospel compares with the others.

May 3, 2026: The Gospel of Matthew

May 10, 2026: The Gospel of Matthew

May 17, 2026: The Gospel of Matthew

May 24, 2026: Conversation with the Rector: We conclude the formation year in our usual fashion of reserving the last gathering for a time of conversation and reflection. How did the formation year go? What was a success and what, if anything, needs some attention or change in the coming year? What topics or issues should our formation time include in the future? Bring whatever questions or comments that you might have to the group for reflection and discussion.