



# How to Select Curriculum Resources

## For Congregations of the United Church of Christ

*Let us run with perseverance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus the pioneer and perfecter of our faith. — Hebrews 12:1c*

**Curriculum.** The word is Latin for “race course” and conjures up images of runners sprinting from the starting line toward the prized goal. Curriculum—in the church—is a course of events, relationships, discoveries, and transformations that congregations experience along faith’s journey. When carefully selected, curriculum resources and materials may help your congregation fully experience God, the Bible, and faith along the way.

This guide offers you a step-by-step process to select the curriculum resources that will best help your congregation run its faithful course. Use these steps to guide your planning over a long period of serious educational study or as a quick help for a one-time selection committee. The questions are helpful even if it is your sole responsibility to select and order curriculum.

Our prayer is that God will prepare the course ahead of you and that the prayerful selection of resources will enrich your congregation’s educational ministry.

### Steps for Curriculum Selection

**1. Pray for God’s guidance.**

Throughout the entire planning selecting process, take time for prayer and prayerful discernment. Your curriculum choices will invite persons into particular experiences with God and with one another. Call on God to help you imagine the appropriate outcomes and experiences for your congregation.

**2. Select a team.**

Call together a group that is excited about your church’s educational ministry. Choose people who are responsible for making resource selections—try to include teachers, learners (children, youth, and adults), ministers, and others who represent the whole congregation. Develop a list of names of people who will make a commitment and note the unique perspective each may bring to the work.

Name	Address	Phone Email	Position or Particular Interest

**3. Identify your vision.**

Determine your congregation’s vision of education, outlining the goals and hopes your congregation has for its educational ministry. Use *Planning the Church’s Educational Ministry in a Local Setting*, or other foundational works to enrich your own vision (ordering information on page 4). If time allows, test your team’s vision with others in your congregation. Make needed changes in the vision statement that will enhance the overall congregation’s commitment to the vision. See how it relates to your congregation’s mission statement and to the mission of other committees. Use the following to develop a statement of vision:

- What hopes do you have for your congregation?
- What is God calling your congregation to be and do?
- How can education support that calling and hope?
- After answering these questions, state in a sentence your team’s vision for education.

**4. Identify settings and educational opportunities.**

Explore and identify the settings in which your congregations’ vision might be realized, asking questions such as:

- What are the current settings in which people of ate in our educational vision? (Include the church school, but also other settings.)
- What new settings are needed? Which current settings need to be renewed or eliminated?
- How are people grouped for learning in each of these settings (for example, by age, interest in content, or interest in a particular activity)?
- What might happen to people—theologically and educationally—if each of these settings was effective?

Setting					
To Be New/ Renewed/ Eliminated					
Age or Grouping					
Purpose (theological & educational)					
Possible Topic/ Curriculum					

## 5. Evaluate and select resources.

The following questions will help determine theological themes and teaching approaches that will match the educational need for each of the identified settings and the needs and interests of learners. Skim catalogs, curriculum samples, or other resource

information such as *Gather 'Round*, *The Present Word*, or *Seasons of the Spirit* for resources that match your vision and needs (ordering information on page 4). If time allows, test the resources with persons who will actually use them. Copy the following for each resource reviewed.

# Curriculum Resource Review and Evaluation

**Curriculum Resource** \_\_\_\_\_

**Setting** \_\_\_\_\_

**For use with what group?** \_\_\_\_\_

## General Review

- How will these resources help you carry out your congregation's vision for education?
- How do these resources relate to the overall life of the congregations—its worship, outreach, and mission?
- How could these resources be helpful in this particular setting?
- How is the Bible used in the material?
- What are the theological commitments of the material?
- How do they reflect the commitments of your congregation and denomination?
- How do these resources reflect diversity, or the need for diversity in your congregation, denomination, or community?
- How are leaders and teachers supported in ways that give them confidence?
- How do these resources encourage home or parental participation?
- What would be the overall cost—including all required materials—to use these resources in this setting?

## Teaching and Learning

- When the learners have finished using these resources, what new information do you imagine they will know and what kinds of experiences will they have had?
- Are the materials accurate, appealing, and age-appropriate?
- Are the lesson plans easy to use, as well as flexible, for the setting in which they will be used?
- What transforming impact might the resources have for individuals and the whole life of your congregation?

## Recommendation

- Why would you recommend or not recommend this resource for use?
- What should be done as a result of your recommendation (order, check out another resource for a particular teaching approach, call a publisher for answers to questions)?

## 6. Order your resources.

Order your resources well in advance and check them completely to ensure all components have arrived. Consider elective materials as well – resources for retreats, confirmation, worship, individual study, and other gatherings. Also keep in mind books and resources you would like to have available in your church library.



## 7. Evaluate your resources.

After you have used the resources, evaluate them with the same questions with which you selected them. Let the publishers of the resources know what you found most helpful or where you encountered difficulties – only then can they improve their resources.

- How did these resources help you carry out your congregations' vision of education?
- What new information do the learners know and what kind of experiences did they have?
- After answering these questions, what do you recommend regarding future use of these resources?

# Resources to Assist You in Your Selection

You may order limited quantities of this guide or the following resources by calling **1-800-537-3394**, or you may make copies of this guide for planning.

### General

- *Planning the Church's Educational Mission in a Local Setting*—This resource helps a local church create its own educational mission statement.  
<http://www.ucc.org/education/plan/index.html>

### Curriculum Resource Information

- *2010-2011 Curricula Catalog* contains information on all curriculum resources for the church's settings, as well as related resources from United Church Press and The Pilgrim Press, Bibles/Bible study materials, and UCC identity products.
- *Seasons of the Spirit* – Provides complete information for congregations who want to do worship-centered, lectionary-based education, connecting worship, learning, and service.  
[www.spiritseasons.com](http://www.spiritseasons.com)
- *The Present Word* – Provides a full description of the adult Bible study resources based on the Uniform Lesson Series.
- *Gather 'Round: Hearing and Sharing God's Good News* – A Bible story-centered curriculum, with an emphasis on strengthening the connection between church and home, discipleship, and peace and justice issues.
- *Faith Practices* – New for 2010 from The Pilgrim Press. Offers explorations based on practices of faith for all ages. Download resources from the Faith Practices website: [www.faithpractices.org](http://www.faithpractices.org)
- *The Kerygma Program* – Choose from a wide variety of Bible studies - long or short; beginner, intermediate or advanced; studies on specific books or topics of the Bible or the Bible as a whole. [www.kerygma.com](http://www.kerygma.com)
- *The Thoughtful Christian* – Timely. Provocative. Faithful. The Thoughtful Christian.com is the place for challenging, relevant, and helpful studies for adult, young adult, or older youth education programs. [www.thethoughtfulchristian.com](http://www.thethoughtfulchristian.com)

### Getting Help from Your Conference or Resource Center

In each conference **Partners In Education** are available to consult with your church about United Church of Christ resources and can come to assist you in planning education programs and selecting resources. A complete directory of UCC conferences is available on the UCC Home Page on the world wide web at

<http://www.ucc.org/about-us/conference/>

For more assistance in your curriculum planning and selection process, contact  
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