

4 Using the Connectional System: Where to Get Help

Help is often close in the connectional Presbyterian system. One of the most helpful resources is the denominational *Presbyterian Planning Calendar*, available from the Presbyterian Distribution Services at 1.800.524.2612 (ISBN 978-1-57153-095-0). In addition to providing an eighteen-month calendar, the *Presbyterian Planning Calendar* also offers resource information for each programmatic emphasis, reminders of Christian education conferences, suggestions for materials to buy, and events that may relate to the Christian education ministries. It also includes directories to synod, presbytery, and General Assembly staff, many of whom can be quite helpful to educators in the local congregation. Resource centers in synods and presbyteries are also listed.

- Each congregation receives *ideas!* magazine, which lists the educational resources available from the denomination. If you don't receive a copy, ask the pastor of your church, or contact the Curriculum Helpline for your free copy (1-800.728.7228, ext. 5080).
- Some of the denominational program areas (such as Mission Interpretation) will automatically send an educational packet to every local congregation and to each pastor. These packets will have materials for adult education classes and youth events, as well as other ways to help your congregation in its educational ministry. Contact Presbyterian Distribution Services (1.800.524.2612) to obtain a packet if your church has misplaced the one sent to it. The Curriculum Helpline will help locate materials that may be useful to your particular congregation. These include materials produced by Congregational Ministries Publishing, producers of the denomination's official curriculum, along with books and resources published through Witherspoon Press.
- The Presbyterian Publishing Corporation offers print resources published by Westminster John Knox Press and Geneva Press that may be helpful for your educational program. Their number is 1.800.334.6580.

- Denominational and ecumenical Web sites provide a wealth of information and many tools to connect to local congregations, presbyteries, and Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) and other denominations. Visit pcusa.org for general information about the PC(USA). You can find a church, connect to your presbytery, or locate a specific mission area of the church from this site. Web pages that offer support for education and church educators are not limited to, but include these sites: pcusa.org/education, pcusa.org/point, pcusa.org/christianeducators, faithandwisdom.org, practicingourfaith.org, openingdoorstodiscipleship.com.

Locally, one can find a number of resources to enhance, enable, and encourage those involved in the Christian education programs of the local church.

- Resource centers are located throughout the United States. Most provide video and print resources. Some publish regular newsletters that provide updates on materials available to support Christian education programming. Still others will offer special events with prominent educators as keynote speakers. Their staff members are extremely helpful in searching for and offering ideas that can enhance and support programs in your church. To locate the resource center nearest you, look at the list of resource centers in the *Presbyterian Planning Calendar*. Over 130 resource centers are listed by presbytery or synod. There is a resource center near you. Find it and use it!
- Many presbyteries or resource centers subscribe to the Resource Center Subscription Service and receive copies of materials developed for the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). This is a good way to preview samples of the curriculum and other support materials offered by the denomination. Check your presbytery office or resource center to see if it subscribes and regularly receives updated materials.
- Many synods offer special educational events. These events offer courses for families

and Christian educators working toward certification, as well as other subjects of interest

- Most presbyteries also offer regularly scheduled events and workshops that are available to both staff and volunteer congregational members working in Christian education programs. Contact your presbytery office for dates and times of such events.
- Some presbyteries employ a staff member whose responsibility is to resource the congregations within the presbytery in the area of congregational life. These persons will generally staff the church education and youth committees of the presbytery, which in turn offer to the local congregation workshops, teacher training, Christian education program evaluation, and assessment of staffing needs in the area of Christian education and youth ministries. Some presbyteries have trained experts called Presbyterians Organized in Nurture and Teaching (POINT) representatives and staff ready to help congregations. Contact your local presbytery office to determine whether such resource people are available. If not, ask them about their presbytery-level Christian education committee, where one will likely find information about both Christian education, in general, and local Christian educators who have volunteered to be resource people.

to children, youth, and adults wanting to know how their faith can relate to their daily lives.

- The Association of Presbyterian Church Educators (APCE) is a national organization that supports and enhances the Christian education ministries of six Presbyterian and Reformed denominations. An APCE annual conference is held in late January or early February, which includes premier keynote speakers in the Christian education field, inspirational worship, and countless workshops. Regional events are also offered throughout the year. Local committees meet on a regular basis. Sometimes they are part of the presbytery Christian education committee, but often they are a separate resource. A magazine, the APCE Advocate, is published four times during the year. To find out more about APCE and the annual conference, visit apcenet.org.
- Certified Christian educator advisors are available to oversee the journey for anyone interested in pursuing certification as educator or associate educator. To find out who the certified Christian educators are in your area, ask your pastor for the denominational Directory that is sent automatically to all local churches or pusa.org/vocations. The directory includes a complete list of certified educators throughout the country.
- Local seminaries offer continuing education opportunities on a regular basis. You can contact these seminaries and ask to be put on their mailing lists for notice of such opportunities. (A list of the denominational seminaries can be found in the *Presbyterian Planning Calendar*.) However, many seminaries that come out of the Reformed tradition or are nondenominational may be nearer to you. Check with your presbytery office for suggestions of which seminaries may be most helpful.
- Ecumenical organizations often have excellent resources for educational events in your area. Speaker bureaus, video resources, workshop plans, and consultants are some examples. Ecumenical organizations include the National Council of Churches, ministerial associations, Church Women United, and many others.