



55 Ways to Engage the Book of Faith Initiative

Because the Book of Faith Initiative is a grass roots effort, there's no set list of things that congregations have to do/try to participate. Sometimes, this means it's hard to just *think* of new ways to build deeper engagement with the Bible into the life of your community. This list of ideas was first developed by Pastor Breen Sipes of Zion Evangelical Lutheran Church in Kratzerville, PA. Over the years, she says she's tried lots of different ideas, trying to find the ones that "stick". Some take more planning while others are pretty simple. Some require spending money on resources to use or give away while others are free. No matter what, there are so many ideas here that there's bound to be something inspiring or new! And whatever you choose, let people know why they're noticing little or big ways that your congregation is deepening engagement with the Bible...*to develop fluency together in the first language of faith: the language of Scripture.*

Worship Ideas

1. After the Greeting, add a Litany of a Bible Verse from the Revised Common Lectionary for the season
2. Pray full Psalms instead of just the verses appointed for the day in the lectionary (unless it's Psalm 119!)
3. Shape the Children's Message around a key verse from one of the readings for the day. Look up the verse with the children during the message and give them a bookmark with the verse on it to put in that spot.
4. Put the BFI logo (images are available on our website) in the bulletin or on verse slips for the Children's Sermon or wherever so that people begin to recognize it as a time or place for Bible learning in the congregation.
5. For 66 Sundays, include an insert in your bulletin on each book of the Bible in alphabetical order. Try using information from www.enterthebible.org.
6. Do a Narrative Communion service one time each year so that people can connect the liturgy with the Bible verses it is made up of.
7. Put verse citations into the bulletin for each part of the liturgy to remind people that the things we do in worship are grounded in Scripture.
8. Brainstorm ways to get people to bring their Bibles to worship.

Faith Formation Ideas for Adults

9. When offering new classes, try using different words like "Bible *Conversation*" or "*Dwelling in the Word*"—some people don't get excited by the phrase "Bible Study"—don't let that be what stops them from participating! (If a meeting is already thriving under that title, don't change it!)
10. Use the "[Together in Faith](#)" series (for the Book of Faith Initiative by Augsburg Fortress) for your Adult Sunday School.
11. Use "[People of Faith](#)" (from Augsburg Fortress) for a more discussion-based Adult learning gathering, whether on Sunday morning or another time.

12. Offer Adult Bible Conversation on a weeknight using "[Books of Faith](#)" from Augsburg Fortress.
13. Begin an "Acts 2:42" group with adults who meet in homes for food, fellowship and study.
14. Offer a Lenten Soup Supper on Wednesday nights during Lent and build a discussion into the evening. Try using the Book of Faith [Lenten Resources](#) from Augsburg Fortress or "[Making Sense](#)" series by David Lose as a framework for the discussion. Or, use the texts from an Easter Vigil service to trace God's saving work through history.
15. Encourage your synod office to ask your bishop to teach classes for adults on questions of Christian theology or classes on books of the Bible. Encourage your adults to go to these classes and to bring friends who may belong to other congregations in town to create teaching and conversation beyond the church doors.
16. Do—or, better yet, enlist volunteers to do—a [Dwelling In the Word](#) moment that sticks with one text for several weeks. For example, invite several people to share a brief reflection on what Luke 1 & 2 means to them throughout the weeks of Advent.
17. Offer Bibles for sale in your church office in various types and translations.
18. Offer a "Bible for Rookies" or "Bible 101" class. Use the "[Rediscovering the Book of Faith](#)" resource for this as a guide if desired.
19. Explore some (or many!) of the other options for [Theological Education](#) through the ELCA.

Faith Formation Ideas for Children & Families

20. Brainstorm ways to make the fourfold method questions accessible for children, such as: "what part of this story doesn't make sense to me?" "what is my favorite part of the story?", "what does this story remind me of?", "what is God or Jesus doing in this story?", etc.
21. Teach [Bible Songs](#) from Faith Inkubators and give CDs away as gifts. The songs are based on NRSV translations of Bible verses—they'll know more verses by heart than they even realize.
22. Watch Veggie Tales with the kids and come up with simple games or activities to reinforce the messages of the stories. Encourage the kids to sing along with the songs or act out the story along with the movie. Make DVDs of the episodes available for families to take home at Christmastime.
23. Create a series of Faith Milestones, each of which has a Bible verse associated with it. Have a physical memento for each milestone with the appropriate verse written on the back and an explanation of why that milestone and verse are important for children.
24. Make posters for each Faith Milestone that will be posted in a public space for all of the kids to see as they grow so that they can see where they've been and what's next.
25. Give age-appropriate Bibles at several points during their growing-up years. Consider "Really Woolly Bible Stories" at baptism, the Spark Story Bible or The Jesus Storybook Bible in pre-K classes, the Spark Bible in 1st Grade and the Lutheran Study Bible in confirmation. Also consider making these Bibles available for sale to grandparents/godparents whose little ones don't attend your church or who live far away—these make great gifts.
26. Use a Children's Bible version of the Christmas Story for a pageant instead of reading the NRSV version. The Spark Story Bible is a good one.

27. During Lent, if you do the Easter Vigil texts with Adults (see #6 in Faith Formation for Adults), do this with children as well!
28. Do a Lenten Workshop where children create artistic representations of stories to share with the Adult study.
29. In Advent, give children a new blue candle each week with a key Bible verse inscribed on it.
30. For a cross-generational event, host an Advent Workshop where you tell the same story in multiple ways (storytelling, skits, puppets, music, visual arts, etc.)
31. During the summer, do a cross-generational Sunday school or “Family Sunday School”. Consider using the “What’s In The Bible?” DVDs by Phil Vischer, creator of Veggie Tales. These videos tell the biblical story in an engaging way from beginning to end (from puppets to simple animation) with songs. Add in a game or craft each week that everyone does together.
32. Connect with members of the Lutheran Association of Christian Educators (LACE) in your area. They are a fantastic resource for educating members of all ages!

Faith Formation Ideas for Youth

33. Use the “[People of Faith](#)” series from Augsburg Fortress as confirmation curriculum. Do one scene per session, using the fourfold method as the basis for the main discussion. Take each question one at a time; have them talk about their answers in pairs and share with the large group what their partner said.
34. Watch Veggie Tales with the youth—almost all ages love these (still)!
35. Play a “Family Feud” style game with the youth (after watching a Veggie Tales or another method of teaching a story) to make sure they picked up on the details of what happened.
36. For older youth, watch mainstream movies based on bible stories and talk with them about why the movies told the biblical story well or not. Check the Movie Index at textweek.com for a list of ideas.
37. Over the course of several weeks, try telling the same biblical story in different ways (whether different media or different styles or time periods). This takes a little bit of creativity, but it also helps youth make connections between the different methods so they can start to understand how enduring a lot of the stories in the Bible really are.
38. Find ways to phrase the fourfold questions that are particularly relevant for youth. Try, “what scares you?” “What pushes you to change something?” or “what is God up to here?”
39. If there is a summer camp ministry in your area, talk with the camp director to see how BFI could be part of the way they do education next summer. Volunteer to come to staff training to teach the counselors how to this!
40. Work with Youth Ministry team of your Synod Office to make BFI a theme for a weekend retreat for grades 6-12.
41. Commit to doing BFI-style Bible Conversations in Confirmation small groups for three years to model it for youth and youth leaders.

Other aspects of Congregational Life

42. Explain the vision and goals of the Book of Faith Initiative to your congregation and council again. Sign on as a Book of Faith Congregation at www.bookoffaith.org.
43. Make your Pastor’s Corner in the newsletter a reflection on an upcoming text from the lectionary. Ask questions based on the [fourfold method](#) and offer your thoughts on the text.

44. Then, use the same lectionary text as a devotional at a Church Council meeting. Break up into pairs or threes and have them use the fourfold method questions as a guide.
45. If the council members head up other committees, ask them to bring this same text to their respective meetings and lead a brief devotion at the opening of their next meeting, adding insights they gained from studying it with the council.
46. Use your church sign for Bible Trivia. They shouldn't be too easy, but could be answered with a simple Google search. Put the answer to last week's question on one side and a new question on the other side each week. Offer "Smarties" candies to the congregation members who get the questions right!
47. Practice "Dwelling in the Word" in more aspects of pastoral ministry: counseling sessions, shut-in visits (train volunteers to do this as well), hospital visits and pre-marital counseling (perhaps using the verses the couple chooses for their wedding—present them with a framed copy of the verse as a wedding gift).
48. Dwell in the Word with families preparing for baptism. Don't just talk about the Bible, dwell in it with them, modeling for their time at home together!

Other Ideas

49. If the pastors in your conference meet on a regular basis, volunteer to lead one of the sessions based on some aspect of the Book of Faith Initiative. Lead a Bible Conversation or Worship service structured around the fourfold questions and give each of the pastors something they can take home (like a bookmark) to use in their own setting.
50. Challenge conference pastors to Dwell in the Word at each conference meeting—pick a text that has nothing to do with an upcoming lectionary text—practice spending time with Scripture for reasons other than preparing to preach.
51. Volunteer to serve as the resource person for BFI in your conference. Talk to your Synod Office to get this process moving. Volunteer to help other congregations get started with BFI as well!
52. Lead a workshop on BFI and the fourfold method at the Synod Assembly.
53. Ask the Synod Assembly planning team to kick off the Assembly with a "Celebration of the Word" service.
54. Get in touch with your Synod Advocate (or those from nearby synods) and see where you can partner with them in their work in your synod.
55. If there is a Director of Evangelical Mission (DEM) in your synod, meet with them to figure out how you can partner to bring the Bible more closely into their work.



Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

God's work. Our hands.