

What Do You Believe?

Purpose: The twenty-four statements below reflect some assumptions often held about our beliefs in the church. There are so many different viewpoints about what we believe that it is helpful to sort these out occasionally. The purpose of this form is to give you an opportunity to struggle with:

- ! Some basic issues about the Christian faith.
- ! The task of the church.
- ! Education within the context of faith.
- ! To help clarify these particular assumptions in your own mind.

It may be helpful to discuss these with other people in your congregation. This form also will provide educational leaders with a better understanding of what the congregation considers to be the purpose of its educational ministry.

(See p. 3.6.4 for suggestions about studying responses to this questionnaire.)

Instructions: Indicate your opinion about each of the following statements on the scale of 1 to 5, circling the appropriate number.

Circle 1 if you *agree strongly* with the statement.

Circle 5 if you *disagree strongly*.

Circle 3 if you are *uncertain*.

Circle 2 or 4 to indicate mild agreement or disagreement.

If you find under any one of the three areas that no statement adequately expresses your personal belief, write your own statement in the space provided.

A. About the Christian faith, I believe:

	Agree	Disagree
1. The Bible is the Word of God without error and is the only source for understanding the meaning of the Christian faith.	1 2 3 4 5	
2. In the Bible, God is made known to humankind. It is a major source for learning about and understanding the meaning of the Christian faith.	1 2 3 4 5	
3. The Holy Spirit, who inspired the writing of the Scriptures, inspires those who faithfully read them.	1 2 3 4 5	
4. God in Christ changes our lives and expects us to be instruments for changing the world.	1 2 3 4 5	
5. Because the Bible tells of the work of God in the words of human beings, it reflects the culture of those who wrote it. This must be understood if it is to speak to us in the present day.	1 2 3 4 5	
6. Scripture demands a personal response to its message and becomes the basis for the Christian's actions.	1 2 3 4 5	
7. Christ calls persons into the community that is the church and calls this community to be come involved in the world.	1 2 3 4 5	

8. The only task of the Christian is to tell others about Christ.	1	2	3	4	5
9. Inclusive language helps us to talk about and to relate more easily to God.	1	2	3	4	5
10. Perspectives from different cultures help us to understand our relationship to God.	1	2	3	4	5
_____	1	2	3	4	5

B. About Teaching and Learning, I believe:

11. In today's world it is essential that all persons be taught skills for interpreting the Bible in order to understand its message.	1	2	3	4	5
12. Christian education should deal primarily with issues and needs in society that call for ethical decision and action by Christians acting individually and in community.	1	2	3	4	5
13. The church teaches by all it does.	1	2	3	4	5
14. Approaches to teaching in the church should be simple and based on direct interpretation of Scripture.	1	2	3	4	5
15. Under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, persons should explore the church's relation to society's problems.	1	2	3	4	5
16. Approaches to teaching in the church should be flexible and include a variety of teaching methods and approaches.	1	2	3	4	5
17. Teaching methods should be practical and uncomplicated, and should use readily available or obtainable materials.	1	2	3	4	5
18. Ordinarily, the setting for education in the church should be the weekly group session in the building.	1	2	3	4	5
19. Christian education should take full advantage of modern technology.	1	2	3	4	5
20. Stories and teachings of scripture should be presented in a manner appealing to the visual culture of children, youth, and adults.	1	2	3	4	5

C. About the church's task, I believe:

	1	2	3	4	5
21. Guided by an understanding of God's purpose for the world, education should focus on the collective witness and social ministry of God's people in the world.	1	2	3	4	5
22. Christian education is to enable persons (a) to know the content of the Bible, and (b) to understand their experiences and relationships in the light of the biblical message to the end that they may respond as faithful disciples.	1	2	3	4	5
23. Persons and groups in the church should seek to discover the authority of the Scriptures in their lives and in the life of the Christian community.	1	2	3	4	5
24. The church should bring individuals to a clear awareness of who they are, how they are a part of the continuing people of God, and how they must seek to transform the world.	1	2	3	4	5
25. The church should work for unity in its mission as a response to the biblical imperative that includes both personal witness and social responsibility.	1	2	3	4	5
26. The total life of the church should demonstrate and reinforce the relationship between one's individual life and one's participation in the corporate or community life of the church.	1	2	3	4	5
27. Christians should have the opportunity to testify to their faith in word and deed, both to other members of the Christian community and to persons outside it.	1	2	3	4	5
28. The purpose of Christian education is to provide a guide for moral conduct so that we may live better lives.	1	2	3	4	5

Studying Responses to “What Do You Believe?”

Use a blank form to tabulate the number of circles responses to each question. Note any comments or additions which individuals have made.

In studying the responses to the questionnaire, “What Do You Believe?”, it is helpful to look for:

- ! Statements where a majority of persons have indicated agreement or disagreement.
- ! Statements where both agreement and disagreement are reflected.
- ! Statements with a large number of responses in the uncertain column.
- ! A diversity of responses in three or more columns.

Try to get as clear and accurate a picture of the ideas expressed by those who filled out the questionnaire.

To summarize conclusions about what is learned, complete the following sentences:

- ! Our congregation sees the Christian faith as . . .
- ! Our congregation sees teaching and learning as . . .
- ! Our congregation sees the church’s task as . . .

This summary and the discussion which leads to it may be used in planning for the congregation’s education ministry in several ways:

- ! Consider using the summary statements in a statement defining the congregation’s education mission.
- ! If you have used the resource *Planning the Church’s Educational Mission in a Local Setting*, compare the learnings from “What Do You Believe?” to learnings developed through the listening process in that resource.
- ! In examining resources for teaching and learning, compare the theological and educational goals of each resource with statements which reflect your congregation’s faith, commitments to teaching and learning, and vision of the church’s task.
- ! Where there is diversity of ideas in the congregation, consider developing educational settings where there can be more dialogue and learning about the issues involved.