

LEAD: THE YELLOW BANANA TEST

Effective Congregational Adult Faith Formation Conversation

Take this 25 question True or False Test – or better yet, ask a few leaders in your congregation to complete it!

Mark a T for True or an F for False on each line.

- ___ Adult faith formation reflects the vision, mission and values of the congregation.
- ___ Adult learners create their own learning labs rather than being served a set menu for learning.
- ___ Learning happens outside of Sunday mornings and off church property.
- ___ Faith formation experiences include service to the community.
- ___ Adults are encouraged to learn and participate in Global Mission.
- ___ Relevant conversations around issues of justice encourage people to be advocates, connecting their faith with their political and social views.
- ___ There is extreme hospitality for people who are new to learning groups.
- ___ The learning season is designed to welcome new people by offering multiple “starts” during the year rather than an annual kick-off that makes it hard for new people to know when and how to enter.
- ___ Prayer groups are actively praying for people by name, even if they have not made a prayer request.
- ___ Spiritual direction is available or encouraged through resources in the community.
- ___ Retreats happen for people of all ages, not only for confirmation or high school students.
- ___ Church committees include faith-learning in their meetings along with the committee work.
- ___ Church council meetings take time for faith-learning.
- ___ The pastor is not the only teacher for adults.
- ___ Teachers have intentional time to learn, do book studies, pray, travel, retreat and/or serve.
- ___ Stories of God-moments in daily life are shared in the community.
- ___ Newsletters, websites and emails to adults include faith stories.
- ___ People come together to know God more deeply.
- ___ Everything the church does is essentially “teaching” people about following Jesus.
- ___ Adults are encouraged to have or be faith-mentors, not just to children or youth.
- ___ There are opportunities to learn in ecumenical and/or inter-faith communities.
- ___ People are motivated to learn because they have a voice in what studies are offered.
- ___ There are faith-learning opportunities that take seriously adult life transitions like marriage, parenting, unanticipated illness, empty nests, retirement, loss of loved ones, drug or alcohol recovery, divorce, etc. recognizing that these times of disorientation are also times of openness to growth.
- ___ Intentional pilgrimages or trips are encouraged, supported and reflected on by the congregation.
- ___ Adults participate in life-groups, small groups or other intentional highly-relational communities that meet regularly for a year.

Count your answers. _____ True _____ False

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Scoring: The goal of this true / false test is to start a conversation rather than rank congregations. You will have to judge for yourself what type of banana your answers reveal.

Green Banana – Your congregation is planning to do some of these things but needs more information on how to make things happen.

Yellow Banana – Your congregation is already doing many of these things and you can see evidence of adults growing in their faith. You may find this Adult Spirituality list by Jim Merhaut helpful.

- Christian spirituality is a movement from selfish to love.
- Christian spirituality connects us with God (the Trinity) in a communal setting.
- Christian spirituality is nurtured through scripture and church tradition.
- Christian spirituality informs and forms every part of our lives.

Rotten Banana – Your congregation either used to do some of these things and is not really doing much of this now or you are frustrated after reading this list because you either don't like the list or wish others in your congregation would make this stuff happen.

A Banana Reflection:

Think of this as a conversation starter rather than a win-lose or judgment on anything, much less faith formation. LEAD believes every congregation can grow in their capacity to follow Jesus. **None of us have the full banana!** There are many ways to increase the capacity to deepen the faith life of adults in your congregation, and this is an important strategic goal. Have a little fun with this!

LEAD offers ways to engage in this conversation, to learn together and to deepen our own faith as leaders. We are partnering with organizations that can provide coaching in each of these learning areas. The hope – we will say this out loud – is to create a hunger among leaders of all ages in our congregations to deepen their faith and strengthen their capacity to lead others in the faith.