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## Ministers modernizing church

**Michael Clancy**  
 The Arizona Republic  
 Feb. 5, 2005 12:00 AM

Two Valley pastors have created a new program for churches to use to initiate new members and educate existing ones.

Methodist pastors David Felten and Jeff Proctor-Murphy call their program "Living the Questions," which they see as an alternative to the popular Alpha Course, used in 73 Valley churches, most of them mainline Protestant.

Felten, pastor of Scottsdale's Via de Cristo United Methodist Church, said the program is an attempt to modernize Christianity by revamping doctrines and dogmas that were created more than 1,000 years ago.



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"There is clearly a need for resources for progressive churches," he said. "We are beyond thinking about Christianity the way it has been through the ages."

Both pastors are leaders in the No Longer Silent-Clergy for Justice organization, which supports the inclusion of gay members in churches.

Much of Felten's concern focuses on the Bible. Even in the first book, Genesis, a close reading makes clear that two creation stories have been sandwiched together over time, he said.

The stories were written in different languages at different times for different audiences and different purposes, he said.

"We need to learn to read the Bible metaphorically and not literally," he said.

Materials for the program put it this way:

"There is a quiet revolution going on. Many people of deep spiritual integrity simply cannot suffer the shallow message of the churches of their birth, nor can they tolerate the simplistic pop theology of the televangelists and their fundamentalist followers."

"We were trying to create a program without easy answers," Felten said. "We believe true wisdom lies in wrestling with the questions."

"Christianity will become more and more marginalized if people's questions are not taken seriously."

The two decided to publish the program privately "so we could be forthright in stating our convictions and calling prejudices into account," said Proctor-Murphy, pastor of Asbury United Methodist Church in Phoenix.

The pair are advertising the program in such mainstream magazines as *Christian*

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For more information on Living Questions:

- On the Internet:  
[www.livingthequestions.com](http://www.livingthequestions.com)

- By e-mail:  
[Info@livingthequestions.com](mailto:Info@livingthequestions.com)

- By telephone: (877) 838-9843.

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They will not advertise in more conservative magazines.

"We will get enough controversy as it is," Felten said.

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