

Study invites questions of faith

12-week course aims to link Christianity with modern life

By Jim Baker, Journal-World

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That's the philosophy of "Living the Questions," a 12-week DVD- and Web-based small group study exploring beyond the traditions and theologies many people might be used to encountering in their churches.

The study -- created by two United Methodist pastors serving diverse and theologically progressive congregations -- is designed as a method of Christian invitation, initiation and spiritual formation.

Its purpose is to help seekers discover the significance of Christianity in the 21st century and what a meaningful faith can look like in today's world.

Ecumenical Christian Ministries, 1204 Oread Ave., and Plymouth Congregational Church, 925 Vt., are teaming to co-sponsor "Living the Questions" for anyone who would like to participate.

The study, which meets from 6 p.m. to 8 p.m. Wednesdays at ECM, began this week. Roughly 25 people have indicated their interest so far.

The format of each session includes a shared meal, watching a DVD, guided discussion, spiritual exercises and Bible study.

"It's a way for people to discuss where they are, who they are as a person of faith and to accept them wherever they are on their journey," says the Rev. Thad

Holcombe, ECM's campus pastor.

"That appealed to us because college students are trying to make sense out of their lives, and they're trying to see if being faith connected helps that. We checked into it, looked at the ("Living the Questions") Web site and decided, 'Let's go for it.'"

The Rev. Peter Luckey, Plymouth's senior pastor, sees the study -- which is open to the community -- as an intergenerational opportunity for Kansas University students to have fellowship with members of his church.

"So many people in a place like Plymouth long to hear the voices of young people -- what's on their minds, what their questions are. The greatest fruit of this study will be the interaction of Plymouth members of all ages with

Want to go?

Sessions of the 12-week study "Living the Questions" will be from 6 p.m. to 8 p.m. Wednesdays at Ecumenical Christian Ministries, 1204 Oread Ave. Cost of the meal served during each session is \$2 for students and \$5 for other participants.

college youths," he says.

Holcombe, Luckey and several KU students will take turns facilitating the sessions at ECM.

There will be ample opportunities for participants to explore new ideas and share their own perspectives on Christianity.

"This study will provide a safe environment where people do have permission to ask the questions they've always wanted to ask about the Christian faith but have been hesitant to do before," Holcombe says.

"This stuff is out there; it's exciting. We don't need to hide it from anybody. Some of it may be disturbing to people, but they can wrestle it. It's not just for (theology) professionals."

Liz Franklin, 21, a KU senior from Cedar Falls, Iowa, will be one of the session facilitators.

Franklin serves on ECM's student leadership team, has coordinated its weekly "Faith Forum: A Liberating Take on Christianity," and is a member of ECM's sexual education committee.

"I think it's good for ECM to do this because it deals with where a lot of college students are: in states of limbo. This study kind of normalizes that, reassures people that's what you're supposed to be doing with your faith: living the questions," she says.

"When you start to live with an answer, you can grow stagnant."

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No new participants will be accepted after the study's second session, which is Wednesday.

For more information, call ECM at 843-4933 or Plymouth Congregational Church at 843-3220. Or go online to

www.livingthequestions.com

