

NOTE: What follows is the **OUTLINE** of a curriculum designed to help individuals become effective AoF Leaders/Facilitators. No prior education or training is needed. We encourage each organization that is helping to administer the Acts of Faith to apply their own teaching style and resources to this curriculum structure. If assistance is needed, the staff of Firebird Spirit, Inc. is able to provide this training online. The complete curriculum is designed for a 10-12 week period (1 hour/session ... this can also be accomplished in 2 full days of group formation.) However, we caution against making assumptions that your leaders will automatically possess or have finely honed these skills on their own.

Acts of Faith Leadership Curriculum 2026 Revision

The Acts of Faith (AoF) model is built on a simple but transformative conviction: **ministry flourishes when leadership is shared**. Every Act of Faith — whether a discussion circle, grief support gathering, neighborhood meal, artistic collaboration, Bible study, walking meditation, justice initiative, or worship experience — is designed to be community-led rather than clergy-dependent. **(Clergy-RESOURCED, yes ... Clergy-DEPENDENT, no!)**

This curriculum reflects a decentralized, relational, and mission-centered approach to spiritual leadership for a changing world. While rooted in the broad Jesus tradition — particularly the values of community, hospitality, justice, compassion, mutuality, and spiritual growth — the curriculum is intentionally adaptable across denominations, contexts, and communities ... even those with NO religious affiliation.

Different Acts of Faith require different forms of preparation. A leader facilitating contemplative walks may need different tools than someone guiding theological discussion or organizing community action. At the same time, all leaders are encouraged to develop a foundational understanding of Scripture, theology, worship, community formation, communication, and ethical leadership. This is not to imply that academic pursuit is necessary, but rather that leaders are truly open to personal growth in all of these areas.

The role of the larger organizing body — whether a congregation, network, nonprofit, or spiritual community — is **not to control individual Acts of Faith, but to resource them**. The wider community provides guidance, mentoring, theological grounding, administrative support, encouragement, and continuing education while allowing each Act of Faith the freedom to adapt to the needs, culture, and lived experience of its participants.

Acts of Faith are intentionally grassroots and relational. Participants may identify strongly with a particular AoF community while also remaining connected to other spiritual communities — or none at all. The model recognizes that meaningful spiritual community often emerges through shared practices, shared purpose, and shared care rather than through institutional membership alone.

This revised curriculum reflects the evolving realities of digital-first community building, hybrid gathering spaces, justice-centered spirituality, neurodiversity, intergenerational leadership, and

the growing need for adaptive forms of belonging in an increasingly disconnected world.

Guiding Vision

We believe that spiritual leadership begins with relationship: relationship with the Sacred, with one another, with ourselves, and with the world we are helping to shape.

The Acts of Faith Model seeks to nurture leaders who embody compassion, justice, curiosity, creativity, humility, courage, and deep respect for human dignity. We affirm that the sacred can be encountered through worship, conversation, service, learning, art, advocacy, silence, hospitality, storytelling, and community care.

The purpose of this curriculum is not simply to transfer information, but to cultivate reflective, grounded, ethical leaders who can help create spaces where people experience connection, meaning, healing, and hope.

Foundational Understandings

1. Learning Format

The primary learning unit is a 20–30 minute video module accompanied, when appropriate, by readings, worksheets, discussion prompts, or practical exercises.

2. Flexible Access

Training materials may be delivered through online learning platforms, hybrid cohorts, local discussion groups, livestreams, or in-person gatherings. Participants are encouraged to engage the material at their own pace while remaining connected to reflective conversation and mentoring.

3. Cohort-Based Growth

Leadership development happens best in community. Whenever possible, participants should engage in local or digital learning circles where they can reflect together, ask questions, and support one another's growth.

4. Context Matters

Partner communities are encouraged to adapt the curriculum to reflect their own geography, culture, theology, demographics, and mission priorities while maintaining the core values of mutuality, justice, compassion, and relational leadership.

5. Formation Over Information

The purpose of the curriculum is not merely academic mastery. It is designed to foster discernment, practical wisdom, emotional maturity, spiritual depth, and relational awareness.

6. Core and Specialized Learning

Certain modules will be identified as core learning for all AoF leaders. Additional specialized

learning pathways may be required depending on the nature of a particular ministry or community focus.

7. Accessible Education

This curriculum is designed for everyday leaders. Prior theological education is NOT required. Materials are written in accessible language while still encouraging thoughtful engagement with complex ideas.

8. Reflection and Integration

Participants are encouraged to move through the curriculum slowly enough to allow for personal reflection, practice, coaching conversations, and communal discernment.

Outline of the Leadership Curriculum

Introduction Session

An overview of the Acts of Faith model, leadership expectations, the philosophy behind decentralized ministry, and the structure of the curriculum.

Area One — Bible (4 session)

Take Away Theme: The Sacred has always been present within human history, community, and creation.

- Reading Scripture in Context

An introduction to historical and contextual approaches to Scripture, including questions of authorship, audience, culture, translation, oral tradition, and interpretation.

- Hebrew Scriptures / Old Testament Overview

Themes of covenant, liberation, justice, creation, lament, resilience, and communal identity.

- New Testament Overview

The life and teachings of Jesus, the decentralized early church, the Book of Acts, Pauline and non-Pauline writings, and the evolving nature of Christian community.

- Biblical Application

Helping leaders thoughtfully interpret Scripture in ways that are compassionate, grounded, ethical, and relevant to contemporary life.

Area Two — Theology (2 session)

Take Away Theme: Spiritual integrity shapes both personal and communal life.

- The Story of the Church

An overview of major Christian traditions, structures, and theological perspectives.

- Reformed and Progressive Traditions

Exploring themes such as freedom of conscience, the sovereignty of God, mutuality, justice,

grace, and the communal nature of faith.

- Emerging and Liberation Theologies

Introducing liberation, feminist, womanist, queer, ecological, disability, and other contextual theologies that expand understanding and inclusion.

- Practical Theology

Helping leaders recognize that theology is lived daily through decisions, relationships, language, priorities, and action.

Area Three — Worship and Spiritual Practice (1 or 2 Sessions)

Take Away Theme: The sacred can be encountered anywhere when intention, presence, and relationship are centered.

- What Is Worship?

Expanding the understanding of worship beyond traditional institutional forms.

- Community and Relationship

Exploring how authentic spiritual community is formed through mutual care, vulnerability, hospitality, creativity, and shared purpose.

- Reimagining Spiritual Gathering

Developing adaptive, participatory, and context-sensitive forms of spiritual expression for contemporary communities.

Area Four — Community Organizing and Leadership (2 or 3 Sessions)

Take Away Theme: Healthy communities are built through relationships, trust, and shared ownership.

- Building Community

Understanding healthy group dynamics, belonging, and relational leadership.

- Starting and Sustaining a Group

Practical guidance for launching and maintaining grassroots gatherings.

- Communication and Public Presence

Using digital tools, storytelling, social media, and local outreach effectively and ethically.

- Conflict Transformation

Developing healthy approaches to disagreement, accountability, and repair.

- Mutuality and Power Dynamics

Recognizing the importance of shared leadership, inclusion, transparency, and emotional safety within communities.

Conclusion Session (1 Session)

A final integrative session drawing together the themes of the curriculum while encouraging ongoing learning, spiritual growth, and adaptive leadership.

Acts of Faith leadership is not about creating experts or gatekeepers.

It is about helping ordinary people recognize their capacity to create spaces of connection, meaning, compassion, justice, healing, and hope in everyday life.

In a rapidly changing world, adaptive spiritual communities will increasingly emerge through relationships, shared practices, localized networks, digital gathering spaces, creative collaboration, and acts of courage rooted in love.

This curriculum exists to help nurture those leaders.