

Stage 3: The Story

The Parish Study

Ministering to our people and neighbourhood

workbook and discussion guide based
on *Christianity for the Rest of Us*



Acknowledgements

This workbook and discussion guide was written by Paige Dampier and Tasha Carrothers.

Bible studies for the practices of discernment (p. 9) and healing (p. 10) were drawn from the website Practicing Our Faith, www.practicingourfaith.org

Permission to reprint from the following copyright sources is acknowledged with thanks:

Dorothy Brooker et al, *In Other Words: Worship Resources for Women's Groups* (Association of Anglican Women: Waiapu, New Zealand) 1993, pp. 40, 48, 69, 72

Gertrude Lebens, *Out of the fire* (Worship and Theology of Liberation) (artemis enterprises, Dundas, Ontario) 1992, p.117

Permission is still being sought from the following sources:

_____, *Evangelical Lutheran Worship*, (Augsburg Fortress: Minneapolis) 2006, p. 304

_____, *Iona Abbey Worship Book* (Wild Goose Publications: Glasgow), 1988

Frank Colquhoun (ed), *New Parish Prayers* (Hodder and Stoughton) 1999

Janet Morley (ed), *Bread of Tomorrow: Prayers for the Church Year*, (Orbis Books: Maryknoll) 1992, pp. 125, 130

Wild Goose Resource Group, *Wee Worship Book: 4th Incarnation* (Wild Goose Publications: Glasgow) 2004, pp. 29, 52, 54

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Outline

First meeting

Following bible study, the task of the first meeting is to

- examine and discern practices
- confirm the number of sessions
- organize the readings, and
- brainstorm and organize interviews and/or special guests

Next 2 to 4 meetings

The following sessions will entail

- bible study and
- examining specific practices in light of the congregation's practice, insights drawn from interviews in the community and within the parish, and information in the Community Profile and the Official Community Plan

Participants will need to prepare for these sessions by reading selected chapters of *Christianity for the Rest of Us*, interviewing parishioners, meeting with members of the broader community, and reviewing the Official Community Plan.

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First meeting

In *Christianity for the Rest of Us*, Diana Butler Bass identifies ten practices that she observed in visiting vital mainline Christian communities throughout the United States. She says: “Being a Christian is not a one-moment miracle of salvation. It takes practice.” (p. 75) The congregations she visited do not engage all ten practices; rather, they are intentional about a few of them, and build on what they do well. Drawing on these ten practices, this workbook aims to help parishes—spiritual communities that form people in faith—identify what they do best now and into the future.

The study group will review ten Christian practices of vital congregations. The group will then discern three that resonate, and over the following sessions will use guided discussion to examine parish life through these practices.

The main work of this meeting is to identify three practices that the parish intentionally engages, so it is a good idea to have wide representation. The study coordinator should invite the wardens and any members of parish council who are interested in attending.

To expand the group’s understanding of specific aspects of parish life, special guests can be invited to contribute to the conversation at later sessions. Or, group members can interview key leaders in the parish.

Homework

Before each session, all participants will have read selected reading. Designated participants will have interviewed people in the parish or invited them to attend the session, and interviewed people in the broader community. Yet another delegated participant will have read the Official Community Plan.

Each session includes reflection on Scripture followed by a discussion of parish life. The discussions are based on personal experience, readings and interviews. Each session closes with prayer. Please leave enough time for bible study and prayer.

Resources to bring to each session:

- a bible
- Community Profile and parish-specific data
- Official Community Plan
- *Christianity for the Rest of Us*

Participants can read the whole book or just sections. It is suggested that participants read at least the following sections, as well as the chapters on the three specific practices:

- Part III: From Tourists to Pilgrims, pages 215 to 217
- Chapter Fifteen: Transforming Lives, pages 219 to 238
- Chapter Sixteen: Transforming Congregations, pages 239 to 254
- Chapter Seventeen: Transforming the World, pages 255 to 278

Who participates?

MAP leadership team

clergy

wardens

special guests

any interested parishioners

Discerning practices

1. Bible Study

Read the passage twice out loud.

So those who welcomed his message were baptized, and that day about three thousand persons were added. They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. Awe came upon everyone, because many wonders and signs were being done by the apostles. All who believed were together and had all things in common; they would sell their possessions and goods and distribute the proceeds to all, as any had need. Day by day, as they spent much time together in the temple, they broke bread at home and ate their food with glad and generous hearts, praising God and having the goodwill of all the people. And day by day the Lord added to their number those who were being saved.

Acts 2:41-47

What are some key words or phrases, images, or important characters?

2. Examining Ten Practices of Vital Congregations

On pages 6 and 7 you will find a summary of ten Christian practices. Which ones do you think your congregation intentionally engages? The group should select three practices. These will guide further reflection on building, finances, people, and the congregation's role in the wider community.

What are Christian practices?

From *Christianity for the Rest of Us*: "Practice is different from program. Practices are things that Christian people do that meet fundamental human needs and serve God's kingdom in the world." Butler Bass observed ten practices and the ways in which vital congregations engage them. Congregations do not engage all ten; rather, they are intentional about a few practices. These intentional practices guide Christian pilgrims on their journey of transformation of self, of faith communities and of the world (Butler Bass, p. 11).

3. Interviews with parishioners

Thinking about the three practices that you have decided to focus on, brainstorm the names of some people inside your parish who are leaders in these areas.

Decide who will interview them. If you turn to the specific practices in pages 8 to 17 of this study guide, there are suggested questions to help guide the interview. These questions are provided as a jumping off point; interviewers are free to ask their own questions. Alternately, the study group may prefer to invite these people to attend the session at which you will be discussing this practice.

4. Interviews in the wider community

Interviewing people in the broader community may feel intimidating. Who should you talk to? How do you call a complete stranger and ask for their time? Some ways to prepare are:

- The preparation notes with each practice are a starting point for identifying likely people.
- Parishioners will likely know people in the relevant fields.
- Before making a cold call, review why you are calling and what you are asking for. Practice on a family member!
- If someone can't meet with you themselves, ask them to suggest someone else. The school principal might be too busy, but could connect you with the PAC chairperson.

These interviews might feel forced, but many parishes have been increasingly isolated from their neighbourhood. MAP is designed to help parishes bridge this divide. If we want to feed the world, we need to know where the hunger lies.

4. Closing prayer

O God, you have called your people to ventures of which we cannot see the ending, by paths as yet untrodden, through changes unknown. Give us faith to go out with good courage, not knowing where we go, but only that your hand is leading us and your love supporting us; through Jesus Christ.

Amen

Evangelical Lutheran Worship, p. 304

Ten Practices

Hospitality

Hospitality is a way of caring for all God's children. It is welcoming strangers into community. It is a central practice of faith that is done for its own sake, not as a means to recruit new members. Christians welcome strangers as we ourselves have been welcomed into God through the love of Jesus Christ. Hospitality implies a lack of judgment. It changes both the host and the guest. As a pilgrim of Christ, you will sometimes be a host, sometimes the guest. Hospitality is a way of overcoming fear and isolation.

If you have chosen Hospitality as one of your three practices, turn to page 8.

Discernment

Discernment is reflecting on how a person knows that what they do, think or feel is right, holy or of God. Discernment is about asking God-questions instead of I-questions. For example, the question is not, 'what do individuals want of and from the church?' but rather 'what does God want of the church and its people?'. Discernment includes reflective questioning and making faithful connections between the past, the present and the future. It includes reflecting on Scripture, congregation-wide call and vocation processes, individual and group spiritual direction, and prayer practice. Discernment includes serious reflection on scripture, grounded in prayer and informed by experience. It can be as simple as telling stories, asking straightforward questions, and listening for the way forward.

If you have chosen Discernment as one of your three practices, turn to page 9.

Healing

The Christian practice of healing relates to harmony. It is a vision of spiritual, mental, physical, relational balance, integration and wholeness. Healing practices include: people visiting the sick, prayer groups, weekly intercessions, healing prayer after or during services, lighting candles for the sick, prayers shawls, and seeking balance and healing through walking a labyrinth. It includes a vision of the church as a hospital for the weary, welcoming all to God's healing grace. Healing is linked with salvation in the sense that God heals and transforms us so that we in turn can open ourselves to transforming the world. Healing is often linked with hospitality in the form of tending to needs through acts of kindness and pastoral care.

If you have chosen Healing as one of your three practices, turn to page 10.

Contemplation

Christian contemplative practice invites people to listen to God, not just to pray for things. It is a call to put aside the frenzy of contemporary life. It can be practiced individually, in small groups and as part of community worship. It can form part of meetings, Bible studies, pastoral care sessions, labyrinth walks, yoga classes and discernment groups. Forms of prayer include centering, contemplative, meditative, bodily, healing, thanksgiving, knitting shawls, building Habitat for Humanity houses, and worship.

If you have chosen Contemplation as one of your three practices, turn to page 11.

Testimony

Testimony is the practice of people talking about their experience of God. It is rooted in early church practice and involves people speaking to the power of God changing lives and communities. It is an opportunity to share stories of faith outside of church. Stories are about finding meaning, finding unique selves, and finding God in a confusing and chaotic world. It is sometimes called a “spirituality of imperfection”.

If you have chosen Testimony as one of your three practices, turn to page 12.

Diversity

Traditionally, congregations formed around common language and customs. The contemporary understanding of the value of diversity is that it reflects God-love for all humanity. Diversity can mean different politics, theologies, cultures and races. Congregations embrace diversity as a way of living out God’s love for all peoples: children, sinners, tax collectors, women, thieves, and so on. It upholds the notion that despite our differences, we will be transformed by love.

If you have chosen Diversity as one of your three practices, turn to page 13.

Justice

The Christian practice of justice takes its mandate from the Biblical teaching found in Micah 6:8—What does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God? Rather than Enlightenment ideals of fairness, equality, and human rights it sees justice as a spiritual journey, compassion enacted. Christians enact justice through practices of hospitality, prayer, discernment, testimony, and diversity.

If you have chosen Justice as one of your three practices, turn to page 14.

Worship

Worship is a way to open people’s souls to transcendent experiences of God. It focuses on experiences of God rather than beliefs about God. Worship is an experience that transforms the heart, and celebrates the life, teachings and acts of Jesus.

If you have chosen Worship as one of your three practices, turn to page 15.

Reflection

Theological reflection is a way of linking the intellectual content of faith to its everyday practice. Reflection combines intellectual liveliness and prayer; it includes Bible study as a practice of thoughtful faithfulness and sees learning as spiritual formation in a way of life that nurtures compassion and justice. Theological reflection integrates head and heart, spirit and intellect, tradition and questioning. It does not mean arriving at certain conclusions but rather can lead to glimpses of truth.

If you have chosen Reflection as one of your three practices, turn to page 16.

Beauty

As a Christian practice, beauty is about music, liturgy, and word supporting each other to make a beautiful presence in the community. It is about maintaining excellence while being flexible and open. It includes seeking God through art, music, and drama. It is one doorway to understanding, allowing some to move beyond mere facts to understanding God through the heart. In this sense, beauty is a form of prayer. Beauty can be linked with hospitality and justice. It can be a way to connect God and neighbour.

If you have chosen Beauty as one of your three practices, turn to page 17.

Hospitality

Readings

Chapter Five: Hospitality, pp 77 to 88

Internet reflection

What if Starbucks marketed like the Church?

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D7_dZTrjw9I

Preparation

Interviews in your parish

Seek out the members of your parish who are known for practicing hospitality or who seem to embody hospitality. Find out what they do and how they think about it. Possible interview questions include:

- What do you do? What is your understanding of hospitality?
- Who gives and who receives hospitality?
- Has this changed in the last ten years?
- How does the parish support this work?
- Do you have hopes or concerns for the future concerning hospitality?

Interviews in the broader community

Speak to two or three people in the geographic community around your church who are involved with hospitality. Some places to start are the executive directors of the neighbourhood house or food bank, a principal or elementary or secondary school, the community policing office, other clergy in the clericus or ministerial, or your MLA or MP. Before making contact, consider how your parish's understanding of hospitality would translate into secular terms. This will form the basis for your interview. Possible questions include:

- What do you do? What is your understanding of hospitality?
- Who gives and who receives hospitality?
- How has this changed in the last ten years?
- How do local faith communities support this work?
- Do you have hopes or concerns for the future concerning hospitality?

1. Bible Study

When they had finished eating, Jesus said to Simon Peter, 'Simon son of John, do you truly love me more than these?' 'Yes, Lord,' he said, 'you know that I love you.' Jesus said, 'Feed my lambs.' Again Jesus said, 'Simon son of John, do you truly love me?' He answered, 'Yes, Lord, you know that I love you.' Jesus said, 'Take care of my sheep.'

John 21: 15-17

What stands out for you in this reading? Do you see links between this passage and your parish's practice of hospitality?

2. Discussion

Turn to page 18, 19 or 20.

3. Closing prayer

From where we are to where you need us.

Jesus, now lead on.

From the security of what we know to the adventure of what you will reveal.

Jesus, now lead on.

To refashion the fabric of this world until it resembles the shape of your kingdom.

Jesus, now lead on.

Because you promise to feed and heal all those who come to you.

Jesus, now lead on.

Let us become the presence of Jesus in our world.

Jesus we are following you. Amen.

Wee Worship Book, p. 24

Discernment

Readings

Chapter Six: Discernment, pp 89 to 102

Internet reflections

http://www.practicingourfaith.org/prct_discernment_ways_ideas.html

<http://www.upperroom.org/methodx/thelife/> - especially the section on Prayer Methods

Preparation

Interviews in your parish

Seek out the members of your parish who are known for leading discernment activities or who seem to embody discernment. This is often clergy. Find out what they do and how they think about it. Possible interview questions include:

- What do you do? What is your understanding of discernment?
- Who participates in this practice?
- How has this changed in the last ten years?
- How does the parish support this work?
- Are there any gaps? Are there groups within the parish who do not engage in discernment? Do you have hopes or concerns for the future concerning discernment?

Interviews in the broader community

Because of the nature of this practice, it is difficult to find a secular equivalent. Interviews in the broader community might include meeting with leaders of other Christian communities or other faith communities.

1. Bible study

Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God; for many false prophets have gone out into this world.

1 John 4:1

The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.

Galatians 5:22-23

What promise does the practice of discernment bear for you? For your faith community? How might this practice provide opportunities to imagine solutions you did not anticipate and help your community to find better paths toward the future?

2. Discussion

Turn to page 18, 19 or 20.

3. Closing prayer

Loving God,

Open our hearts, so that we may feel the breath and play of your Spirit.

Unclench our hands, so that we may reach out to one another and touch and be healed.

Open our lips, that we may drink in the delight and wonder of life.

Unclog our ears, to hear your agony in our inhumanity.

Open our eyes, so that we may see Christ in friend and stranger.

Breathe your Spirit into us and touch our lives with the life of Christ. **Amen**

Bread for Tomorrow, p. 130

Healing

Readings

Chapter Seven: Healing, pp 103 to 114

Preparation

Interviews in your parish

Seek out the members of your parish who are known for practicing healing or who seem to embody healing. Possible interview questions include:

- What do you do? What is your understanding of healing?
- Who participates in this practice?
- How has this changed in the last ten years?
- How does the parish support this work?
- What are your hopes or concerns for the future concerning healing?

Interviews in the broader community

Speak to two or three people in the community who are involved with healing. Some places to start are the executive director of the community health centres; hospital and prison chaplains; extended care homes and hospices; and other clergy.

Before making contact, consider how your parish's understanding of healing would translate into secular terms. This will form the basis for your interview. Possible questions include:

- What do you do? What is your understanding of healing?
- Who participates in healing? What role do you see for members of the wider community?
- How has this changed in the last ten years?
- How do local faith communities support this work?
- What are your hopes or concerns for the future concerning healing?

1. Bible study

Jesus called the twelve and began to send them out two by two, and gave them authority over the unclean spirits... They cast out many demons, and anointed with oil many who were sick and cured them.

Mark 6:7,13

How have we let healing activities become separate from congregational life? What connection could they have? What new conceptions of healing can the church offer people who suffer from chronic illness?

2. Discussion

Turn to page 18, 19 or 20.

3. Closing prayer

O God, the source of our common life, when we are dry and scattered, when we are divided and alone, we long for connection, we long for community.

Breath of God, Breathe on us.

With those we live beside, whom we may be afraid to approach, with those we have only heard of, who see with different eyes, but whose lives are linked with ours, we long for connection, we long for community.

Breath of God, Breathe on us.

When we are dry and scattered, when we are divided and alone, when we are cut off from the source of our life, open our graves, O God, that all your people may be free to breathe, strong to move, and joyful to stand together to celebrate your name.

Breath of God, Breathe on us. Amen

Bread of Tomorrow, p. 125

Contemplation

Readings

Chapter Eight: Contemplation, pp 115 to 128

Internet reflections

A description of forms of contemplative prayer from the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America:

<http://www.prayingchurch.org/contemplative.html>

Reflections from Thomas Merton on contemplative prayer:

<http://ca.youtube.com/watch?v=KkYNaC29khhk&feature=related>

Preparation

Interview people in your parish

Seek out the members of your parish who are known for leading or practicing contemplation. This is often clergy. Find out what they do and how they think about it. Possible interview questions include:

- What do you do? What is your understanding of contemplation?
- Who participates in this practice?
- How has this changed in the last ten years?
- How does the parish support this work?
- Do you have hopes or concerns for the future concerning contemplation?

1. Bible study

And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the saints.

Ephesians 6: 18

What stands out for you in this reading? Do you see links between this passage and our parish's practice of contemplation?

2. Discussion

Turn to page 18, 19 or 20.

3. Closing prayer

Alpha and Omega, from the beginning to the end, you are God, the mystery beyond our knowing, yet revealed to us by your Beloved and revealed within human life. Come into our hearts that we may be born again to new relationship with each other and to a new commitment to the spirit of abundance. Come, O Holy One; come reawaken the bones of this dying age and fill us with resurrected life.

Amen

Out of the Fire, p. 117

Testimony

Readings

Chapter Nine: Testimony, pp 129 to 142

Preparation

Interviews in the parish

Seek out the members of your parish who participate in the practice of testimony. Talk to them about their understanding of what they do. Possible interview questions include:

- What is your understanding of testimony?
- How has this practice changed in the last ten years?
- How does the parish support this work?
- What are your thoughts for the future concerning testimony?

1. Bible study

On the first day of the week we came together to break bread. Paul spoke to the people and, because he intended to leave the next day, kept on talking until midnight.

Acts 20: 7

What stands out for you in this reading? What similarities and differences do you see between this passage and your parish's practice of testimony?

2. Discussion

Turn to page 18, 19 or 20.

3. Closing prayer

O come, let us sing to the Beloved, let us make a joyful noise to the rock of our salvation! Psalm 95:1

To you, God of creation,
we sing a new song of praise.
A song of trees planted by streams
of living water,
a song of mountains
clapping their hands for joy,
a song of cities delighting
in heavenly harmony,
a song of people that were lost
and have been found.
For the whole earth belongs to our
God,
and we shall rejoice and be glad in it.

Alleluia, Amen
Origin unknown

Diversity

Readings

Chapter Ten: Diversity, pp 141 to 156

Preparation

Interviews in your parish

Seek out the members of your parish who are known for promoting diversity. Find out what they do and how they think about it. Possible interview questions include:

- What do you do? What is your understanding of diversity?
- Who encourages this practice?
- How has diversity changed in the last ten years?
- How does the parish support this work?
- What are your thoughts for the future concerning diversity?

Interviews in the broader community

Speak to two or three people in the community who are involved with diversity. Some places to start are the executive director of a local immigrant organization or the neighbourhood house, the clergy of other faith communities, or advocacy groups for local gays and lesbians or disabled people.

Possible questions include:

- What do you do? What is your understanding of diversity?
- Who promotes diversity?
- How has diversity changed in the last ten years?
- How do local faith communities support this work?
- What are your hopes or concerns for the future concerning diversity?

1. Bible study

[F]or all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.

Galatians 3: 27-28

What stands out for you in this reading? Is this reading about diversity or conformity? Who is left out?

2. Discussion

Turn to page 18, 19 or 20.

3. Closing prayer

Breath of God,
Breath of life,
Breath of deepest yearning,
Come Holy Spirit come.

Comforter,
Disturber
Interpreter,
Encourager,
Come Holy Spirit come.

Heavenly friend,
Earthly companion,
Lamplighter,
Sun maker
Revealer of truth,
Midwife of change,
Come Holy Spirit come.

Our Holy God is here.
God's spirit goes with us. Amen

Wee Worship Book, p. 54

Justice

Readings

Chapter Eleven: Justice, pp 157 to 170

Preparation

Interviews in your parish

Seek out the members of your parish who are known for promoting justice. Find out what they do and how they think about it. Possible interview questions include:

- What do you do? What is your understanding of justice?
- Who encourages this practice?
- How has “doing justice” changed in the last ten years?
- How does the parish support this work?
- What are your thoughts for the future concerning justice work?

Interviews in the broader community

Speak to two or three people in the community who are involved with promoting justice. Some places to start are the executive director of a local advocacy group. Groups exist to promote justice for low income people, First Nations, and disabled people, among others. Neighbourhood houses often host free law clinics; the clinic coordinator would be a good person to talk to. Local groups will also promote eco-justice.

Possible questions include:

- What do you do? What is your understanding of justice?
- Who promotes justice in this community?
- How has justice work changed in the last ten years?
- How do local faith communities support this work?
- What are your hopes or concerns for the future concerning justice?

1. Bible study

[A]nd what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?

Micah 6: 8

What stands out for you in this reading? Why do you think this passage links doing justice with loving kindness and walking humbly?

2. Discussion

Turn to page 18, 19 or 20.

3. Closing prayer

Reshape us, O Holy God,
until in generosity,
in faith,
and in expectation
that the best is yet to come,
we are rendered truly Christ-like.
Make us passionate followers of Jesus
rather than passive supporters.
Make our hearts as well as our churches
places of radical discipleship
and signposts to heaven,
then, in us, through us, and—if need
be—despite us,
let your dream for Earth come quickly.

Amen

Wee Worship Book, p. 79

Worship

Readings

Chapter Twelve: Worship, pp 171 to 183

Preparation

Interviews in your parish

Seek out the members of your parish who participate in planning, preparing for, or leading worship. Find out what they do and how they think about it. Possible interview questions include:

- What do you do? What is your understanding of worship?
- How has worship changed in the last ten years?
- How does this practice serve the world around us?
- What are your thoughts for the future concerning worship?

1. Bible study

Shout for joy to the Lord, all the earth.
Worship the Lord with gladness;
come before him with joyful songs.

Know that the Lord is God.

It is he who made us, and we are his;
we are his people, the sheep of his
pasture.

Enter his gates with thanksgiving and
his courts with praise;
give thanks to him and praise his name.

For the Lord is good and his love
endures forever;
this faithfulness continues through all
generations.

Psalm 100

What stands out for you in this psalm?
What links do you see between this
passage and your parish's worship?

2. Discussion

Turn to page 18, 19 or 20.

3. Closing prayer

Lead us Gentle One into the world,
Help us tread lightly on the good earth,
For it is the dwelling-place of God;
Help us deal gently with all living
things,

For they are created by our God;
Help us live simply, humbly,
and joyfully,

Remembering that we are the beloved
children of our Generous God.

And the blessing of God—
Lover, Beloved and Love—
renew us, sustain us
and strengthen us,
now and always. Amen.

In Other Words, p. 69

Reflection

Readings

Chapter Thirteen: Reflection, pp 185 to 199

Preparation

Interviews in your parish

Seek out the members of your parish who lead or participate in bible study and other kinds of reflection. Find out what they do and how they think about it. Possible interview questions include:

- What do you do? What is your understanding of theological reflection?
- Who encourages this practice?
- How has theological reflection changed in the last ten years?
- How does the parish support this practice?
- What are your thoughts for the future concerning theological reflection?

Interviews in the broader community

Speak to two or three people in the community who are involved with promoting continuing education.

Possible questions include:

- What do you do? What is your understanding of continuing education?
- Why do people participate in continuing education?
- How has continuing education changed in the last ten years?
- What are your thoughts for the future concerning continuing education?

1. Bible study

After three days they found him in the temple courts, sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions.

Luke 2: 46

What stands out for you in this reading? How does this model of reflection compare with the practice in your parish?

2. Discussion

Turn to page 18, 19 or 20.

3. Closing prayer

Throughout this week,
Enliven our minds,
Inspire our conversation,
Inform our decisions,
And protect those we love.
And should this week bring
What we neither anticipate nor desire,
Increase our faith
and decrease our pride
Until we know that,
When we face the unexpected,
we do not stand alone.
Hear our prayers
Made in the name and presence
Of our beloved friend Jesus Christ.

Amen

Wee Worship Book, p. 52

Beauty

Readings

Chapter Fourteen: Beauty, pp 201 to 214

Preparation

Interviews in your parish

Seek out the members of your parish who partipate in or support beauty through music, liturgy, architecture, art or drama. Find out what they do and how they think about it. Possible interview questions include:

- What do you do? Why is beauty important to you?
- Who encourages this practice?
- How has the place of “beauty” in the parish changed in the last ten years?
- How does the parish support this practice?
- What are your thoughts for the future concerning the practice of beauty?

Interviews in the broader community

Speak to two or three people in the community who are involved with the arts.

Possible questions include:

- What do you do? What is your understanding of the arts and community?
- How have the arts changed in the last ten years?
- What are your thoughts for the future concerning art and community?

1. Bible study

Sing joyfully to the Lord, you righteous; it is fitting for the upright to praise him. Praise the Lord with the harp; make music to him on the ten-stringed lyre.

Sing to him a new song; play skillfully, and shout for joy.

For the word of the Lord is right and true; he is faithful in all he does.

The Lord loves righteousness and justice; the earth is full of his unfailling love.

Psalm 33: 1-5

What stands out for you in this reading? This psalm asks people to “shout for joy”, “sing a new song”, and “play skillfully.” It also links these practices with justice and love. How does this compare with “beauty” as it is practiced in your parish?

2. Discussion

Turn to page 18, 19 or 20.

3. Closing prayer

Spirit of beauty, Spirit of love,
Spirit of hope; comforting Spirit,
healing Spirit, patient Spirit,
Spirit of peace; Holy Spirit of God,
come into our hearts
and stay with us now,
and forever more. Amen.

In Other Words, p. 482

Discussion questions

Practice under discussion: _____

<p>Question 1. Describe an experience where you have observed, received or somehow participated in this practice. What happened? How did you feel?</p> <p>What do you think are the core values that lead to this practice?</p>	<p>Question 2. List the ways your parish engages this practice. Who participates? Do different generations practice it differently?</p>	<p>Question 3. Think about the day-to-day operations of your church. If this practice is part of the work of the church, how does the “church work” at your parish support it? Brainstorm everything from signage, phone answering, greeting, to clergy time, committees, etc.</p>
<p>Question 4. Review your Community Profile and the Official Community Plan. Reflect on information gleaned from the interviews with members of the wider community. What directions does this data suggest for this practice?</p>	<p>Question 5. What does this practice look like in your preferred future? How will this practice touch the lives of</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ people in the parish? ▪ people who have just come through the door? ▪ friends and family members? ▪ people in the surrounding community? 	<p>Building and Finances In reflecting on the preceding questions, comments may come up about the building or finances. Note them here for reference when you are completing the building and finances workbooks.</p>

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