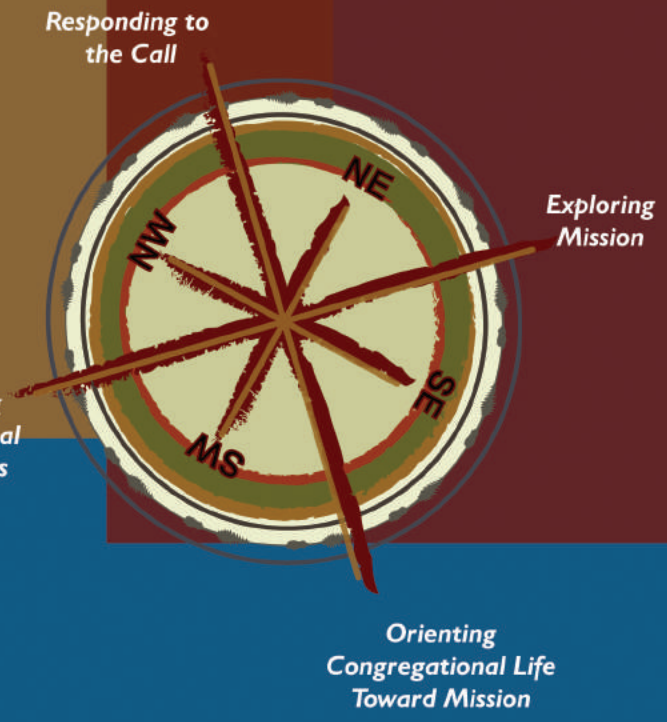
Community of Christ

Pastors and Leaders FIELD GUIDE

USE THIS GUIDE TO:

- "live into" shared practices of Christian discipleship that create a congregational culture shaped by the mission of Jesus Christ
- engage the gifts of all ages in mission
- organize a well-functioning congregation



Printed in USA

Produced by Community of Christ
1001 W. Walnut St.
Independence, MO 64050-3562

Herald Publishing House
P.O. Box 390
Independence, MO 64051-0390

© 2012 Herald Publishing House
All rights reserved. Published 2012.
Printed in the United States of America
ISBN: 978-0-8309-1542-2

Cover Design: José Carreón
Book Design: Lynda Roberson and Patty Wilson

Contents

Letter from the Editors

New Pastors: Getting Started

Responding to the Call

Pastoring Basics ..... *Responding to the Call—1*
The Congregation Embodies Christ's Mission ..... *Responding to the Call—7*
What Mission Means ..... *Responding to the Call—19*

Exploring Mission

Sharing Leadership and Ministry ..... *Exploring Mission—1*
Discovering Our Context for Mission ..... *Exploring Mission—11*
Becoming Sacred Community: A Foundation for Mission ..... *Exploring Mission—19*
Discerning God's Call for Mission ..... *Exploring Mission—25*
Orienting Mission around the Gifts of All Ages ..... *Exploring Mission—31*

Orienting Congregational Life Toward Mission

Building a Pastor's Leadership Team ..... *Orienting Congregational Life Toward Mission—1*
Caring for the Most Vulnerable ..... *Orienting Congregational Life Toward Mission—17*
Cultivating Individual and Group Spiritual Practices ..... *Orienting Congregational Life Toward Mission—25*
Disciple Formation (Christian Education) for Mission ..... *Orienting Congregational Life Toward Mission—35*
Ecumenical/Interfaith Ministries ..... *Orienting Congregational Life Toward Mission—41*
Finding Balance and Renewal ..... *Orienting Congregational Life Toward Mission—45*
Invitation, Witness, and Hospitality ..... *Orienting Congregational Life Toward Mission—53*
Modeling and Leading Generosity ..... *Orienting Congregational Life Toward Mission—61*
Pastoral Care Ministry ..... *Orienting Congregational Life Toward Mission—69*
Priesthood Ministry: Developing Mutual Expectations ..... *Orienting Congregational Life Toward Mission—75*
Sacraments in a Mission-focused Congregation ..... *Orienting Congregational Life Toward Mission—89*
Scripture in a Mission-focused Congregation ..... *Orienting Congregational Life Toward Mission—95*
Ministry Together with Young Adults ..... *Orienting Congregational Life Toward Mission—101*
Worship Planning ..... *Orienting Congregational Life Toward Mission—109*

Establishing Organizational Effectiveness

Communication Is Essential to Effective Ministry ..... *Establishing Organizational Effectiveness—1*
Congregational Audits ..... *Establishing Organizational Effectiveness—7*
Leading Congregational Conferences (Business Meetings) ..... *Establishing Organizational Effectiveness—13*
Legal Services, Crisis Communication, and Risk Management ..... *Establishing Organizational Effectiveness—21*
Protecting Our Children ..... *Establishing Organizational Effectiveness—25*
The Missional Budget ..... *Establishing Organizational Effectiveness—29*
Planning and Calendar ..... *Establishing Organizational Effectiveness—33*
Priesthood Calls: Discerning and Processing ..... *Establishing Organizational Effectiveness—37*
Resources: Descriptions and Locations ..... *Establishing Organizational Effectiveness—43*

Alphabetical Index of Practices and Tools

Topical Index of Practices and Tools

Community of Christ

Dear Pastors and Congregational Leaders:

The mission of Jesus Christ is not just an idea. It is not a program. The mission of Jesus Christ arises out of our relationship with God and with one another. It is holistic. It is experienced when individuals and congregations share the gospel in ways that bless people's whole lives—the physical, mental, emotional, relational, and spiritual.

The primary purpose of this field guide is to help pastors and congregational leaders "live into" shared practices of Christian discipleship that create a congregational culture shaped by the mission of Jesus Christ. This mission is concerned with our personal relationships with God, as well as with God's love for the communities in which we live. It includes the character of our relationships in congregational life, as well as the manner in which we care for persons who are not yet a part of our fellowship.

The secondary purpose of this field guide is to help pastors and congregational leaders carry out the basic elements of organization and administration required for a well-functioning congregation. Taking care of what, at times, may seem like routine administrative tasks helps build credibility to lead on matters of greater significance. How we choose to lead in these matters reveals the character of our relationships and care for one another as the body of Christ.

To help congregations engage in mission, this field guide is designed to be practical. Each article focuses on a specific topic and includes foundational concepts, important questions for leaders to consider, and specific suggestions and practices for implementation. Contributions to each article are from ministers with experience in implementing these ministries in congregational life. We are grateful to each for their contribution and appreciate the collaboration of so many whose ministry and desire to share suggestions and expertise supported the creation of this resource.

Please become familiar with the topics addressed in this field guide. Copy and use specific articles with the leadership team, with the priesthood, or with whichever groups of disciples are considering ministries that relate to the topics covered in this guide. Use this field guide as a personal resource for your own leadership.

Most importantly, the editors trust that your use of this guide will come under the umbrella of your personal prayerful attention to your own relationship with God. Ultimately, it is the Holy Spirit that has the ability to sustain mission and transform lives. We hope this field guide will be a practical resource for people who are grounding their leadership in a relationship with Christ, and looking for practical ways to give that leadership expression through the life of the congregation.

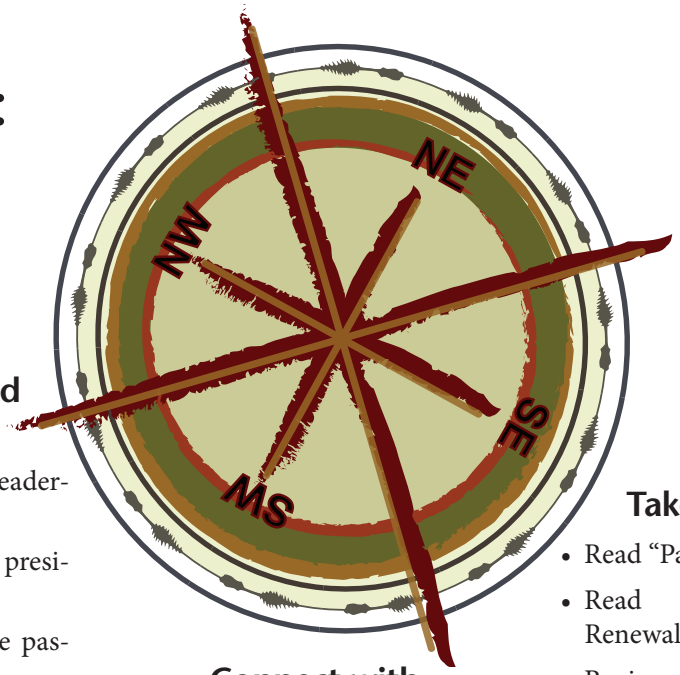
The church is grateful for your dedicated service, and we wish you God's blessings as you lead your congregation in mission.

In the peace of Christ,

David Schaal, First Presidency

Ron Harmon, Council of Twelve Apostles

New Pastors: GETTING STARTED



Invite Others to Lead with You

- Read "Building the Pastor's Leadership Team"
- Invite your mission center president to partner with you
- Invite people to serve on the pastor's leadership team
- Read "Sharing Leadership and Ministry"
- Begin conversations with the pastor's leadership team to establish mutual expectations

Connect with Christ's Mission

- Read "What Mission Means"
- Read "The Congregation Embodies Christ's Mission"
- Engage the pastor's leadership team in discerning and planning for mission and ministry priorities

Take Care of Basics

- Read "Pastoring Basics"
- Read "Finding Balance and Renewal"
- Review Church Administrator's Handbook 2005 edition (order from *www.HeraldHouse.org* or download from *www.CofChrist.org/policy*)
- Review key administrative articles in the Pastors and Leaders Field guide:
  - "Legal Services, Crisis Communication, and Risk Management"
  - "Leading Congregational Conferences (Business Meetings)
  - "Priesthood Calls: Discerning and Processing"
  - "Missional Budget"
  - "Planning and Calendar"
  - "Communication Is Essential to Effective Ministry"
  - "Resources: Descriptions and Locations"

Pastoring Basics

by David Schaal

PRACTICES

- Time for Personal Spiritual Practices
- Shared Leadership
- Sustaining a Focus on Mission

You are a pastor. Thank you.

Thank you for your willingness to give your life to the sacred call of leading and caring for a congregation. Thank you for saying "yes" to a stewardship that makes you vulnerable to frustration, while opening possibilities for wonderful adventure and joy.

A Sacred Call

People serve as pastors for various reasons. For some, it is in response to a deep and abiding sense of call. For others, it is because no one else is available or willing to serve. For some, it is because they believe it is their responsibility to "take their turn."

Whatever the reason may be for accepting the invitation to serve as pastor, the invitation itself is a sacred call. It is not a call to give directions or to have all the answers. It is, however, a call to care deeply about a congregation of people, and to work with a team of ministers in caring for and leading those people. It is a call to help people deepen their relationship with God and one another. It is a call to lead people in discerning and pursuing meaningful mission.

Importance of Spiritual Practice

Serving as pastor is first and foremost a spiritual matter. The pastor's first stewardship is to be as faithful as possible in her or his relationship with God. This sounds obvious, but it is easy to forget in the midst of so many responsibilities that compete for the pastor's time and attention.

There are ministries to sustain, conflicts to address, planning to do, and people to organize and support. Even one's ideas, dreams, and agendas—as noble and well-motivated as they may be—can distract a pastor from this primary stewardship.

Spiritual leadership requires every pastor to give adequate time to disciplines of prayer, meditation, scripture, or whatever practice helps create a deeper personal relationship with God. This is important for many reasons, and this article will share a couple of them.

First, a life of prayer and personal spiritual renewal is essential for the pastor to maintain adequate levels of energy, creativity, and joy. Engaging headlong in the needs of people is important. At the same time, it can be exhausting as people look to the pastor for comfort, spiritual guidance, moral support, conflict resolution, and information. Over time, the demands placed on pastors can erode their own spiritual energy. So, it is essential for pastors to follow Jesus' example and deliberately care for their own spiritual life.

Second, effective pastors and congregational leaders seek the Holy Spirit to shape their leadership. Pastoral leadership is not about hunting for the right program to "install and run." Effective pastoral leadership has more to do with discerning (with others) what God may be inviting the congregation to be and do. It's easy for leaders to be swept away in the tides of their own ideas, or be consumed in program management and conflict resolution. Wise pastors ground their leadership team in spiritual practice so they and their team are more available for spiritual insight, and so their efforts may flow out of lives of increasing

spiritual awareness. (See the article "Cultivating Individual and Group Spiritual Practices" in this field guide.)

It's About Shared Leadership

No pastor has all the answers. No pastor can be every member's personal chaplain. It is not the pastor's job to personally handle the congregation's outreach or pastoral care ministries. Effective pastoral leadership is *shared leadership.*

What is shared leadership? To begin with, shared leadership is not simply "delegation." The "delegation model" has its strengths, but it can easily devolve into individuals doing their own thing, with little sense of real community. Shared leadership is when a group of leaders choose to journey together. They have individual roles, but they also try to understand one another's stewardship and how each fits into the whole. In shared leadership, ministers spend time in prayer together. They see the way ahead together. They mutually "own" the vision that God is birthing among them. They care for one another. They consider together how to care for the congregation while leading the congregation in mission.

In shared leadership, the above principles are not limited to the pastor's leadership team. The leadership team uses these principles in the congregation to draw congregational members and friends into the ministries of the church according to their various gifts.

The point to all this is simple. Pastors are not called to be all things to all people. Pastors are not called to be the primary caregiver to everyone's needs. Pastors are not responsible for managing all congregational programs, or single-handedly deciding the vision and direction for the congregation. Pastors are called to cultivate a team of people who share leadership. With and under the pastor's leadership, the team cares for the congregation's needs and leads people in mission. (See the articles "Sharing Leadership and Ministry" and "Building the Pastor's Leadership Team" in this field guide.)

The Need for Discernment

The mission of the church is clear:

Invite People to Christ
Christ's mission of evangelism

Abolish Poverty, End Suffering
Christ's mission of compassion

Pursue Peace on Earth
Christ's mission of justice and peace

Develop Disciples to Serve
Equip individuals for Christ's mission

Experience Congregations in Mission
Equip congregations for Christ's mission

How the congregation lives out its mission will depend on the needs in its community, the gifts of its members, and how God may be calling the congregation to serve.

With this being the case, discerning God's call to mission for the congregation is important. Discernment is different than goal setting. Discernment involves personal and congregational prayer, as well as data gathering and study. It encompasses both quiet contemplation and group discussion. It includes examining the congregation's gifts, as well as trusting in God's guidance. Discernment is an ongoing practice in which inspiration comes as it will. It does not imply that the congregation just sits idly by until it hears God calling it to act. To the contrary, discernment includes experimenting with missional behaviors to "test" the congregation's compatibilities with different types of ministry. (See the article "Discerning God's Call to Mission" in this field guide.)

The Basics of Administration

Spiritual practice, shared leadership, and discernment are three "basics" for leading mission. Another set of basics, less exciting (for some people at least) yet critical, is the basics of administration.

Pastors do not need to be experts in administrative matters. At the same time, handling administrative matters effectively can save time and energy. Handling administrative matters effectively and in harmony with the policies and procedures of the church builds credibility as the people observe the pastor and the pastor's leadership team. Skillful administration builds trust.

So let's make this simple. Don't worry about having all the answers. However, when in doubt about a policy or procedure, consult the *Church Administrator's Handbook* (2005 edition). If still unclear about a matter, call the mission center president. Administration is not the arena for guesswork. Take your time to get the information needed. Lead according to the policies and procedures of the church. Doing so will lessen administrative messes. It will build trust. It will help the congregation have more time and energy for mission.

Questions

Good pastors ask important questions. The specific questions you ask will depend on your congregational context. The following though, are three questions that every pastor should ask.

"How will I schedule time for personal prayer and spiritual practice?" We can practice spiritual disciplines anywhere at almost any time. However, unless we reserve specific times for spiritual practice, our frantic, busy schedules can unduly shape our spiritual lives.

One of the traps that some pastors fall into is the trap of having their spiritual life defined by their role as pastor. As pastors, we obviously need to pray for our congregations and our stewardship of leading and caring for people. At the same time though, it's important to not neglect our own relationship with God, which must be—to some degree at least—independent of the roles we occupy.

A second question is: "Knowing what I know about leaders in the congregation, what can I do to help the pastor's leadership team form true community with one another?" Remember, the leadership team is not just a group of people to whom you delegate responsibility. The leadership team should be a fellowship of companions who have agreed to go on a journey of leading mission together.

A third question is: "How can I keep the focus on mission?" Many pastors discover that although they begin with a focus on mission, it's easy to lose sight of this focus as other responsibilities demand their time and attention. It is important to keep personal and congregational matters in perspective to maintain a mission focus.

Help for addressing these questions is in the practices that follow this article.

As stated in the beginning, "thank you" for your willingness to serve as a pastor. God is eager to bless your leadership.

Practice

Time for Personal Spiritual Practices

Objective

To create an environment in the pastor's life that allows for ongoing renewal, continued insight for leadership, and grounding in one's primary relationship—a relationship with the living God.

Process

Everyone's spirit is renewed and shaped in ways that are unique to that person. When it comes to spiritual practice, one size does not fit all. Please consider the following:

- Make a list of all the personal spiritual practices that you have ever experienced or heard of, such as prayer, meditation, scripture study, journaling, and being present with nature.
  - Circle the ones that you find to be the most meaningful or helpful.
  - Look at the ones you circled. What time of day is it easiest for you to give attention to spiritual practices on a regular basis?
- Make a list of any of other actions that renew your spirit or cause you to be more fully aware of God's presence. This will vary greatly from person to person.
  - What can you do to experience these things more often?
- Who can you talk with on a monthly basis to discuss your spiritual life? This needs to be someone trustworthy who won't try to "advise" you as much as simply help you to explore your own spiritual practice experiences.
- Now, how can you arrange your schedule to honor your commitment to pursue personal spiritual practices?

Notes, Journal

Practice

Shared Leadership

Objective

To deepen the relationships on the pastor's leadership team and increase the team's sense of community.

Process

Relationships can be complicated. However, they can deepen when we do a few simple things.

- Pray for your leadership team every day.
- Read and discuss the article "Shared Leadership and Ministry" (found in this field guide) with the pastor's leadership team.
  - Discuss what kind of team you will choose to be.
- Take time in every leadership team meeting for prayer, contemplating a selected scripture passage, and "checking in" with one another to see what's happening in everyone's personal lives. These are the behaviors of companions on a missional journey, as opposed to the behaviors of people who are just attending a meeting.

Notes, Journal

Practice

Sustaining a Focus on Mission

Objective

To help the pastor and the pastor's leadership team keep their focus on mission, even when other needs demand their time and attention.

Process

Every pastor faces expected and unexpected needs and demands that compete for time, attention, and energy. Many times, these things can pull leaders away from the focus on mission that they wish they could attend to. This is especially challenging if the congregation is only beginning to adopt a focus on mission. The following two suggestions are quite simple, but helpful.

1. Organize every leadership team meeting agenda, every congregational conference, and every budget around the one or more of the five mission priorities of the church:

Invite People to Christ
Christ's mission of evangelism

Abolish Poverty, End Suffering
Christ's mission of compassion

Pursue Peace on Earth
Christ's mission of justice and peace

Develop Disciples to Serve
Equip individuals for Christ's mission

Experience Congregations in Mission
Equip congregations for Christ's mission

2. Every time an idea for the congregation is raised, and every time a program or activity is planned, be the voice in the room that asks: How does this (or how could this) relate to the five mission initiatives? *Every* time.
   - If the congregation is doing something that does not clearly fit under one of these initiatives, consider whether or not it is really necessary.

Notes, Journal

Foundational Concepts

The Congregation Embodies Christ's Mission

by Ron Harmon

PRACTICES

- Who Do We Want to Be?
- Sharing Our Stories
- Dwelling in the Word
- Hospitality
- Mission Initiatives Overview and Questions for Leaders

In Eugene Peterson's *The Message Bible there* is a unique rendition of John 1:14: "The Word became flesh and moved into the neighborhood." Jesus of Nazareth fully embodied (that is he gave a tangible or visible form to) the nature and will of God on a relatively small piece of geography and for a limited time span.

The simplest way to imagine what it looks like to embody Christ's mission is to ask, "What would it look like if Jesus moved into my neighborhood?" "What would Jesus be saying and doing?" "Who would Jesus be associating with?" A mission-shaped congregation is always addressing these essential questions. The content and character of worship, study, prayer, proclamation, and action as individual disciples and as a congregation are in response to these questions. When the congregation approaches congregational life intentionally asking these questions it is preparing itself to be Christ's living expression of "evangelism, compassionate service, and justice and peacemaking" (see Community of Christ mission initiatives at *www.CofChrist.org/mission*).

Christ's mission is the entire reason for being a congregation. Christ's mission is not merely a ministry of the congregation, like community outreach or pastoral care. Again, mission is the entire reason for being a congregation.

The pastor and leaders of the congregation are challenged to create an environment where the above questions are the starting place for every decision and ministry of the congregation. It does not matter whether the congregation is deciding to pave a parking lot or begin a new ministry. When considering any congregational decision ask, "What would it look like if Jesus moved into our neighborhood?"

A good way to begin asking this question is reflecting on and discussing scripture as a part of every congregational experience. "Dwelling in the Word" is a simple but powerful practice that helps ground the congregation in the Living Word. Choose scriptures from the life and ministry of Jesus Christ. Lead the congregation in discernment and planning by use of scripture and remember to ask, "What would it look like if Jesus moved into our neighborhood?" For more study see the article "Scripture in a Mission-focused Congregation."

God calls the church to be "a new community of tolerance, reconciliation, unity in diversity, and love" (Doctrine and Covenants 164:5). When the congregation encounters the living Christ it no longer sees itself or others from the same perspective. The character and quality of the congregation's interactions with one another and the world look different because it sees and acts through the eyes of Christ. Through words and actions the congregation provides a preview of the "new community" that is emerging, the Zion of our hopes, amid an imperfect world.

Creating this "new community" in a society that places an emphasis on individual satisfaction and choice is challenging. Many Christians shuffle between churches and denominations in search of what best

meets their needs. A mission-shaped congregation is not about meeting the individual preferences of its members. A mission-shaped congregation is about coming together to become like Christ for the sake of the world.

The more the congregation understands *about* Jesus the more it understands *about* the mission of the church. The pastor's leadership team should shape how the congregation forms disciples through Christian education, small groups, worship, spiritual practices, and service. It is not enough to ask individuals to serve in various roles of leadership. The pastor's leadership team coordinates all avenues of formation. This coordination leads to a deeper understanding and fuller expression of the life and ministry of Jesus Christ in the congregation and community.

The church is part of a global movement of disciples and congregations that also asks, "What would it look like if Jesus moved into our neighborhood?" Asking this question helps everyone see more clearly the needs for reconciliation and wholeness that are near. Also, asking this question helps everyone hear the voices of those in other parts of the world who desperately seek a future of hope.

Although many agree that Jesus Christ is central to the congregation's mission, people bring their individual biases and tendencies. Individual biases and tendencies reduce the mission of the church from Christ's mission to individual ones. Congregations can reduce the mission of the church to matters of preference over worship style, format of the Sunday morning experience, and building and property issues. Congregational leaders must raise the congregation's conversations to a new level of urgency and intent.

How can leaders engage the congregation to envision the future with a bias toward those it serves? A good starting place is to develop a clear understanding of who we are as Community of Christ in our local neighborhoods. The church's enduring principles, grounded in the life and ministry of Jesus Christ, provide the foundation and lens through which the congregation can discern its future and respond to Christ's mission.

How is the congregational experience (including its activities, ministries, and priorities) transformed by how it chooses to live out the enduring principles? For example, the pastor's leadership team may spend several months exploring the enduring principles with the congregation to translate them into specific behaviors that bring the enduring principles to life. When the congregation "lives into" new behaviors it allows itself to be transformed by the enduring principles. Consider using the "Who Do We Want to Be?" practice. This practice helps the congregation translate the enduring principles into values that shape the congregation's experience together.

Congregational leaders have a special calling to cultivate an environment where disciples and seekers encounter mission as Christ's invitation, hospitality, and healing presence. The congregation's understanding of Jesus' message and mission as recorded in scripture takes on added depth and urgency when experienced through the eyes of a hurting world.

The enduring principles provide a helpful way of thinking about who the congregation wants *to be*. The mission initiatives provide a helpful framework for thinking about what the congregation wants *to do*. The mission initiatives express in clear ways what it looks like to embody and live out Christ's mission as a congregation. The mission initiatives don't prescribe exactly what a congregation will do. The mission initiatives provide five key areas of focus:

Invite People to Christ
Christ's mission of evangelism

Abolish Poverty, End Suffering
Christ's mission of compassion

Pursue Peace on Earth
Christ's mission of justice and peace

Develop Disciples to Serve
Equip individuals for Christ's mission

Experience Congregations in Mission
Equip congregations for Christ's mission

The pastor's leadership team can discern and lead mission by understanding and applying the mission initiatives to real challenges in their towns, cities, nation, and world. Helping the congregation connect the mission initiatives with real opportunities, locally and globally, is an effective way to lead mission. Consider reviewing the practice "Mission Initiatives Overview and Questions for Leaders" with your leadership team as you plan ministries.

With God and one another the church can accomplish so much more than it can as individuals. This is one of the primary ways the church embodies Christ's mission in the world. Through actions together the power of just a few changes the world. This creates hope for all that Christ's vision and mission are possible.

Creating loving and purposeful community is challenging. Everyone has personal gifts needed to contribute to the totality of Christ's mission in congregations, neighborhoods, and the world. Everyone has something meaningful to contribute.

One of the most critical roles of congregational leaders is

to discern and use intentionally the gifts of all ages. This requires a commitment to develop meaningful relationships, spiritual sensitivity, and opportunities for others to discover their gifts in service to the congregation and community. For more study see the articles "Becoming Sacred Community: A Foundation for Mission," "Sharing Leadership and Ministry," and "Orienting Mission around the Gifts of All Ages." Training and other resources are available through Peacebuilding Ministries, *www.CofChrist.org/peacebuilding*, phone 1-800-825-2806, ext. 2353.

Questions

1. What would it look like if Jesus moved into our neighborhood?
2. If Christ's mission is the sole reason for being a congregation, what would Jesus do if he visited your congregation?
3. How can you incorporate scripture reflection into your times of gathering to ground conversations and decisions in Christ's mission?
4. How can the pastor's leadership team coordinate with other leaders to provide an environment that leads to a deeper experience and understanding of Jesus Christ?
5. Specifically, how can Christian education, small groups, worship, and spiritual practices lead to a deeper experience and understanding of Jesus Christ?
6. How do we envision the future together with a bias toward those whom we are called to minister?

Practice
Who Do We Want to Be?

Objective

To describe how the enduring principles (see *Sharing in Community of Christ,* 2nd edition) can be lived out in the congregation by asking, "Who do we want to be?" The enduring principles help answer the discernment questions listed in the chart below ("The Enduring Principles and Who Do We Want to Be?") and they inform the congregation's decisions and life together.

Process

There are three basic steps:

Step One (several weeks)—The pastor and the pastor's leadership team meet to study the enduring principles, to pray, and to discuss the discernment questions for several weeks.

Step Two (10 consecutive weeks to explore our name and the nine enduring principles)—During the Sunday worship service the pastor introduces and leads the congregation in exploring the enduring principles. Begin with an exploration of "Our Name." Each week one enduring principle is introduced. For each enduring principle invite a person to share a testimony about an enduring principle to encourage the congregation to consider the question, "Who do we want to be?"

Step Three (one four- to five-hour session)—On week 11 the congregation meets to explore the enduring principles and the discernment questions. The goal is for the congregation to outline in specific ways how to live the enduring principles in congregational life.

1. Designate 10 places to post a description of "our name" and each enduring principle on a wall for all to see. Using flip chart paper may be helpful.
2. Divide participants into groups that will eventually meet at each of the 10 places. Assign a facilitator for each group.
3. Each time a group meets at one of the 10 places the group outlines how the principle can be lived out in the life of the congregation. Ask participants to use the chart below as they discuss each enduring principle and the accompanying discernment questions. After 10 minutes for discussion invite individuals first to reflect silently on the questions and then write on sticky notes their insights and responses to this specific question: "How would you see this enduring principle being lived out in our congregation?" Then place the sticky notes for all to see. Placing sticky notes on flip chart paper may be helpful. After 15 minutes (10 for discussion and 5 for writing and placement of notes), at one enduring principle move on to the next enduring principle. Repeat this process until all the enduring principles are covered. Each group will add and categorize sticky notes to the preceding group's notes.
4. After all groups have discussed each principle assign participants into groups that will review the sticky notes and look for themes for each principle. Ask each group to provide a report to the large group on how their assigned enduring principle can be lived out in the life of the congregation. Each group should ask one person to take notes and share a report on behalf of the group.
5. In the large group, receive reports on how each enduring principle could be lived out in the life of the congregation. It is not important at this stage to get the words exactly right. Look for the key concepts.
6. From the reports and notes, draft short concise statements that capture common themes and describe clearly what it looks like to live out the enduring principles in and through the congregation. Or, assign this last task to a small group to write the statements.

Step Four (ongoing)—The pastor's leadership team uses the insights from Step Three as a guide for continuing conversation, discernment, and decision making with the congregation.

Process Tip

Encourage and ensure that each participant listens carefully and that each one has an opportunity to share perspectives in table groups. Begin the session with prayer and consider singing together "Now in this Moment" *Hymns of the Saints* 58.

The Enduring Principles and Who Do We Want to Be?

Our Name and the Enduring Principles *www.CofChrist.org/ourfaith/enduring-principles.asp*	Discernment Questions	What Does This Look Like in Our Congregation?
1."**Community of Christ,**" your name, given as a divine blessing, is your identity and calling. If you will discern and embrace its full meaning, you will not only discover your future, you will become a blessing to the whole creation. Do not be afraid to go where it beckons you to go. *—Doctrine and Covenants 163:1*	What does it mean to become a sacred community? What does it mean to follow Jesus Christ? Where is Christ leading?	
2. Grace and Generosity We generously share our witness, resources, ministries, and sacraments according to our true capacity.	Why are grace and generosity connected? How have we received both grace and generosity in our encounters with God and others? What does it look like to generously share our lives, resources, and witness with others for the sake of the peaceable kingdom now?	
3. Sacredness of Creation We join with God as stewards of care and hope for all creation.	How is God still creating in our world? How is God inviting us to join in that creation? How do we join God as stewards of hope and care for our Earth?	
4. Continuing Revelation In humility, individually and in community, we prayerfully listen to understand God's will for our lives, the church, and creation more completely.	How is God moving our lives? How is God moving in our congregation? How is God moving in our neighborhoods? How do these understandings shape and form everything we do?	
5. Worth of All Persons We join with Jesus Christ in bringing good news to the poor, sick, captive, and oppressed.	Who is invited to the table of fellowship and reconciliation? How did Jesus respond to the poor, sick, captive, and oppressed? Does our congregation engage in practices and behaviors that devalue others? How do we recognize and respond to systems, structures, and relationships that devalue basic human worth?	

Our Name and the Enduring Principles *www.CofChrist.org/ourfaith/enduring-principles.asp*	Discernment Questions	What Does This Look Like in Our Congregation?
6. All Are Called We respond faithfully, with the help of the Holy Spirit, to our best understanding of God's call.	Have we sensed God's call to be a disciple? What does this look like? How does our congregation help individuals find their contribution in ministry and leadership?	
7. Responsible Choices We are called to make responsible choices within the circumstances of our lives that contribute to the purposes of God.	How do our choices impact others locally and in other parts of the world? How does our inaction contribute to maintaining the status quo? What does it look like to make decisions based on a vision of God's peaceable kingdom in the present?	
8. Pursuit of Peace We celebrate God's peace wherever it appears or is being pursued by people of good will.	How is God calling us to experience the peace of Jesus Christ amid the questions and struggles of life? How are we called to share all the dimensions of Christ's peace through relationships and our engagement in transformative ministries? What does it look like to envision the future in our congregations and communities from the perspective of "we" instead of "me"?	
9. Unity in Diversity We confess that our lack of agreement on certain matters is hurtful to some of God's beloved children and creation.	How do we truly understand and embrace our diversity? When will our congregations look more like our neighborhoods? How do we seek consensus and practice discernment? How do we envision the future as "we" instead of "me"? How do we provide room for theological diversity and yet unite in mission?	
10. Blessings of Community We are called to create communities of Christ's peace in our families and congregations and across villages, tribes, nations, and throughout creation.	How do we define sacred community and what does it look like? How can our faith communities signal that change—God's vision for creation—is coming? What does it look like to be a faith community that stands with the poor (spiritual and physical), marginalized, and oppressed in our neighborhoods?	

Practice

Sharing Our Stories

Objective

This practice helps disciples develop their story of faith and prepares them to listen to the stories of others on their journey of faith. Each disciple is a sojourner living her or his faith in daily life. Often, disciples have opportunities to share their faith and beliefs. Although it may be difficult to talk to a stranger this scripture encourages each disciple: "But in your hearts set apart Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect" (1 Peter 3:15 NIV).

Process

This practice includes writing or journaling and prayer.

Write answers to these questions:

- What people and events on your faith journey influenced your life? What do you sense God was doing through these people and events?
- When and how have you experienced the good news of the kingdom? What was happening in your life at the time of those experiences? What changed in your life as you experienced the good news?
- What would you say if a stranger asked, "so what is the gospel?"

Pray this prayer every day: "God, who's out there that you are wanting me to trade stories with? I need to listen to their stories and they need to hear mine. God, bring me together with the people that you would like for me to be in a witnessing relationship with. In Jesus' name I pray, amen." As you offer this prayer, be prepared to respond to the opportunities God will present as you meet fellow sojourners.

Process Tip

No one tool alone will bring a person to Christ. Whatever tool is used, use it with prayer and a genuine concern for the people who are searching for an authentic relationship with Christ. "Remember, the conversion process isn't just about people hearing the truth; it's about people being ready to receive the truth." (Hugh Halter and Matt Smay, *The Tangible Kingdom, Creating Incarnational Community*, [San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2008] 96)

Notes, Journal

Practice

Dwelling in the Word

Objective

To read and hear scripture as a spiritual practice that leads to new understandings. "Dwelling in the Word" is a practice based on our understanding that God continues to speak to us in the context of our day and calling. Listen for God's voice in scripture to connect with God's mission in Christ. Listen to the voices of others about what God is doing in their lives. This practice is not about gaining information about scripture. Rather, it is about listening to how God is speaking, calling, and sending us to join in Christ's mission to our communities and the world.

Process

Provide a printed copy of a scriptural text. A printed copy allows participants to hear and see the words for reflection. Read the scriptural text out loud and pause for a few minutes to allow people time to reflect on what they've heard.

Read the passage a second time. Ask people to make note of a word, phrase, or image they are drawn to as they hear it read again. After a short pause, form into small groups of no more than four or five people to provide opportunities for each person to share their responses to questions like ones provided below. If someone wishes to remain silent, that is acceptable. It is important to make sure the reflections are personal and do not become an exercise in biblical interpretation.

Here are some questions:

- Is there a place I feel drawn to dwell or explore?
- What words, images, or phrases are speaking to me in this text?
- What is God's invitation to me in this scripture?
- What is God's invitation to our congregation in this scripture?

This is a practice of discovery, be expectant that God's mission in Christ is among you as you gain insights from listening to one another and to God.

Process Tip

Be patient with the practice. Encourage participants to remember it is a spiritual practice that invites scripture to transform our understanding and our way of being and doing. Do not let this become an intellectual exercise which will limit the transformative impact of this practice. Like any practice, this will take time to fully understand.

Notes, Journal

Practice
Hospitality

Objective

For members and friends of the congregation to practice the hospitality of sharing one's home. "Hospitality is not about impressing others with well-decorated homes and gourmet cooking. It's not simply for the gifted or those with clean homes. Neither is it just for women. Hospitality is a way of loving our neighbor in the same way God has loved us." Parker Palmer says in his text, *To Know as We Are Known*, that hospitality is a way of, "receiving each other, our struggles, our newborn ideas with openness and care." "It means creating an ethos in which the community of truth can form." (Adele Ahlberg Calhoun, *Spiritual Disciplines Handbook*, [Downers Grove, IL: IVP Books, 2005] 139)

Process

Pray for the people you invite to your home. Pray for them as you invite them. Pray for them the day they visit. Pray for them as they leave your home.

Suggestions

- After your guests have left ask, "How has sharing my home given me deeper ways to hold my guests before the Lord? Send a note with your prayers to your guests.
- Be spontaneous. Hold a "craving potluck." Ask everyone to bring something they crave. Don't try to make it perfect. Focus on the guests.
- Help your children grow in understanding God's hospitable heart. Help them plan a party for their friends. Encourage them to think about what will make each one feel most welcome.

Process Tip

Have fun thinking of ways to welcome the other. Be patient. It is important to realize that not everyone will be comfortable in practicing this as part of their family practice. It is important to provide people an opportunity to welcome and to **be welcomed**. Make sure people who "always have guests" will also be invited to experience what it means to be welcomed.

(Ideas for process taken from *Spiritual Disciplines Handbook*)

Notes, Journal

PRACTICE

MISSION INITIATIVE OVERVIEW AND QUESTIONS FOR LEADERS

OBJECTIVE

Each time the pastor and leaders meet they reflect on the five mission initiatives.

PROCESS

Begin each meeting with a review of a mission initiative and consider the questions and ideas for each initiative described below.

1. **Invite People to Christ: Christ's mission of evangelism**—*to bring good news*

   This is evangelism in the fullest sense: proclamation in word and action, invitation, and welcoming hospitality. According to President Veazey, "The good news is that the resurrected Christ lives in community that restores people to right relationships with God, others, themselves, and the earth."

   How do we as congregational leaders cultivate an environment where we first practice Christ's invitation and hospitality with each other? What does it look like for the good news to be proclaimed and lived out among us? What does Christ's invitation, hospitality, and healing look like in the congregation when we engage in:

   - Experiences of worship—how we encounter God individually and in community?
   - Relationship-building activities—how we create sacred community?
   - Practices of discipleship—what we study, share, and experience as disciples on the journey?

   What does Christ's invitation, hospitality, and healing look like when we engage:

   - With our neighbors and friends?
   - With strangers in need of loving community and healing?

   Evangelism is not optional for those who pursue Christ's mission. It is the call to invite others into the possibilities of new life in Christ. Congregational leaders are called to model the way by inviting persons and extending radical hospitality. The congregation is called to critically evaluate every dimension of congregational life (for example, worship, fellowship, practices of discipleship) in light of this central aspect of Christ's mission.

   See the "Sharing Our Stories" and "Hospitality" practices.

2. **Abolish Poverty, End Suffering: Christ's mission of compassion**—*to bring good news to the poor and recovery of sight to the blind*

   In his April 2011 address President Veazey challenged the church to live Christ's mission and be "caring and healing ministry for the hurt, grief-stricken, and brokenhearted." He also challenged us to be Christ's "compassionate ministry with people who are physically, spiritually, or emotionally hurting, which at one time or another is all of us."

   Caring for those who are suffering and working to alleviate conditions that perpetuate such suffering is not optional for those who pursue Christ's mission. Congregational leaders are called to first model compassionate ministries and then help their congregations connect with opportunities to alleviate poverty and suffering locally and globally. Something significant occurs when people encounter the suffering of others. Words on gilded pages become an urgent call to action and change becomes more than a hope for those who suffer.

   Poverty and suffering can seem overwhelming. Where can congregational leaders begin? Here are four steps:

   - Create Awareness—Congregational trips to community-based ministries and service organizations, guest speakers on Sunday morning, resources for Christian education, and volunteer service in community-based ministries.
   - Partner with Organizations—Discuss opportunities to partner with community-based ministries to make a difference.
   - Identify Unmet Needs—As congregations become more aware of what is happening to address human suffering locally and globally they also become aware of unmet needs. These unmet needs can become opportunities for new forms of ministry.
   - Commit to Ongoing Awareness, Partnering, and Engagement—Over time a culture and environment of concern and responsibility develops in the congregation.

   The pastor and leaders can create a sustainable mission-shaped culture by intentionally following these four steps on a consistent basis.

3. **Pursue Peace on Earth: Christ's mission of justice and peace**—*to release the captives... to let the oppressed go free...to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor*

The time is now to restore harmony and balance, and remedy social and economic injustices. It is not enough to just care. President Veazey challenges us, "The mission includes ministries that release people from unfair and crushing conditions that cause suffering. We must address the root causes of poverty, hunger, discrimination, and conflict."

The cause of Zion (the pursuit of peace, the kingdom of God, and the reign of God) has deep meaning for us and calls us beyond random acts of kindness to promoting the peaceful reign of God on Earth as it is in heaven. It begins one person, one relationship, and one situation at a time. As millions around the globe catch this vision, we, together with God create an alternative future.

For congregations this is an opportunity and challenge to learn about the systems and structures that create conditions in our world that hold people back from becoming fully and completely who God created them to be. For many congregations learning and discussion is the appropriate place to begin. The pastor and leaders of the congregation can begin the conversation and suggest resources for study.

Here is a list of issues and resources:

- Extreme Poverty—*The End of Poverty: Economic Possibilities for Our Time* by Jeffery D. Sachs
- How Systems and Structures Contribute to Oppression—E*verything Must Change: When the World's Biggest Problems and Jesus' Good News Collide* by Brian D. McLaren
- Responsible Consumer Choices—*The Better World Shopping Guide: Every Dollar Makes a Difference* by Ellis Jones
- Environmental Sustainability—*Living Green: A Practical Guide to Simple Sustainability* by Greg Horn
- Ideas on How Others Are Changing the World—*World Changing: A Users Guide for the 21st Century*, edited by Alex Steffen
- Raising Peaceful Children—*Raising Peaceful Children in a Violent World* by Nancy Lee Cecil
- Justice—Justice in the Burbs: *Being the Hands of Jesus Wherever You Live* by Will and Lisa Samson

Addressing root causes of suffering will result in questions and discussions that may lead to disagreement over causes or solutions. Congregational leaders will need to be intentional in setting expectations for respectful dialogue. Equally important is an awareness that seeking to change the status quo will result in resistance. Leaders are called to model Christ-like love in exposing injustice and offering alternative solutions to bring justice and healing.

Seek the guidance of your mission center president and field team for support as you work to Pursue Peace on Earth in your part of the world.

The last two initiatives describe our inward journey of preparation and learning. Disciple formation in our congregations is where we have the opportunity to test and experiment with new understandings in a safe environment. Congregational leaders create a safe environment by modeling collaborative relationships and encouraging participation of all ages in the following two mission initiatives.

4. **Develop Disciples to Serve: Equip individuals for Christ's mission.**

Developing disciples is a key concern for congregational leaders. It is a primary function of a congregation to prepare disciples to live out Christ's mission through the first three mission initiatives. According to President Veazey this preparation is for all ages and occurs "through spiritual practices, community experiences, and educational curriculum for disciple formation." In short, it is critical that we are intentional in what we study, share, and experience in our congregations.

Where do congregational leaders begin?

- Provide leadership to the congregation's Christian education. What the congregation studies and experiences should lead to a clear and compelling understanding of Christ's mission! What the congregation studies makes clear to members and visitors the congregation's priorities for mission.
- Be grounded in God's revelation in Jesus Christ. Who is Jesus Christ? What was Jesus's message and mission in first century Palestine and how does that inform us about mission today?
- Use resources that help disciples view contemporary problems and issues through the lens of the gospel. Whether studying scripture or world poverty, we want to continue to press the issues and challenges of our neighborhoods and world up against the message and mission of Jesus Christ. Failure to do so reduces the gospel to private spirituality and limits its transforming influence.
- Equip and develop disciples to serve! If our efforts don't lead to concrete actions we have missed the

mark. Our studies and experiences should lead to confidence and skills to make a difference!

- Build community and promote healthy relationships. We are in this together! We are not individual disciples trying to find our way but a community of Christ's followers supporting each other on the journey. Creating experiences and opportunities to strengthen relationships creates a foundation for everything else we do.

See the "Disciple Formation Guide" at *www.CofChrist.org/dfg* for ideas on creating experiences, practices, and curriculum that lead to mission. Also contact your mission center president or field staff for ideas on helpful resources.

5. Experience Congregations in Mission: Equip congregations for Christ's mission

President Veazey challenges us, "Individual preparation and effort is not enough. We especially need congregations that are living expressions of the personality, love, spirit, and mission of Jesus Christ."

Congregations are called to more than routine social activities. A key question posed to congregations by President Veazey is, "Where is the love, spirit, and mission of Christ calling us to focus or redirect congregational activity?" Everything our congregations do must be "evaluated in terms of mission alignment." The congregation has no mission apart from the mission of Jesus Christ.

How we embody Christ's mission is the journey of a lifetime. For each of the five mission initiatives ask, "What would it look like if Jesus moved into our neighborhood?" Seek to cultivate congregational environments that are aware and engaged with physical and spiritual suffering. Let's participate in God's activity and join God in all the places and relationships in need of healing and restoration.

Our enduring principles help us define what we want to be and our mission initiatives help us define what we want to do as Community of Christ.

Foundational Concepts

What Mission Means

by David Schaal

The mission of Jesus Christ is what matters most for the journey ahead. These closing words from Doctrine and Covenants 164 echo through the church, renewing our call to engage in mission. This is a call to your congregation!

But what is mission?

If we are truly to be Community *of Christ*, then our mission must be the mission of Christ. Jesus Christ announced his purpose in the synagogue of his hometown (Luke, chapter 4). Standing in the place where his family nurtured him in their spiritual traditions, Jesus used scripture from Isaiah to declare his own personal mission:

> The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor.
>
> —Luke 4:18–19

He began with a striking affirmation: *The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me…* In this simple but profound statement, Jesus made clear that his ministry was not a new program that he had read about or dreamed up. Rather, his mission flowed out of a life grounded in spiritual awareness and was responsive to the stirring of God's Spirit. Likewise, pastors and leaders must give attention to spiritual disciplines and care for their relationships with God. Missional leadership has less to do with finding and running the right programs, and more to do with *discerning* the way forward together in response to Christ's call.

Jesus went on to declare the particulars of his mission, identifying three primary things.

First, Jesus said the Spirit of the Lord had anointed him *to bring good news to the poor…* In his 2011 address to the church, President Stephen M. Veazey reminded us that *to bring good news to the poor,* means "evangelism in the fullest sense of the term. It means gospel proclamation in word and action, including invitation and welcoming hospitality!" We share Christ with people because we love them. Do we love them enough to also invite them into our community of mutual support and purposeful living? In Community of Christ, mission involves *inviting people to Christ*, including the invitation to come to church, and often to be baptized and confirmed.

Second, Jesus' life declared that his understanding of bringing *good news to the poor* and *recovery of sight to the blind* also means caring for people who are broken, lonely, grieving, hungry, and suffering. Consequently, in Community of Christ, mission includes compassionate ministry to people who are hurting. We join with Christ in his mission to *abolish poverty and end suffering.*

Third, Jesus stated that he had been sent to *proclaim release to the captives…*to *let the oppressed go free, and proclaim the year of the Lord's*

PRACTICES

- Talking About Mission
- Aligning What We're Already Doing
- Mission and Congregational Gifts

favor. It was stated earlier that we invite people to Christ and to be baptized and confirmed because we love them. If we do, in fact, love them, then we will be deeply concerned about the quality of life in the communities where they live. For Community of Christ, we are concerned about the cultural, economic, and political systems that perpetuate unnecessary suffering. In Community of Christ, mission includes *pursuing peace on earth* by being engaged in efforts to mend the systems, structures, and norms of this world that hurt people.

Fourth, the above three aspects of Jesus' mission are central, but not complete. Jesus prepared people for mission. Effective engagement in mission includes ministries of disciple and leadership formation where people are shaped by the Holy Spirit. Therefore, mission, in Community of Christ also includes *developing disciples to serve.* This important aspect of mission suggests that congregational priesthood need support and opportunities to deepen their servant ministry. (See "Priesthood Ministry: Developing Mutual Expectations" in this field guide.) It means that our Christian education programs should help people receive information and help them learn how to live the life of Christian disciple. (See "Disciple Formation [Christian Education] for Mission" in this field guide.)

Fifth, discipleship in Community of Christ is a personal matter, but it is not private. While individual disciples should be engaged in mission, it is important that the congregation organizes its energy and gifts for a collective missional impact on the community. In other words, there are things that a community of disciples can accomplish that are simply not possible for individuals to achieve by themselves. This means the congregation will intentionally consider the needs of its surrounding community when it plans its ministries and budgets. It also means the congregation will give attention to its worship life so its people will continue to be inspired, challenged, and healed. (See "Worship Planning" in this field guide.) This is why, in Community of Christ, mission includes *experiencing congregations in mission.*

So, what is mission? In Community of Christ, mission has five components called *mission initiatives.* These initiatives were at the core of Jesus' ministry. They were at the heart of the early church's purpose. In April 2011, President Veazey reaffirmed these five mission initiatives as defining the church's mission:

Invite People to Christ
Christ's mission of evangelism

Abolish Poverty, End Suffering
Christ's mission of compassion

Pursue Peace on Earth
Christ's mission of justice and peace

Develop Disciples to Serve
Equip individuals for Christ's mission

Experience Congregations in Mission
Equip congregations for Christ's mission

It might be tempting to only give attention to the mission initiative(s) we are personally most excited about. While people may have a stronger sense of call to one initiative more than to another, congregations as a whole should give attention to all five. This is because the mission of Christ is holistic. So, does this mean that congregations need to implement five sets of programs for each of the mission initiatives? No! The mission initiatives are not new programs! The mission initiatives are ways of intentionally relating to one another and to our world. For example:

- *Christ's mission of evangelism* may not require ***any*** new programs. It may however, require improving the quality or relevancy of programs we already have in order for people to feel more confident about inviting their friends.
- *Christ's mission of compassion* may not require new programs, although it may require us to care for one another and those in our community with a renewed intentionality.
- *Christ's mission of justice and peace* may not call for new programs. It, of course, might call us to consider more prayerfully how we could improve the quality of life in the communities where we live, or how we might support one another in peace and justice efforts.
- *Equipping individuals for Christ's mission* may not require new programs. It may require us though, to examine the content of what we do in our Sunday schools, priesthood gatherings, and leadership team meetings.

- *Equipping congregations for Christ's mission* may not require new programs. It may motivate us though, to take a fresh look at how we plan worship, where we invest our congregational efforts, how we construct our budget, and for whom we plan social opportunities.

When thinking about the above, pastors and leaders need to be aware that each congregation already has all that it needs to engage in Christ's mission—*IF* the congregation is willing to engage in mission *according to its gifts*. The five mission initiatives do not ask congregations to implement a common set of programs. Rather, congregational leaders are encouraged to prayerfully explore how the five mission initiatives above can be lived out according to the unique capacities and circumstances of your congregation. In fact you're probably already engaged in one or more of the initiatives.

Questions

Good planning often starts with asking the right questions. In regard to your congregation's mission, there are some key questions for pastors and congregational leaders to ask. The following three questions can be helpful.

The first question is: *How can the pastor's leadership team (or the congregation as a whole) best study, pray, and talk* ***together*** *about the five mission initiatives?* Remember, each congregation will need to think through the mission initiatives within the context of their own gifts and circumstances. Trust God's Spirit to lead. Don't rush to program implementation. Instead, study, pray, discuss, and be open to simple possibilities that may arise.

The second question assumes there are ministries already happening in the congregation's life that can be adjusted to more fully align the congregation with mission. The second question therefore, is: *How can the congregation adjust what it is already doing to be more truly focused on the mission initiatives?*

The third question recognizes that each congregation is different and will therefore express mission in different ways. The question is: *How should this congregation's unique set of gifts shape its ministries and mission?*

These are important questions. Practical helps for exploring these questions can be found in the practices section of this field guide.

As stated earlier, God wants to bless you and your congregation in its ministry. Key to being faithful to God is aligning with Christ's mission, as opposed to pursuing individual agendas—as noble and well-intended as they may be. Great adventures await the congregation that prayerfully pursues Christ's mission in harmony with its gifts and in response to God's call.

Practice

Talking about Mission

Objective

To create a climate in which the pastor's leadership team (or congregation as a whole) can thoughtfully, prayerfully explore the mission initiatives in relationship to their congregational context.

Process

Keep it simple. Meet with the pastor's leadership team (or congregation) in a casual, comfortable place where you can talk freely and share some simple refreshments.

- Use the instructions for *lectio divina*, found in this field guide in the article "Cultivating Individual and Group Spiritual Practices," to facilitate a prayerful discussion of Luke 4:18–19. Make an evening out of discussing Luke 4 and your personal lives. Set a time to get together again in one to four weeks.
- Before ending the discussion, make a covenant with the pastor's leadership team (or congregation) in which everyone agrees to spend time each day with Luke 4:18–19 until you meet again. In addition, distribute copies of this resource, "What Mission Means" for everyone to read.
- When you get back together (again in a comfortable, casual place) talk about any notable thoughts or insights that you experienced in relationship to Luke 4:18–19. Then, discuss the resource "What Mission Means." Avoid the temptation to jump right into planning. Instead, pray about it together, talk about the congregation's gifts and circumstances relative to the mission initiatives. Do any thoughts or ideas "bubble up" that seem to invoke a special degree of energy or attraction? If so, explore that idea a bit further. If no ideas come, or if none come that invoke energy and interest, don't worry about it, and please do not "force" anything. Perhaps something will arise later—perhaps after the meeting.

Notes, Journal

Practice

Aligning What We're Already Doing

Objective

To help the pastor's leadership team explore how to adjust what the congregation is already doing in order to be in greater alignment with the mission initiatives.

Process

Post each of the five mission initiatives on five separate places on a wall. On another area of the wall, post the word "Other." With the pastor's leadership team, make a list of *everything* the congregation is currently doing (programs, meetings, activities, groups, etc.). Write each item on a separate 4" x 6" index cards or sticky notes. As a team, place each index card under the mission initiative that the item on the card directly relates to (don't "stretch" to fabricate a relationship that's really not there). If an item on a card does not have a *direct relationship* to one of the mission initiatives, place it under "Other." Talk together about the following questions:

- Are there any items posted under "other" that we can stop doing to free up time and energy for mission?
- Are there any items posted under "other" that could be altered to relate more directly to mission?
- Look at all items posted. Do we know whether or not the people responsible for implementing these items feel "called" to these items, or are these activities just taking up the time and energy of people? How can we find out? (Don't assume that you know unless people have talked with you about their sense of call and passion.)
- Are the items posted under the mission initiatives bearing their intended fruit? If so, great. If not, how could they be adjusted to align more fully with mission?
- Consider the people who currently give leadership to each item mentioned. Do their gifts align well with the item they are leading? Does this leadership task energize them or drain them?

Is there anything that is not bearing fruit that we could stop doing in order to free up energy and resources for mission?

Notes, Journal

Practice

Mission and Congregational Gifts

Objective

To align the congregation's gifts and resources with mission in order to increase effectiveness and raise energy levels.

Process

Scripture does NOT say that all are called according to someone else's gifts, or according to a template of gifts that every congregation should try to match. To the contrary, Doctrine and Covenants 119:8b states that: "All are called according to the gifts of *God unto them*." Community of Christ is united in mission, but that mission will be lived out differently in each congregation, due to the simple fact that congregations have different circumstances and different constellations of gifts.

To help shape your congregation's relationship with mission according to its gifts, give the pastor's leadership team copies of the article in this field guide titled "Orienting Mission around the Gifts of All Ages." Study this resource as a leadership team, and determine how it can be used in your congregation.

Notes, Journal

Sharing Leadership and Ministry

by Ron Harmon

Foundational Concepts

As we encounter the scripture stories of people who responded to Jesus' call it becomes clear they were not extraordinary persons. People who responded to his call to "come follow me" were ordinary fishermen and even despised tax collectors. There is a common thread that runs through the scriptures and speaks to us today. It is most fully expressed in our enduring principle, All Are Called. Every man, woman, and child has something significant to contribute to Christ's mission. Pastors and congregational leaders are called to share leadership and ministry to model a full understanding of the gospel to be the body of Christ.

In Romans 12:5–6 Paul counsels the saints in Corinth, "so we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually we are members one of another. We have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us." The challenge for congregational leaders is to not let programs, buildings, and issues take precedence over our fundamental call to belong to one another in Christ. This is the foundation for everything leaders do in congregational life.

In practical terms, every congregation is a community of diverse individuals with gifts, hopes, and concerns for the future. The congregation is truly the church God envisioned when it learns to come together in love, supports one another even in differences, and shares its giftedness for the sake of others. When a congregation achieves this, it becomes a unique sacred community signaling to the world around it God's intent for the coming kingdom.

Learning to share congregational gifts in leadership and ministry only happens when congregational leaders are intentional. Some very practical questions can guide the leadership team as it attempts to broaden participation in all aspects of Christ's mission in the congregation:

- What does it look like to be in relationship and discernment with members of the congregation?
- Do past experiences and biases influence our openness to the calling and giftedness of others?
- How can we specifically engage others in shared leadership and ministry in the congregation?

What is leadership? The life and ministry of Jesus, demonstrates that he cultivated an environment for the disciples where they:

- learned from his teaching,
- encountered human suffering and healing through his acts of unconditional love, and
- experienced renewal through prayer and fellowship with one another.

For Jesus, leadership and ministry were adaptive and intentional. He utilized his context to convey important truths. In his final words to his disciples Jesus commissions his disciples for leadership and

PRACTICES

1. Dwelling in the Word
2. Hospitality
3. Honoring and Discovering Your Gifts
4. Sharing in the Round
5. Praying for the Other
6. Valuing the Other

suggests to them that they will do the same work he has done, and in fact, they will do greater works (John 14:12).

How do we define leadership in the context of the congregation? Looking at the life and ministry of Jesus, we can employ several important principles about leadership and the congregation to guide us:

- Leadership is to model Christ's example of teaching, encountering, and renewing in word and action.
- Leadership is not a solo activity. The good news of Jesus Christ calls us into new life together. Without each other Christ's mission is not sustainable.
- Leadership is about intention. The gospel of Jesus Christ can only be proclaimed and lived in sacred space when disciples choose to share in leadership and ministry.
- Leadership is about cultivating an environment of divine encounter, safe space, learning, spiritual practices, and inspired innovation.
- Leadership is about creating an environment where disciples discern and engage in Christ's mission together! Leadership is not about having the answers.

In order to break away from many cultural notions of leadership congregational leaders need to be grounded in their primary identity as disciples of Jesus Christ. When leaders truly identify themselves as belonging to Christ and to one another they recognize they are not in control. They seek to discern and join God's movement in their individual lives, families, congregations, neighborhoods, and world.

Practices of discipleship and relationship building become very important in cultivating safe space to risk new ideas and imagination with God. For a more in-depth conversation, see the article "Becoming Sacred Community: A Foundation for Mission." One practice, "Dwelling in the Word," uses scripture to listen to the Holy Spirit and to one another to ground leaders and the congregation in their identity as brothers and sisters in Christ. "Dwelling in the Word" is about how the text of scripture invites people individually and collectively into God's purposes as revealed in Jesus Christ.

Cultivating environments of divine encounter, safe space, learning, spiritual practices, and inspired innovation is challenging and requires both adaptation and intention. Outlined below are steps to cultivate an environment that leads to a deeper expression of Christ's mission together:

1. Schedule opportunities for meaningful relationships and community building. Creating safe space is the foundation for a willingness to risk new ideas and ministries. Consider committing to the practices of "Hospitality" or "Sharing in the Round" one or two times per month to deepen relationships and trust. Consider congregational trips that provide opportunities for meaningful shared experiences.
2. Model the enduring principle Worth of All Persons in every leadership team meeting, congregational meeting, and church school class. Utilize the "Valuing the Other" practice as a discipline of honoring and carefully listening to every person—adult, teen, and child.
3. Commit to the practice of "Dwelling in the Word" every time the congregation or leadership team gathers. Ask someone to keep a journal of insights shared and reflect on those insights from time to time as a congregation. Consider together new ideas and ministries for exploration and possible experimentation.
4. In order to create an environment of inspired innovation, the pastor and leadership team encourage individuals or small groups to experiment based on their sense of how their gifts can best be utilized in the five mission initiatives. For this environment to flourish, leaders shift away from permission granting to encouraging new ministries that respond to the movement of the Holy Spirit. The role of leadership becomes coordination and support not control.

Some people are reluctant to risk new ministries for fear of failure. The pastor and leadership team can model the way by sharing ideas as well as successes and learning from ideas that don't come to fruition.

Those called to lead have a specific responsibility to cultivate an environment where every person feels valued and connected to Christ's mission as lived out by the congregation. Good leaders are secure in their identity in Christ and can devote their energies to helping others discover and utilize their giftedness. Congregations are most fully the church (i.e., body of Christ) when every person feels connected to the loving community (i.e., Blessings of Community) we are called to create. This is not an easy task for leaders. Some people demand more than their share of attention. Others are content to fade into the background. The pastor cannot be the connecting point for every person. All disciples share a mutual accountability for one another's welfare.

The pastor and leadership team can take these steps to create connecting points for each disciple:

1. Engage the priesthood in a conversation regarding mutual expectations for ministry. When the priesthood meet for worship and learning affirm expectations and identify specific needs for ministry.

Many congregations assign small pastoral groups to priesthood members or priesthood teams to ensure intentional ministry and connection is taking place. Engage the priesthood in the practice "Praying for the Other" as part of their commitment to provide ministry to individuals. For a more in-depth conversation refer to the article "Priesthood Ministry: Developing Mutual Expectations."

2. During leadership team meetings pray for individuals in the congregation and for discernment of individual giftedness and opportunities for ministry. Take time to share thoughts and insights and record the insights for purposes of ongoing discussion and discernment. See the practice "Honoring and Discovering Your Gifts" for another approach to discerning giftedness.

3. The leadership team can also consider identifying persons who may be on the periphery of the congregation and discuss specific steps to encourage participation. Developing relationships is the best place to start. When individuals feel we are only interested in them for a particular position or function it can have the opposite impact we desire. As leaders we lead with relationships (i.e., Worth of All Persons) as the foundation for everything else we do in ministry and leadership.

4. For more ideas on utilizing the giftedness of others refer to the article "Orienting Mission around the Gifts of All Ages."

5. In smaller congregations (and some larger ones) it may be more effective for the leadership team to ask individuals to take on specific projects or assignments. Often individuals are reluctant to take on a role for an entire year (for example, Christian education director or congregation missionary coordinator). A project or assignment that has a defined beginning and end (such as a six-week adult class or outreach fundraising dinner) may seem less overwhelming and actually better match the giftedness of the individual. This strategy may result in more affirmative responses by congregational members.

Community of Christ has a rich heritage of shared leadership and ministry. When leaders generously share their gifts they most fully embody Christ's mission for the church. Congregational leaders can continue to share in ministry and leadership only when they have the support of a congregation that shares accountability for the mission entrusted to all.

Questions

1. How can we broaden the base of those committed to the well-being of the congregation and living out Christ's mission?
2. How can we identify and utilize the gifts of all ages for mission?
3. How do we model shared leadership by learning to discern and lead as a cohesive team?
4. How do we know when we have reached consensus on a particular issue or direction?
5. How do we honor diverse perspectives and work through disagreement?

Practice

Dwelling in the Word

Objective

To read and hear scripture as a spiritual practice that leads to new understandings. "Dwelling in the Word" is a practice based on our understanding that God continues to speak to us in the context of our day and calling. Listen for God's voice in scripture to connect with God's mission in Christ. Listen to the voices of others about what God is doing in their lives. This practice is not about gaining information about scripture. Rather, it is about listening to how God is speaking, calling, and sending us to join in Christ's mission to our communities and the world.

Process

Provide a printed copy of a scriptural text. A printed copy allows participants to hear and see the words for reflection. Read the scriptural text out loud and pause for a few minutes to allow people time to reflect on what they've heard.

Read the passage a second time. Ask people to make note of a word, phrase, or image they are drawn to as they hear it read again. After a short pause, form into small groups of no more than four or five people to provide opportunities for each person to share their responses to questions like ones provided below. If someone wishes to remain silent, that is acceptable. It is important to make sure the reflections are personal and do not become an exercise in biblical interpretation.

Here are some questions:

- Is there a place I feel drawn to dwell or explore?
- What words, images, or phrases are speaking to me in this text?
- What is God's invitation to me in this scripture?
- What is God's invitation to our congregation in this scripture?

This is a practice of discovery, be expectant that God's mission in Christ is among you as you gain insights from listening to one another and to God.

Process Tip

Be patient with the practice. Encourage participants to remember it is a spiritual practice that invites scripture to transform our understanding and our way of being and doing. Do not let this become an intellectual exercise which will limit the transformative impact of this practice. Like any practice, this will take time to fully understand.

Notes, Journal

Practice

Hospitality

Objective

For members and friends of the congregation to practice the hospitality of sharing one's home. "Hospitality is not about impressing others with well-decorated homes and gourmet cooking. It's not simply for the gifted or those with clean homes. Neither is it just for women. Hospitality is a way of loving our neighbor in the same way God has loved us." Parker Palmer says in his text, *To Know as We Are Known*, that hospitality is a way of, "receiving each other, our struggles, our newborn ideas with openness and care." "It means creating an ethos in which the community of truth can form." (Adele Ahlberg Calhoun, *Spiritual Disciplines Handbook*, [Downers Grove, IL: IVP Books, 2005] 139)

Process

Pray for the people you invite to your home. Pray for them as you invite them. Pray for them the day they visit. Pray for them as they leave your home.

Suggestions

- After your guests have left ask, "How has sharing my home given me deeper ways to hold my guests before the Lord? Send a note with your prayers to your guests.
- Be spontaneous. Hold a "craving potluck." Ask everyone to bring something they crave. Don't try to make it perfect. Focus on the guests.
- Help your children grow in understanding God's hospitable heart. Help them plan a party for their friends. Encourage them to think about what will make each one feel most welcome.

Process Tip

Have fun thinking of ways to welcome the other. Be patient. It is important to realize that not everyone will be comfortable in practicing this as part of their family practice. It is important to provide people an opportunity to welcome and to *be welcomed.* Make sure people who "always have guests" will also be invited to experience what it means to be welcomed.

(Ideas for process taken from *Spiritual Disciplines Handbook*)

Notes, Journal

Practice

Honoring and Discovering Your Gifts

Objective

The purpose of this practice is to review all the current ministries of the congregation, identify the individual gifts that make these ministries possible, and share stories of how you have seen these gifts expressed in one another.

Process

1. Make a list of every ministry you can think of that occurs in the congregation. This includes preparing the bulletin, cleaning, cooking, worship settings, and many other ministries the congregation overlooks. Use newsprint paper and write the ministries where the congregation can see them. Leave space around each ministry so you can identify:
   - What specific gifts do you see expressed or offered in each ministry?
   - Who in the congregation expresses or offers the gifts in each ministry?
2. Lead a discussion by asking someone to share a story of a time they saw someone offer their gifts in one of the ministries listed. Continue this practice. Allow time for people to express appreciation for the gifts shared in the congregation. Consider allowing time for this exercise over a few weeks each time the congregation gathers.

It is important to identify a gift and give expression to every person as you move through this practice. Keep a continuing record of all the ministries and gifts for reference as you continue this practice.

Notes, Journal

Practice

Sharing in the Round

Objective

Develop and deepen relationships by sharing in the ancient practice of table fellowship. Some of the most important ministries of Jesus occurred around the table of invitation and hospitality. Good food, friends, and conversation lead to deeper relationships and community.

Process

Commit to the practice of sharing in the round *every other week* by inviting an individual or family in the congregation to have dinner either at your home or a place suitable for good conversation. Since the goal is to deepen relationships, it is important to be intentional in moving the conversation beyond surface level discussion.

Be willing to be vulnerable by sharing some of what is going on in your life. This often opens the pathway of trust for others to share. Balance sharing with listening. Pay attention to the movement of the Holy Spirit in your conversation. The Holy Spirit may be prompting you to pray for a concern expressed or to extend understanding and compassion.

Sharing in the Round can also lead to opportunities for outreach when expanded to include people in your neighborhood. Doctrine and Covenants Section 154 challenges us, "My Spirit is reaching out to numerous souls even now…" Openness to this counsel leads to opportunities to encounter sacred community as we invest in the lives of other people.

Notes, Journal

Practice

Praying for the Other

Objective

To enter prayer that is intentional and focused on behalf of another person.

Process

Go to a place that will provide a few moments without distractions or interruptions. Close your eyes. Begin thinking about the person who will be the subject of your prayer. Identify in your mind your concern for the person and their specific needs.

1. Enter this prayer time gently, greeting and thanking God for this time together.
2. Imagine the Spirit of God as bright, white light surrounding and enfolding the person. Hold the person in the light of God.
3. Pray for the specific needs of the other person. Offer that prayer humbly to God while continuing to see the person held in the light of God.
4. Present the person to God for a blessing to meet needs only God is aware of.
5. Gently leave the person in God's hands and with the Holy Spirit.
6. Thank God for the person you have lifted in prayer.
7. Gently and slowly leave this prayer time, taking a moment or two to relax in the Spirit before opening your eyes.

Process Tip

Using your imagination in prayer such as this may seem difficult at first. Don't become discouraged. As you continue this practice it will get easier.

Notes, Journal

Practice

Valuing the Other

Objective

To deepen conversation and understanding by developing active listening skills.

Process

Use an object such as a rain stick or ball that will pass easily from person to person and be visible to the whole group. Outline the following ground rules for group discussion:

1. When a topic or question is before the group, the person holding the object has the floor. Set a time limit for speaking such as three minutes unless the questions or sharing need more time. It is the responsibility of each person to listen carefully to the person speaking.
2. For a person to speak he or she must receive the object from the person speaking. To receive the object from the person speaking, one must be able to restate what that person just shared in summary fashion to that person's satisfaction. *Note: it is important the person feels* heard and understood. *This is a critical part of the journey of deepening relationships and creating a safe place.*
3. This process continues until the group is ready to move on to another question or topic.
4. At the end of the meeting provide time for discussion about how people felt about the experience. Some people will feel the process was cumbersome. We often feel that we already listen carefully to others when often we are formulating our own thoughts while someone else is speaking.

Process Tip

The facilitator should be alert to how people are responding both verbally and nonverbally. Be sure participants feel they were truly heard before they pass the object to the next person. Listening with all our senses so we not only hear but feel what the other person said is a practice that takes concentration and time to develop.

Notes, Journal

Foundational Concepts

Discovering Our Context for Mission

by Ron Harmon

Twenty-first century Community of Christ congregations are navigating familiar and unfamiliar territory. What is familiar is the ancient call to journey with God into an unknown but hopeful future. What is unfamiliar is not only the future but the present. What once worked for the local congregation is increasingly ineffective. As a result many congregations have experienced decline in membership.

There are many descriptions, such as, postmodern and post-Christian attached to this time of transition we are living in. No matter what we call it, things have significantly changed. There is uncertainty and confusion about how to engage with our culture and how to live the gospel through relevant discipleship and mission. This is not a new challenge. Engaging the culture in relevant ways was a challenge for the first-century church and it is our challenge today.

Doctrine and Covenants 162:2e states this challenge in contemporary terms:

> Again you are reminded that this community was divinely called into being. The spirit of the Restoration is not locked in one moment of time, but is instead the call to every generation to witness to essential truths in its own language and form. Let the Spirit breathe.

Context (i.e., the circumstances that form the setting for ministry) impacts all areas of life, from having a simple conversation to engaging in mission. Context is the congregation's and each disciple's setting for ministry. It is critical for the congregation and disciples to understand their context. Understanding contexts is one way the congregation and each disciple becomes aware of their surroundings so they are open to how, when, where, and in what forms God is leading them into relationship with others. Through study and experience the congregation and each disciple can become more skilled at communicating, providing ministry, and engaging in mission in a specific context. Disciples and congregations who pay attention to their contexts see that their contexts are opportunities to follow God's movement in the lives of people.

Why does context matter? Why should all church leaders pay attention to context? The simple reason is we are encountered by God in the world (our context). It was in response to "our" context that Jesus declared his mission, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor" (Luke 4:18–19). The context was poverty, captivity, suffering, hunger, and all forms of injustice crying out for God's shalom. "If we take the incarnation seriously, the Word has to become flesh in every new context." (David J. Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission*, Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1991, 21.)

Section 162 counsels the church to proclaim and live the gospel in ways relevant to the specific context. It is in today's context the

PRACTICES

1. Walking the Neighborhood
2. Third Place Ministry
3. Listening in the Spaces
4. Panes of Perspective

congregation seeks to provide ministry. For example, the congregation can have a fuller understanding of the message and mission of Jesus by studying Jewish culture in the first century. Yet, how does the congregation translate its understanding of Jesus and first century culture into incarnational ministries needed for today? This means the congregation's language and forms of invitation and mission must speak directly to the specific circumstances of those it is sent to serve.

Congregational leaders must be aware of the particular context for their leadership, communications, and ministry in the congregation and in the neighborhoods where the congregation carries out its mission. Leaders must become students of these different contexts if they are to understand how to communicate, lead, and minister in effective and relevant ways in various situations.

There are numerous ways to learn about contexts. This article will explore ways to learn about the congregation's context for ministry in the United States. Where do we go to learn more about our changing context for ministry and how it impacts the ministries of the local congregation?

There are several excellent sources from which to learn about context:

- **Percept**—Since its beginning in 1987, Percept has supplied thousands of churches and hundreds of regional and national denominational agencies with demographic data to help them engage in mission within their particular contexts. Percept adds value to its demographic information by integrating data about the religious attitudes, preferences, and behavior of the American people. Community of Christ has a license with Percept. Congregations in the United States can request data based on zip code or a specified radius around their congregation or the neighborhoods where their members live. Contact your president of seventy, apostle, or mission center missionary coordinator for help with an analysis.
- "U.S. Religious Landscape Survey, Religious Affiliation: Diverse and Dynamic, (Feb. 2008) (*http://religions.pewforum.org/pdf/report-religious-landscape-study-full.pdf*, assessed July 6, 2011.) This is one of the most extensive demographic and preferences surveys conducted and provides significant national and regional data. This study is helpful in understanding national and regional religious trends and practices. See *www.pewforum.org*.
- George Barna, *Revolution,* (Carol Stream, IL: Barna-Books, Tyndale House, 2005). This book provides interesting trends for the unchurched population and implications for the local congregation.
- Ronald Rolheiser, *Secularity and the Gospel: Being Missionaries to Our Children*, (New York: The Crossroad Publishing Company, 2006). This book explores the forces shaping religious thought, attitudes, and behavior in the 21st century.

Although the implications for congregations may seem a bit overwhelming, the first step toward relevance and missional effectiveness is understanding context. Understanding the data and trends is one way to learn the congregation's context. Data and trends, however, are no replacement for motivating the congregation to interact with real people and hear their stories of struggle and hope.

The congregation's contexts are always changing and the call as disciples and leaders is to be fully present and awake to our surroundings. Becoming more intentional students of the scriptures and our neighborhoods, *new insights will emerge and one will inform the other*. The faith journey is a continuation of the journey that began with the story of Abraham. The moment the congregation risks new relationships and reaches out to new places, it can trust in the Holy Spirit that new opportunities for ministry and mission will emerge. When the congregation immerses itself into its context, it will discover surprising ways to fulfill Christ's mission.

According to author and theologian Alan Roxburgh, "This is about getting outside the walls of the church and leaving behind our assumptions about what people need to attend to what is really happening among the people in the neighborhood. To be very blunt, this is not a matter of buying demographics and studies that tell you about people; it's about entering their lives, sitting at their tables, and listening to the way the Spirit is inviting a new imagination about being the church in that context." (Alan J. Roxburgh and M. Scott Boren, *Introducing the Missional Church: What It Is, Why It Matters, How to Become One*, Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2009, 85.) This quote is not meant to suggest there is no value in demographic studies. Demographic information is helpful and provides part of the picture when seeking to understand the congregation's context. Beyond studying raw demographic data and report findings there are simple and effective ways to begin to more clearly understand one's context. God being with us, never abandoning us, knowing us, coming to us is the theological basis for why entering people's lives is important. The following practices have been developed, field-tested, and found to be helpful to congregations seeking greater understanding of their context:

- **Walking the Neighborhood**—a practice of prayer, listening, and engagement in relationships in a defined geographical area.

- **Third Place Ministry**—a practice of listening and engaging in relationships in a preferred third place of gathering in a town, city, or neighborhood.
- **Listening in the Spaces**—a practice of creating space in the rhythm of our day to be aware of God and our surroundings.
- **Panes of Perspective**—a practice of planning and discernment that utilizes trends that impact ministry and mission.

Although practices provide helpful suggestions and habits of discipleship, being fully present in a particular context requires intentionality. Being aware of context is like having eyes, heart, and ears wide open to people. A stop at the gas station becomes an opportunity to interact more deeply with a clerk at the counter. An evening at the bookstore provides opportunity to learn more about people and their stories. When fully present in their surroundings and open to the leading of the Holy Spirit disciples see things they did not see before.

Following are simple but effective ways for congregational leaders to help the congregation learn about its neighborhood:

- host or attend a community festival
- meet-the-neighbors walk
- develop a neighborhood scripture garden
- develop a community garden
- vacation Bible school with a celebration evening for adults
- special interest classes at the congregation
- neighborhood survey
- install outdoor recreational equipment (e.g., basketball goal)
- host a blood drive
- take part in a community choir
- invite guest speakers from community-based organizations
- partner with a neighborhood school

All of these activities and many others create opportunities for people to gather. When congregations engage fully and are open to the leading of the Holy Spirit they have opportunity to make meaningful connections. Making connections is about extending Christ's invitation and hospitality. Congregations invest in relationships with others because of their deep conviction about the worth of every person.

Leaders can best help congregations understand their context by engaging with people outside the congregation. Jesus modeled the way as he crossed every economic, social, and religious barrier to bring persons together in the family of God.

Questions

1. How do we as leaders make sense of all the trends and data? How can we best use data and trends to understand what is going on in the neighborhood and broader community?
2. In reviewing the chart in the Panes of Perspective practice, how can we respond to key trends in how we gather for worship, fellowship, and education, and how we engage in mission in our community? Specifically, how would our congregation look different if it planned each activity and ministry through these lenses?
3. How can we, as congregational leaders, help people understand key changes needed to rethink how to engage the specific contexts of our congregation's, members' and friends' neighborhoods?
4. What principles or truths from the life and ministry of Jesus Christ give us clues as to how we can navigate in a changing environment?

Practice

Walking the Neighborhood

Objective

To learn to listen and pay attention to what is happening in the lives of people in your community in a familiar setting. Additionally, it is an opportunity to discern ways you and your congregation can respond to the needs and opportunities where God is moving in your neighborhood.

Many times people in the neighborhood watch us come and go to our church facility. Often there is very little conversation with those in the neighborhood but God is moving in their lives and we are being invited to connect with where God is moving.

The foundation for this practice is one of our enduring principles, the Worth of All Persons. We engage with people because we are called to be in relationship with others and discover the blessings of relationships and community. This is not about engaging in relationships with a motive other than connecting with other people and being open to what God is up to in these relationships.

Process

Take a family member or go with a friend and begin walking in your home neighborhood or in the neighborhood around your church facility. As you walk, pray about each home and the blessing of God in the lives of the people who live there. Also, if people are out in their yards or on their porches, greet them and wish them a good day.

As you become a regular presence in the neighborhood, begin to have conversations with the neighbors. As you walk through your chosen neighborhood, ask God to lead you to the people with whom God wants you to share in conversation. Listen for where God is moving in their lives. Consider offering the following prayer as you walk in the neighborhood: "God, who's out there that you want me to trade stories with? I need to listen to their story and they need to hear mine. God, bring me together with the people you would like for me to be in a witnessing relationship with. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen."

Be creative by taking some cookies to offer to people on your walk, or some freshly picked vegetables—anything you can offer them as a way of sharing God's love in a practical way. Listen for what God is doing in their lives or what their experiences have been in their individual walks of faith. Between walks share with your partner in prayer and conversation about the people you meet and where God may be leading you in mission.

Now… "step out" in faith!

Process Tip

Read Doctrine and Covenants 161:3, 4.

Notes, Journal

Practice

Third Place Ministry

Objective

To learn to listen and pay attention in informal settings to what is happening in the lives of people in your community. This practice will help you and your congregation discern ways to respond to the needs and opportunities that surface when you pay attention to meaningful conversation.

According to Ray Oldenburg, an American sociologist who first coined the term, *third places*, "Third places are those environments in which people meet to develop friendships, discuss issues, and interact with others." He points out that home is our first place, our place of employment is a second place, but the place where we most learn what's going on in the community around us is a *third place*. Communities of faith have incorporated third place ministry in their missional focus. Here are ideas for disciples or congregations to start a third place ministry.

Process

Start by asking, "In our community where do people gather for informal conversation?" Consider some of the following: local coffee shop, bookstore, park, convenience store or other places where people sit and visit. Then go to one of these places regularly with the intent of getting to know the names of clerks and frequent visitors.

After a few visits, take a book you're reading or your scriptures. Place the books on your table and be open to people engaging in conversation about them. Invite friends to join you and talk about issues or interests going on in life. Be open to inviting others to join your conversation. Listen to what is important to them. Ask yourself, "What is God doing in their lives?" "What is the invitation from God about their experience?"

Additional Suggestions

1. Visit a local school to talk with the principal or guidance staff about needs they have for their students. Do they need someone to sit and have lunch with the students? Do they need tutorial help? What is the need that God is inviting you and others to be part of in your community?
2. If you have a group of people skilled or interested in knitting, do a prayer shawl ministry in a public place like a local coffee shop. This ministry could become an ecumenical ministry where knitters from different faith communities give shawls to local domestic violence shelters, hospitals, assisted living centers, or nursing homes.

Process Tip

This practice requires genuine investment in relationships and time. This practice is not about "inviting people to church." It is about helping us better understand what God is up to in the lives of people in the community by using an informal setting. If your community doesn't have a meeting place, that's an opportunity for the congregation to create and develop a third place experience for the community!

Practice

Listening in the Spaces

Objective

To re-center ourselves during pauses or transitions throughout the day so we become more aware of God's presence in the world around us. In Joan Chittister's book about Benedictine spirituality, *Wisdom Distilled from the Daily* (New York: HarperCollins, 1990), she explains that members of the community stop outside the chapel for a few minutes before entering for prayer. "The practice of *statio* is meant to center us and make us conscious of what we're about to do and make us present to God who is present to us. *Statio* is the desire to do consciously what I might otherwise do mechanically. *Statio* is the virtue of presence."

Process

Using this Christian practice, we can reframe the many transition times and places we experience during the day. Instead of regarding them as wasted periods, unavoidable delays or inconveniences, we can see them as divine invitations to stop, to re-center ourselves, and to become more aware of God's presence in the world around us. We can use transitions as opportunities to contemplate what matters to us, to give thanks for all the gifts from the Creator and to connect with our loved ones.

Here are suggestions on how to weave a sacred pause or *statio* into your daily life:

- Pause outside your door as you leave for work or school. Say quietly to yourself: "This is a day the Lord has made. I will watch for God's presence in my life today. I will stay open to the grace of God."
- Before leaving your car, train, bicycle, or bus say a silent prayer for all those you have passed on your journey that they may know health, happiness, peace, and well-being. Repeat this *statio* practice as you leave a restaurant or a store.
- When entering your workplace focus on your day. Say a prayer of blessing on your work, the service to your employer, and the world at large. Think about the people you will meet during the day and give thanks for their support and creativity. If you are in conflict with a co-worker, ask that you may be forgiving and forgiven.
- Before entering a doctor or dentist's office for an appointment or the gym for your workout, thank your body for being such a faithful and constant companion. Know and accept that God cherishes every hair on your head.
- When returning home pause before entering your home. Be aware of the moment's importance as you move from the outside world into the space of your home. Leave on your doorstep any stresses, problems, or unfinished business of the day. (You can always pick them up again the next morning!) If you share your home with others, remember what you are bringing to them—the fruits of your labor, perhaps, but most important, your loving presence. Use this refreshing pause to prepare for a blessed reunion with them.

Process Tip

Be patient as you develop the skill of pausing and taking the time to see and hear God in the world around you. It will take time and practice to stop, listen, and observe moments often taken for granted. It will take practice to release daily cares so you do not fill these moments with worry and planning for the day…these should be moments of *statio.*

Practice

Panes of Perspective

Objective

To design and plan activities, ministry, and mission by use of current trends that impact ministry and mission.

Process

Use the following "Panes of Perspective" chart to imagine each trend as a glass pane in a window that helps us see more clearly how to connect with younger generations. Use the following questions as you plan ministry and events:

a. Is this ministry or event something we could empower someone or a group to design and implement?

b. Does this ministry or event foster a process of shared discovery and collaborative planning rather than being tightly defined?

c. What relevance does this ministry or event have to the real problems people face in their neighborhoods and world?

d. How do we connect with those who find it physically difficult to get to church? Are there ways, other than being physically present, for them to connect to the congregation's ministry? (Are virtual communities, such as Facebook, possibilities?)

e. How does this event or ministry cultivate genuine opportunity for meaningful relationships to develop?

f. How does this event or ministry reach a diversity of backgrounds (e.g., ethnic, social, economic, age, single, family)?

g. How does this event or ministry help create an alternative future of hope and healing?

h. How does this event or ministry connect individuals for opportunities to make a positive difference locally or globally?

Process Tip

Remember to frame the ministry and events under one of the five mission initiatives (Invite People to Christ; Abolish Poverty, End Suffering; Pursue Peace on Earth; Develop Disciples to Serve; Experience Congregations in Mission).

Notes, Journal

Panes of Perspective Chart

Trend (Context)	Comments	Implications for the Congregation
Generational Changes in Leadership	Younger generations have leadership in other organizations. They have a different approach to and expectations of leadership. They are collaborative, fast paced, and insist on sharing in solutions.	In general, congregational processes are often slow, can be hierarchical, and not as participative in decision making. Younger adults find this frustrating when compared with their professional careers and organizations.
Clashing of World Views—Modern and Post-modern Perspectives	Although difficult to define precisely, "post-moderns" see the interconnectedness of all of life (people, environment, religions). They don't draw lines between sacred and secular, Earth and heaven, etc. Spirituality is a journey—not indoctrination or holding a set of beliefs. Questions are as critical as answers because they lead toward beauty and truth.	Congregational life tends to be an indoctrination model to promote beliefs. Churches and denominations in the U.S. have become more about having right beliefs than a way of life that impacts the world. Sunday mornings in many congregations don't foster exploration and only allow dialogue within tightly settled doctrinal boundaries. The congregation's tightly defined worldview does not match reality for many younger adults.
Dismissing the Irrelevant	Younger generations have little patience for institutions more concerned about tradition, rituals, and self-preservation than responding to real human need and suffering in the world.	The average congregation for many younger adults seems out of touch with what is going on in the world. Real neighborhood, national, and world issues are rarely discussed in light of the good news. There is often a serious disconnect between Jesus' radical message of the kingdom and the activities and ministries of the congregation.
Impact of Technology	Younger generations are connected to what is going on and are used to quick access to information.	Congregational delivery systems are slow and often in only one mode. For example, education is often only delivered in workshops or classes.
Genuine Relationships	Deep, authentic, and meaningful relationships are critical.	Most congregations don't programmatically foster meaningful relationships. Congregational space is often not relational space (e.g., pews, hard chairs, sterile buildings). Older generations are often hesitant to disclose personal concerns and are uncomfortable with the knowledge younger adults share about one another.
Increasing Diversity	Many if not most neighborhoods are changing with a significant increase in ethnic, cultural, and economic diversity.	Congregations are not prepared to relate to changing neighborhoods. There are significant needs and opportunities that require more language skills and new levels of cultural awareness to relate effectively to a changing population.
Participation in Creating Reality	Being a part of the solution is important! Younger generations do not want to accept the status quo. They want to participate in meaningful change.	Congregations are often set in their ways. Many are happy with things as they are and don't understand why things need to change. Some would say, "it was good enough for me, why is it not good enough for them?"
Meaning and Connection	Overall, younger generations are seeking to be part of something where they find meaningful connection with others who share common interests and values.	Many congregations don't have a clear focus or mission. Most efforts seem to be directed toward making Sunday morning happen. Many members have drifted apart over time and there is not a sense of common purpose and community that once was present.

Becoming Sacred Community: A Foundation for Mission

by Blake Smith

PRACTICES

1. Valuing the Other
2. Dwelling in the Word

Foundational Concepts

Becoming sacred community is one of the primary ways the congregation gives tangible expression to Christ's mission. Becoming sacred community means constantly learning how disciples belong and relate to one another in Christ for the sake of the world. This was the experience of the first-century church. This is the church's experience today. The church is called to be a sacred community, to not only carry out Christ's mission but to be an example of Christ's mission—"a light on a hill."

No matter where a member travels in the world, a visit to a Community of Christ congregation will be like a visit home. Chances are the visiting member will know someone or have a common acquaintance or experience with someone. The sense of being at home and knowing one another are threads that run deep through the church. These threads draw people together into sacred community. This sense of being at home and knowing one another is a true blessing. As congregations grow in their understanding of being in community those threads will continue to weave a rich spiritual home for people.

Sacred community is more than just a place to feel at home. Sacred community is a spiritual home where people belong to one another in Christ and feel compelled to respond to a world in need.

> …for in Christ Jesus you are all children of God through faith. As many of you as were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus. And if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to the promise.
>
> —Galatians 3:26–29 NRSV

> While I studied this passage, the Spirit helped me see much broader dimensions of God's grace working through Christ to transform human relationships in a divided world. As a result, I have an even-greater testimony than before of the power of the gospel of Christ to birth a new creation among those who dare to live its message in sacred community.
>
> —Stephen M. Veazey,
> introduction to Doctrine and Covenants 164

The congregation is called to live the message of Christ's gospel in sacred community. In *The Godbearing Life,* the authors introduce a concept of "communion" that is helpful. "Christian tradition understands 'breaking bread' as the most basic way Jesus reveals himself to his followers." Communion unites disciples to Christ and to one another in ways that are more than being a group of people who have things in common.

> "…in communions we also take on the lives of one another—we participate in a common life, united by Jesus Christ, not by mutual interests or similar personalities, and experience the joys and pains of others as though they were our own…Communions require repentance and forgiveness, speaking the truth in love, hospitality and reconciliation, the tender trust of knowing and being known, the assurance that our friends would lay down their lives for us."
>
> —Kenda Creasy Dean and Ron

Foster, *The Godbearing Life: The Art of Soul Tending for Youth Ministry*, (Nashville, TN: Upper Room Books, 1998), 112

Developing relationships for this level of community doesn't just happen. It requires hard work and intentionality. When a community hurts or marginalizes someone, it is not enough to simply say the congregation didn't intend for that to happen. Instead, the congregation has to be intentional in language and behavior to create an environment that upholds the worth of all persons and the blessings of community.

Like mission, becoming sacred community is not merely a function of the congregation but must be integrated into all of congregational life. The pastor's leadership team must model this integration by leading with relationships first, over programs and agenda. How the leadership team communicates, collaborates, and cares for its members will tell how it values the worth of all persons. Without this foundation in place congregational leaders will lack the personal integrity required to invite others to risk new ideas and forms of ministry.

The following texts of scripture give a clear picture of the actions necessary to create sacred community and the relational principles necessary to sustain it.

> Do not think more highly of yourself than you ought.
> Love one another with mutual affection.
> Outdo one another showing honor.
> Extend hospitality to strangers.
> Do not be haughty, but associate with the lowly.
> Overcome evil with good.
>
> —Romans 12 NRSV, adapted

> Open your hearts and feel the yearnings of [the] lonely, despised, fearful, neglected, unloved.
> Reach out in understanding.
> Invite all to share in the blessings of community.
> Be ready to listen and slow to criticize.
> Be patient with one another.
> Embrace the blessings of your many differences.
>
> —Doctrine and Covenants 161:3–4, adapted

> "God…ultimately is concerned about behaviors and relationships…rooted in the principles of Christ-like love, mutual respect, responsibility, justice, covenant, and faithfulness…"
>
> —Doctrine and Covenants 164:6a

These scriptural sources are consistent with the Hebrew concept of *hesed*—"God's loving, dependable action that goes beyond what justice requires…caring, covenantal commitment." (David Teutsch, *Spiritual Community: The Power to Restore Hope, Commitment and Joy,* [Woodstock: Jewish Lights Publishing, 2005], 19.) *Hesed* draws congregations beyond casual acquaintanceships and captures the depth and breadth of the new creation they are called to become.

The pastor's leadership team can model the relational principles above by identifying all the points of interaction with the congregation and individuals that occur over a month. Discuss how these interactions can become opportunities to build community through the lenses of Romans 12 and Doctrine and Covenants 161:3–4 and 164:6a. Devote a portion of each leadership team meeting to discussing relationships and praying for ways to build community in the congregation.

Becoming sacred community does not come without struggle. Richard Barger writes that "conflict is inevitable in communities where passions run deep about the very life of the community and its clarity of purpose. Yet, as places where creative conflict is welcomed, these congregations simultaneously are places of healing…filled with lots of grace."(Richard Barger, *A New and Right Spirit: Creating an Authentic Church in a Consumer Culture*, [Herndon, VA: The Alban Institute, 2005], 35.) Denial of the presence of conflict or disagreement does not remove the conflict. It simply serves to create a false sense of security. This will eventually lead to future problems that may show themselves at unexpected times and in unexpected ways.

It is the responsibility of the pastor's leadership team to commit to and model open and honest relationships regardless of the difficulty of some situations. Sometimes this may mean seeking external help by contacting the mission center president. Failure to address conflict will create a significant barrier to discerning and leading mission. Additional help is available through Peacebuilding Ministries. Call 1-800-825-2806, ext. 2353 or see *www.CofChrist.org/peacebuilding* for details on training, facilitation, and mediation ministries to assist in individual and group interpersonal relationships and preparation for difficult conversations or decisions.

The pastor's leadership team can create an open and honest environment by providing opportunities to be in relationship in sacred community. What does this look like? Life is full of challenges and triumphs, questions and answers, doubts and assurances, concerns and joys. It is imperative that people feel free to be themselves and share out of their deepest questions and experiences without fear of judgment or retribution. In these environments individuals can ask questions, explore new ideas, risk new ministries, and establish deeper spiritual friendships that connect gifts and open doors to mission.

The following can help build community and foster support, safety, and encouragement to engage in Christ's mission:

- Make belonging to one another in Christ the highest priority. Create safe space for open, honest, high-trust

dialogue. Learn to listen carefully and respectfully to diverse perspectives and each life journey. Plan times for fun together and experience the hope and freedom of the gospel.

- Model vulnerability. Be honest about your own mistakes. Encourage new approaches without fear of condemnation or judgment. Create an expectation that all attempts at new ministry are successes and "failures" are opportunities to learn.
- Create opportunities to know one another more deeply. Take time to be with one another and hear one another's stories. This often occurs outside the walls of the congregation in living rooms, around dinner tables, and in coffee shops.
- Create opportunities to celebrate and cry together. Celebrate one another's victories, accomplishments, and joys. Share in each other's struggles and pain. Listen for and encourage the hopes and dreams of one another.
- Share the gift of presence. No one should have to walk life's journey alone. Often it is not words but our presence that heals and conveys our care for another. Engage the priesthood and others in ensuring all people experience friendship in sacred community.
- Pay attention to everyone. Learn together to respond to visual cues, body language, and behaviors that signal separation.
- Encourage Christ-like love, mutual respect, responsibility, justice, and faithfulness (Doctrine and Covenants 164:6a). Explore these principles and identify behaviors that more fully express them in the life of the congregation.
- Engage in spiritual practices as a community. See the field guide article "Cultivating Individual and Group Spiritual Practices."

Creating sacred community is beyond the scope of the pastor's leadership team. The pastor's leadership team can model the way and collaborate with others to ensure the blessings of community are a way of life. See "Priesthood Ministry: Developing Mutual Expectations" for ideas on how to engage priesthood in developing safe and sacred community.

Questions

1. What are the attributes of sacred community in your congregation? How can you make these attributes stronger? What attributes of sacred community are missing or need strengthened?
2. What are the conditions in your congregation that create an environment of being home?
3. How can the pastor's leadership team specifically promote sacred community by how it interacts with the congregation and people?
4. How can the pastor's leadership team model vulnerability in how it communicates, engages in relationships, and leads?
5. How can the pastor's leadership team be alert to situations that may lead to conflict and tension?

Practice

Valuing the Other

Objective

To deepen conversation and understanding by developing active listening skills.

Process

Use an object such as a rain stick or ball that will pass easily from person to person and be visible to the whole group. Outline the following ground rules for group discussion:

1. When a topic or question is before the group, the person holding the object has the floor. Set a time limit for speaking, such as three minutes, unless the questions or sharing need more time. It is the responsibility of each person to listen carefully to the person speaking.
2. For a person to speak he or she must receive the object from the person speaking. To receive the object from the person speaking, one must be able to restate what that person just shared in summary fashion to that person's satisfaction. Note: it is important the person feels heard and understood. This is a critical part of the journey of deepening relationships and creating a safe place.
3. This process continues until the group is ready to move on to another question or topic.
4. At the end of the meeting provide time for discussion about how people felt about the experience. Some people will feel the process was cumbersome. We might feel that we already listen carefully to others when often we are formulating our own thoughts while someone else is speaking.

Process Tip

The facilitator should be alert to how people are responding both verbally and nonverbally. Be sure participants feel they were truly heard before they pass the object to the next person. Listening with all our senses so we not only hear but feel what the other person said is a practice that takes concentration and time to develop.

Notes, Journal

Practice

Dwelling in the Word

Objective

To read and hear scripture as a spiritual practice that leads to new understandings. "Dwelling in the Word" is a practice based on our understanding that God continues to speak to us in the context of our day and calling. Listen for God's voice in scripture to connect with God's mission in Christ. Listen to the voices of others about what God is doing in their lives. This practice is not about gaining information about scripture. Rather, it is about listening to how God is speaking, calling, and sending us to join in Christ's mission to our communities and the world.

Process

Provide a printed copy of a scriptural text. A printed copy allows participants to hear and see the words for reflection. Read the scriptural text out loud and pause for a few minutes to allow people time to reflect on what they've heard.

Read the passage a second time. Ask people to make note of a word, phrase, or image they are drawn to as they hear it read again. After a short pause, form into small groups of no more than four or five people to provide opportunities for each person to share their responses to questions like ones provided below. If someone wishes to remain silent, that is acceptable. It is important to make sure the reflections are personal and do not become an exercise in biblical interpretation.

Here are some questions:

- Is there a place I feel drawn to dwell or explore?
- What words, images, or phrases are speaking to me in this text?
- What is God's invitation to me in this scripture?
- What is God's invitation to our congregation in this scripture?

This is a practice of discovery, be expectant that God's mission in Christ is among you as you gain insights from listening to one another and to God.

Process Tip

Be patient with the practice. Encourage participants to remember it is a spiritual practice that invites scripture to transform our understanding and our way of being and doing. Do not let this become an intellectual exercise which will limit the transformative impact of this practice. Like any practice, this will take time to fully understand.

Notes, Journal

Discerning God's Call for Mission

by Marvin Rice

Amid active personal lives and competing congregational priorities it is critical to ask some important questions: Is the congregation living out the mission of Christ in community? How do congregations discern what their congregational direction should be in response to the mission of Christ as reflected in the enduring principles and mission initiatives?

Initially the thought of leading the congregation in discerning Christ's mission may seem like adding extra work for leaders and members who are already busy. The question for congregational leaders is not how to start another new idea but how to make discernment a part of the congregation's ongoing experience of worship, fellowship, and service. Through discernment practices the people of the congregation seek the Holy Spirit's guidance in their growing understanding of their shared mission as followers of Jesus.

There is no one approach to discerning Christ's mission for individual disciples and the congregation. Discernment is discovering and learning to "live into" new practices of encounter with God, others, and the world around them. New practices open the congregation's vision to see individuals, situations, and relationships from a new perspective. Discernment practices create opportunities to see God moving in ways not discerned before. By discerning together the congregation will discover how its gifts, sense of call, and human need intersect in ways that empower it for Christ's mission.

The practical reality is that many congregations have just begun to experiment with discernment in recent years. The pastor's leadership team has the real challenge of inviting the congregation into a new understanding and constant practice of discernment. One approach to begin discernment consists of three specific areas:

1. Sacred Story
2. Connecting with Spirit
3. Holy Listening

Sacred Story

Begin with *sacred story*. In order to depend on the Holy Spirit's guidance into a deeper understanding of Christ's mission, the congregation needs to develop the ability to recognize the Holy Spirit's presence. It is helpful to recall how the Holy Spirit has blessed in the past both individuals and the congregation. Calling to mind these past experiences will stir souls and invigorate thinking so the congregation can be more awake to receive the grace of God's guidance toward Christ's mission.

Below are two activities to engage the congregation in sacred storytelling and to awaken awareness of God's presence:

Experiences with the Holy: Gather everyone in small groups. Provide paper, pencils, pens, and crayons. Ask participants to recall their first

PRACTICES

1. Centering Prayer
2. Walking the Neighborhood
3. Dwelling in the Word

experience with "The Holy." It is important in this practice to recall an event as early in their lives as possible. Then ask each person to draw a picture that reflects that event. People may hesitate to draw. To encourage others the facilitator leads by drawing, coloring, and going first to share a picture of his or her experience.

Initial sharing by the facilitator creates trust and the participants won't be as concerned about how their drawing may look. Invite everyone to share their drawings and stories in small groups and if time allows with the larger group. Encourage people to write their experience on the back of the drawing and to keep it in a three-ring notebook. Encourage them to add other drawings and experiences to the notebook as they recall them. This will create a wonderful book of testimonies for them and their families. Telling sacred stories in this way creates deeper levels of trust and understanding in the congregation.

Our Congregational Story: Invite persons who are the longest members of the congregation to share stories of their early memories and experiences in the congregation. Invite the congregation historian to search the records to bring out added details. Form a worship service around the congregational story by asking people to share their memories. Consider a congregational dinner with cake honoring the oldest members of the congregation. Invite others to share their memories of the congregational history up to the present day.

The purpose of sharing individual and congregational stories is to bring fresh awareness of the presence of the Holy Spirit throughout our lives as individuals and as a community. The congregation builds a path of trust when it remembers it has been and continues to be on a divinely led journey together.

Connecting with Spirit

There are many pathways to connect with the Spirit. Below are two:

I**ndividual and Group Fasting:** One of the most recognized and oldest pathways to connect with the Spirit is the discipline of fasting. This scriptural tradition focuses on reducing the intake of food as the object of the fast. However, the object of fasting can be withdrawing from any voluntary activity or object that becomes dominant and requires an unhealthy attention. The purpose of fasting is not to make people feel like they are suffering or deprived. Fasting's purpose is to control activities or objects that may fill so much time that people don't have time for God. One definition of a successful fast is to withdraw from something that in someway controls part of a person's life and to replace it by inviting God and spending time with God in the new space. This spiritual practice has application for individuals and the congregation. Congregational activities and concerns can take up significant space and distract the congregation from a meaningful relationship with God and one another. Congregational leaders lead by engaging in personal fasting and inviting the congregation into special times of fasting in the place of other congregational activities or concerns.

Prayer: Prayer helps people connect with the Spirit. "Praying the Hours" is a practice of ongoing conversation with God throughout the day. In its purest form "Praying the Hours" is done in monasteries six to eight times a day. Congregations may want to select one time each day when it is practical for its members and friends to stop whatever they are doing and spend a few moments in intentional prayer. The result of the congregation praying together each day will be a growing recognition of the Holy Spirit being present in the congregation's journey. The congregation will begin to see one another and those they encounter in our neighborhoods and places of work from a new perspective.

There are many creative ways to come together in prayer. For example, the congregation can commit to an experience of 24 hours of prayer. Invite people to sign-up for specific times of prayer for a specific purpose (i.e., discerning Christ's mission for the congregation). These prayers are typically held at the church, by at least two people at a time, and are offered over a 24-hour period. One approach is to begin on a Saturday morning and end on Sunday morning in time for worship. The congregation can then share in a special service focused on discernment and communion with the Holy Spirit.

Holy Listening

Following are three practices (see the practice section following this article) to engage the congregation in *holy listening*:

Centering Prayer: Its purpose is for people to come before God in quiet and listen for the whisper of the Holy Spirit in their hearts and minds. With practice, people can learn to put aside their thoughts and the demands of life and just sit in the presence of God. The only agenda is to turn the focus of these moments over to God and listen for God to speak in the manner of God's choosing.

Centering prayer is also for the congregation. The Holy Spirit draws people together in community as they center their thoughts on common purposes and concerns by simply listening. People often feel the need to fill the quiet spaces when they are together. Creating space to listen is an important practice for leadership team meetings, worship experiences, or walks in the neighborhood. Congregational leaders help model the importance of centering,

silence, and holy listening by intentionally creating space for silence in the routine congregational activities and ministries. It is meaningful to reflect together on new insights gained during these quiet moments.

Walking the Neighborhood: Although some think of discernment as a classical spiritual practice (for example, prayer, fasting, and meditation), discernment also occurs as the congregation encounters real human need and suffering in our neighborhoods and places of work. Often the Spirit is seeking to break through in the ordinary events of our daily lives. Whether checking out in the grocery line or reaching out to help a stranger in need, the congregation is to be fully present and awake to the Spirit's promptings. Experiences of daily living when pressed up against the gospel of Jesus Christ can result in new understandings and insights about Christ's mission. When the congregation gathers for fellowship or worship having encountered the world coupled with the story of scripture it can lead to inspired imagination.

Dwelling in the Word: This practice allows the stories of daily living and the story of scripture to intersect in ways that lead to new understandings of discipleship and mission. The text of scripture, the Spirit, and sharing stories can become part of an ongoing practice of listening. Reflecting on discipleship and the congregation through scripture grounds the disciples and the congregation in what God has done and desires to do on the journey with God into the future.

Real discernment requires commitment and intentionality by the pastor's leadership team and the congregation. The result of the effort can be an immediate refreshing of spirit for the congregation and a deeper understanding of Christ's mission for the congregation.

Questions

1. How can we cultivate an expectation that in *everything* we do we ground ourselves in spiritual practices—our planning, worship, fellowship, and service?
2. What are ways we can create space for quiet reflection and listening amid congregational activities?
3. How can we model and invite others into spiritual practices as an integral part of discipleship?
4. How can we encounter God's presence in places, situations, and relationships outside the congregation?

Practice

Centering Prayer

Objective

In centering prayer the emphasis is on creating a space of quiet openness in which we become aware of God's presence with us. It is called centering prayer because our attention is gathered in and centered on perceiving and receiving God. Centering prayer uses two "tools" to help us pull away from distractions and move us to listening. These two tools are breath and a prayer word (sometimes called a sacred word).

Process

1. Sit with relaxed but erect posture in a comfortable chair, both feet on the floor, hands open in lap. Close your eyes.
2. Offer a brief prayer to state your intention to God and to ask for help and guidance. (For example: "I'm here, God, waiting, listening, open. Empty me of fear, worry, and inner noise. Allow me to rest and rejoice in the awareness of your presence.")
3. Use your breath to create a sense of peace and letting go into God. Breathe deeply, slowly, calmly, starting with several cleansing breaths that end in an audible sigh. As you fill your lungs and exhale, feel the tension in your muscles and your entire body flow out with the air. Continue to breathe in a regular, natural rhythm from your abdomen rather than your chest.
4. Focus on breathing God in, breathing all else out until you feel calm and centered.
5. Continue paying attention to your breath as you focus your body, mind, and spirit on the reality that God is present and that you are here with the intention of loving and being loved by God.
6. Listen beneath or within your breath for a prayer word (or phrase) that expresses the desires and needs of your heart in this time. Don't struggle for the word. Trust that it will arise as you continue to be still and open.
7. When you have been made aware of the prayer word or phrase, repeat it silently to yourself in rhythm with your breathing.

   Example:

(breathing in)	Fill me…
(breathing out)	…O God
(breathing in)	[silence]
(breathing out)	…peace

8. When distracting thoughts pull you away from centering in God (for example, laundry, work deadlines, a phone call you need to make), bring yourself back by returning to your prayer word and the rhythm of your breathing. Don't fight the thoughts so much as recognizing and letting them go as you re-center on God through your prayer word and breathing.
9. Continue in this quiet pattern of presence before God for approximately 20 minutes. (Beginners may want to start with 5–10 minutes.) You may want to set a timer so you will not have to keep checking the time.
10. When the time for prayer has elapsed, offer a brief word of thanks to God, take several more deep breaths, become aware of the room around you, move or stretch in your chair, and open your eyes when you feel ready.

Practice

Walking the Neighborhood

Objective

To learn to listen and pay attention to what is happening in the lives of people in your community in a familiar setting. Additionally, it is an opportunity to discern ways you and your congregation can respond to the needs and opportunities where God is moving in your neighborhood.

Many times people in the neighborhood watch us come and go to our church facility. Often there is very little conversation with those in the neighborhood but God is moving in their lives and we are being invited to connect with where God is moving.

The foundation for this practice is one of our enduring principles, the Worth of All Persons. We engage with people because we are called to be in relationship with others and discover the blessings of relationships and community. This is not about engaging in relationships with a motive other than connecting with other people and being open to what God is up to in these relationships.

Process

Take a family member or go with a friend and begin walking in your home neighborhood or in the neighborhood around your church facility. As you walk, pray about each home and the blessing of God in the lives of the people who live there. Also, if people are out in their yards or on their porches, greet them and wish them a good day.

As you become a regular presence in the neighborhood, begin to have conversations with the neighbors. As you walk through your chosen neighborhood, ask God to lead you to the people with whom God wants you to share in conversation. Listen for where God is moving in their lives. Consider offering the following prayer as you walk in the neighborhood: "God, who's out there that you want me to trade stories with? I need to listen to their story and they need to hear mine. God, bring me together with the people you would like for me to be in a witnessing relationship with. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen."

Be creative by taking some cookies to offer to people on your walk, or some freshly picked vegetables—anything you can offer them as a way of sharing God's love in a practical way. Listen for what God is doing in their lives or what their experiences have been in their individual walks of faith. Between walks share with your partner in prayer and conversation about the people you meet and where God may be leading you in mission.

Now… "step out" in faith!

Process Tip

Read Doctrine and Covenants 161:3, 4.

Notes, Journal

Practice

Dwelling in the Word

Objective

To read and hear scripture as a spiritual practice that leads to new understandings. "Dwelling in the Word" is a practice based on our understanding that God continues to speak to us in the context of our day and calling. Listen for God's voice in scripture to connect with God's mission in Christ. Listen to the voices of others about what God is doing in their lives. This practice is not about gaining information about scripture. Rather, it is about listening to how God is speaking, calling, and sending us to join in Christ's mission to our communities and the world.

Process

Provide a printed copy of a scriptural text. A printed copy allows participants to hear and see the words for reflection. Read the scriptural text out loud and pause for a few minutes to allow people time to reflect on what they've heard.

Read the passage a second time. Ask people to make note of a word, phrase, or image they are drawn to as they hear it read again. After a short pause, form into small groups of no more than four or five people to provide opportunities for each person to share their responses to questions like ones provided below. If someone wishes to remain silent, that is acceptable. It is important to make sure the reflections are personal and do not become an exercise in biblical interpretation.

Here are some questions:

- Is there a place I feel drawn to dwell or explore?
- What words, images, or phrases are speaking to me in this text?
- What is God's invitation to me in this scripture?
- What is God's invitation to our congregation in this scripture?

This is a practice of discovery, be expectant that God's mission in Christ is among you as you gain insights from listening to one another and to God.

Process Tip

Be patient with the practice. Encourage participants to remember it is a spiritual practice that invites scripture to transform our understanding and our way of being and doing. Do not let this become an intellectual exercise which will limit the transformative impact of this practice. Like any practice, this will take time to fully understand.

Notes, Journal

Orienting Mission around the Gifts of All Ages

by David Schaal

Perhaps there's more to Doctrine and Covenants 119:8b than we often think. This passage of scripture states that "All are called according to the gifts of God unto them." Community of Christ has celebrated this affirmation for decades—and rightly so! It's a marvelous affirmation—each person is unique and called to serve Christ's mission according to their unique gifts and capacities.

But is there more to it than this? Through the years, people have typically interpreted this scripture as pertaining to individual disciples. At the same time however, this affirmation is a vital principle for the congregation as a whole. In other words, just as every person is unique, each congregation's collective "constellation" of gifts is unique.

Why then, would anyone expect congregations to all look alike, use the same programs, and be mirror images of one another in their style and approach to being the church? No one would ever expect all people to have similar gifts and to express their discipleship in almost-identical ways. So why would anyone ever expect congregations to live their lives out of a cookie-cutter?

You Already Have What You Need

Your congregation already has everything it needs to engage effectively in the mission of Jesus Christ. Seriously. Your congregation already has what it needs to engage in mission *if it is willing to do so according to its gifts.*

What does this mean? The following three examples tell the story.

Example #1: If a congregation is well-gifted and well-positioned to tutor neighborhood children after school, then *maybe (so much depends on their sense of call and overall context)* that's what they should do. On the other hand, if a congregation is not *gifted* to provide children's programs effectively, then maybe they should not try to offer a vacation Bible school, even if someone thinks they should.

Example #2: If a congregation is blessed with gifts of hospitality and abilities to create safe space for people to share, then maybe they should host experiences of worship characterized by personal sharing, praying for each other's concerns, discussing scripture, and supporting each other in serving the community. On the other hand, if that same congregation is not blessed with gifted preachers (at least, not to the degree that people are willing to invite friends), then perhaps that congregation should not include preaching in their worship (or at least not every week).

Example #3: If a congregation has enough people with a sense of call and the gifts of leadership to run multiple programs, then perhaps they should do so. If, however, a congregation only has three or four people who have the gifts, time, and desire to lead, then perhaps they should focus only on one or two things that they are well-positioned to do, based on their gifts and desires.

PRACTICES

1. Exploring Congregational Gifts
2. Exploring Call and Giftedness

You get the idea. Minister and plan according to what your congregation is uniquely suited to do. Give yourself permission to stop doing what you cannot do well.

Increase Creativity and Energy

All three of the following are important, but what does your congregation need the most: more vision, more training, or more energy? Time and time again, pastors (especially those who have served more than two years) have answered: "more energy." This is no surprise, given the multiple demands that compete for people's time. People have responsibilities with family, work, church, and community. Asking people to do "one more thing" sometimes equates to asking the impossible. They simply don't have the energy (or the time).

Engaging in mission does not have to be "one more thing." It is not about doing more! Congregations unleash new energy and creativity when they give themselves permission to stop doing what they cannot do well. Congregations unleash new energy and creativity when they begin to orient congregational life, organization, and programs around their gifts. Of course, the opposite is true as well. Congregations have one sure way to drain energy—assign willing "workers" to roles they are not gifted for nor have a sense of call about.

Think about it for a moment. When do you feel the most alive? Is it when others saddle you with responsibilities that you feel committed to but do not feel gifted for? Probably not. On the other hand, how does it feel when you have stewardship for something that you have a sense of call about, and feel gifted to do?

The same is true for congregations! Congregations will feel most alive when they pursue Christ's mission *according to their gifts*. Congregations have an obligation to center themselves in Community of Christ identity, mission, message, and beliefs. Every congregation is to honor the policies and procedures of the church. Every congregation is to engage in mission according to the five mission initiatives (see "What Mission Means" in this field guide). Nevertheless, how a congregation lives out its "way of being" Community of Christ should be shaped by its unique personality and gifts.

This can be quite freeing—knowing that the congregation is fully centered in the church's identity and mission, yet living out its life according to what it uniquely is! (With no pressure to be like some other congregation.)

Increasing Invitation

One of the potential results of orienting congregational life around the gifts of its members is the increased likelihood of people inviting friends to share in congregational life and mission.

Recently, an informal survey asked why people did not invite friends to church regularly. The most common answer given was, "I'm just not confident about the quality of the experience that I would be inviting them to." In reality this may be a bigger worry for the "inviter" than it is for the "invitee." Still, if people are not inviting their friends, it's a concern.

But what if the congregation oriented its activities, programs, and worship around the gifts of its people? Not only might the quality increase, but so would the authenticity. "Authenticity," in this case, has nothing to do with "sincerity." Authenticity simply means the congregation is being true to who it really is and what its gifts are.

How natural it is to invite friends into one's home for a meal or to meet a friend for coffee. A bit more demanding, yet potentially joyful, is when people introduce different friends to each other. People can't force others to become friends, but they can introduce them. If, on the other hand, introducing our friends to each other meant that we had to try and be someone that we're not comfortable being, then no one probably would ever make the effort. The same is true for congregations. The experience that we invite people to does not have to be "flashy" or perfect in any way. The experience should however, have the mark of authenticity—in other words, being true to who we are. When we live according to our gifts, the quality of what we do increases. As quality and authenticity increase in congregational life, so does the likelihood of invitation.

Questions

Many congregations burden themselves by perpetuating ways of "being the church" that only weighs them down. These congregations could experience great freedom if they would honor the principle of orienting their mission around their gifts.

1. *How can the pastor's leadership team help the congregation explore its gifts and senses of call?*

   This is a critical question. Congregational leaders dare not decide on their own what the congregation's gifts are. To do so is to diminish understanding and invite conflict. Wise leaders will lead the congregation (or recruit someone from "outside" to lead) in a process that helps the congregation discover its gifts. The more collaborative the process, the more likely the congregation will support orienting its mission around its gifts.

2. *How can congregational leaders model the principle of exploring their gifts and serving accordingly?*

   It's often best to start small. Rather than attempting congregation-wide transformation, begin with one part of congregation life, or with one group. One possibility is for the pastor's leadership team to explore together their personal gifts and sense of call. They can then adjust their roles and responsibilities accordingly.

3. *How can looking at our gifts give us clues regarding what our mission might be?*

   Remember Doctrine and Covenants 119:8b? Understanding our gifts can provide wonderful insight into the congregation's mission, since people and congregations "are called according to the gifts of God unto them." Several years ago, a congregation decided that their mission was to reach out to neighborhood children because they had heard about other congregations doing so. Reaching out to children is clearly in harmony with gospel principles and the mission of the church. However, they wore themselves out and were ineffective. Why? In part because they did not have the gifts for the type of work they were attempting. They were doing it because they thought they "should." No one really had a spiritual sense of call to do this kind of ministry. Their outreach efforts blossomed several months later though, when they discovered that their unique capacity for hospitality was coupled with their love of hosting and their genuine concern for young families. Our gifts give us clues to how we live out mission.

The above questions are important. The practices following this article can help.

Practice

Exploring Congregational Gifts

Objective

To help congregations explore their gifts for mission.

Process

1. Call the congregation together in an informal setting. Serve refreshments. Begin with prayer.
2. Have people name memories of experiences/activities/ongoing ministries in the congregation's life over the past five years that stand out as especially meaningful or effective (or fun). What things have really energized them? (10–20 minutes)
    a. List them on a flip chart or board so that all can see.
3. Ask everyone put a mark or "sticky dot" next to the top five items on the list that have been most important to them (five minutes). Underline five items with the most marks.
4. Divide into small groups of six to eight. Appoint group recorders and leaders ahead of time.
5. In the groups, spend time "remembering" each of the top five underlined items. What made these things so good? What is your fondest memory associated with each one (one hour +).
    a. Ask the recorders to capture the major points made in the group.
6. Ask groups to review the five things again. For each one, discuss what gifts were necessary to make this particular thing happen so effectively?
    a. State that gifts might be resident within individuals. Other gifts might be made possible through the collective efforts of people. Name both kinds of gifts.
    b. Ask recorders to record the gifts named (allow up to one hour).
7. Come back into one group.
    a. Ask recorders to report the gifts that their group identified—name both the gifts seen in individual lives (do NOT name the individuals) as well as gifts that were seen as "collective gifts" of the congregation.
    b. Record the gifts that the recorders name on a flip chart or board that all can see.
    c. Instruct recorders to name all gifts their group identified, even (especially) if it has already been mentioned.
8. In the general group, discuss what congregational life might look like if we oriented congregational life around these gifts? (Focus on the "gifts," not the activities identified.) What would our activities, community service, worship, etc. be like?
    a. Note: This is not a planning session or a time to make decisions. It is simply a time to think out loud together about what congregational life might be like if we really tried to live according to what we're well-suited to be.
9. Share that following this meeting, the pastor's leadership team will be discussing the insights produced during the discussion.
    a. The pastor's leadership team should prayerfully discuss how congregational gifts might shape congregational life, and what ministries you might engage in.
10. Note: Depending on time available, and the depth and breadth of the discussion, you may want to break the foregoing outline into two meetings.

For a more detailed approach and additional resources, see *The Power of Asset Mapping: How Your Congregation Can Act on its Gifts,* by Luther Snow, (Herndon, VA: Alban Institute, 2004).

Practice

Exploring Call and Giftedness

Objective

To help congregational leaders explore and discuss their personal sense of calling and giftedness.

Process

In a pastor's leadership team meeting, give everyone the following instructions:

1. On a blank piece of paper, draw a triangle in the middle of the page (about 2 in/5 cm diameter).
2. In and around this triangle, write down everything that you do in the life of the church—such as attending worship, serving on committees, visiting, planning, and cleaning. (State that it's okay if individuals have a little or a lot to write.) Allow three minutes.
3. Put your pens down and pause for a moment.
4. Next, hold in your imagination the image of a circle. Do not draw it, only imagine it. Imagine that the circle represents your personal gifts and deepest sense of call. (This is the stuff that's at the heart of who you are as a person.)
    a. Just sit quietly for about a minute and think about this.
5. Now, take the circle out of your minds and draw it on the paper in proper relationship with the triangle. (*Facilitators: demonstrate the following as you explain*)
    a. If what you are doing currently in the life of the church is in almost perfect alignment with your gifts and sense of calling, then your circle will be drawn directly on top of your triangle.
    b. If, on the other hand, what you are currently doing in the life of the church is only partially aligned with your gifts and calling, then your circle will just partially overlap your triangle.
    c. If your sense of giftedness and calling are generally not aligned at all with what you are currently doing, then there will be various degrees of space between your circle and triangle.
    d. Now…take the circle out of your minds, and draw it on the paper in relationship to the triangle (allow one minute).
6. Now, turn the page over and draw a large circle. In this circle, write a brief description of your sense of calling, and giftedness as you understand it.
7. As a leadership team, share your circles and triangles with each other. Talk about what they represent.
    a. Please note that this exercise should not even be attempted unless there is an attitude of trust and mutual respect on the team as a whole.
    b. Don't be rushed or pressured by the fruits of this exercise. It is meant to help the leadership team talk about their gifts and sense of call. Changes, if any, should arise naturally and not as the result of forcing conclusions.
    c. Over time, talk about how you can work together to support each other according to your senses of call. Are there activities or programs that need to be given up if no one has a sense of call about leading them? Are there ways of leaders doing what they're already doing differently in order to align with the leadership team's gifts and sense of calling? Are there new things to be experimented with in light of this exercise?

Foundational Concepts

Many of us, when asked to serve as pastor, experience an overwhelming sense of inadequacy. We ask ourselves if we are really the best person and whether we will be able to rise to the leadership task. If we are fortunate enough to feel gifted as a leader, we may question our ability to provide spiritual leadership. We might ask how leading the congregation in its mission relates to the leadership skills developed in the secular world. Some of us feel ready to lead without much assistance.

The reality of congregational leadership is that every pastor needs a pastor's leadership team. The pastor's leadership team is not simply a crutch for the person who does not feel gifted to lead. Experience has demonstrated that leading and sustaining a congregation in mission today requires a pastor committed to shared leadership. The multidimensional role of pastor is challenging and cannot be fully expressed in the giftedness of one individual.

The first step in modeling "community" in Christ is to build a pastor's leadership team. Even if we feel like we can handle the job alone, there are a multitude of reasons a team is better.

First, recruiting a leadership team enables a broad spectrum of gifts to be developed and expressed in leading the congregation.

Second, developing a leadership team provides a more comprehensive and sustainable approach to leadership. The pastor and congregation benefit from multiple perspectives, mutual accountability, and a shared approach to discerning, planning, decision making, and engaging in mission.

Third, leading as a team models shared leadership for others by showing how to discuss, disagree, and build consent on matters of importance to the congregation.

Fourth, committing to a team approach helps develop new leaders and provide continuity during pastor transitions.

Recruiting a Pastor's Leadership Team

The key in recruiting your pastor's leadership team is to select a group of people with a broad spectrum of gifts that can be developed and expressed in leading the congregation.

Begin by reviewing the list of duties and responsibilities of pastors found at *www.CofChrist.org/policy* in the *Church Administrator's Handbook* (2005 edition) on pages 9–10. This list can feel overwhelming. Remember, this is why you are building a pastor's leadership team.

Next, adapt this general list of duties and responsibilities to create a custom list that applies specifically to the leadership needs of your congregation. Which of the duties and responsibilities are most important for the pastor's leadership team in your congregation? Which duties and responsibilities can be set aside (at least for now)? How can

Building a Pastor's Leadership Team

by Stassi Cramm

PRACTICES

1. Dwelling in the Word
2. Celebrating Life
3. Valuing the Other
4. I Have a Dream
5. If I Could Change One Thing
6. Role Play Different Perspectives
7. Body of Christ
8. My Favorite Scripture
9. TOOLS:
   a. Assessing Your Team Climate
   b. Assessing Your Team's Communication

you group your custom list of duties and responsibilities into leadership gifts needed to lead your congregation in mission?

To develop the best possible pastor's leadership team for your congregation, honestly and humbly reflect on your own gifts as a leader. Prayerfully consider what gifts you have that are on the list of what the congregation needs in the leadership team and what gifts you are missing. Be honest about both your strengths and weaknesses. After personal reflection, ask trusted friends or your mentor how they would describe your strengths and weaknesses. Receive their observations as gifts.

Compare the list of your strengths and weaknesses with the list you made of gifts needed to lead the congregation. Now identify the gifts and skills needed in the pastor's leadership team members that support and complement your strengths and weaknesses. For instance, here is a sample list of gifts you might need to lead your congregation in mission:

- Vision and passion for outreach ministry
- Vibrant worship planning
- Facilitating a team
- Developing others
- Project planning and management
- Spiritual formation skills
- Disciple formation skills

Once you have decided what gifts you need in the team, decide on the number of team members needed and who to ask to join the pastor's leadership team.

There is no single best answer on what size team you will want to develop. This will depend on the gifts needed by the team and what potential team members have to offer. A general guideline is to have a team that is between 10 to 20 percent of the number of active participants within the congregation. This means if you have 30 people who are active members and participants at an average event, you might want a leadership team of three to six people including yourself.

Start with a list of all members and participants. Prayerfully consider each one and each one's gifts. Pray and reflect on who would create a good pastor's leadership team for your congregation. Be open to possibilities.

Developing a Pastor's Leadership Team

Now that you have recruited a pastor's leadership team, share with your team what gifts you perceive each person brings and how you envision those gifts can work together to lead the congregation in mission. Share your personal image of how the team can function and be shaped by the vision of the team.

Building a team takes time. Avoid the temptation to jump straight into "business," and invest time together in the following three things. These things may occupy the majority of the team's time for a while.

First, to help the team get to know one another, consider having the team read article 25 on page 72 of the *Church Administrator's Handbook* (2005 edition). Discuss who on the team is best equipped to meet the ten expectations for leadership identified in this article. No single person will be best equipped to meet all the expectations.

Second, spend time together reviewing and discussing the enduring principles (*www.CofChrist.org/ourfaith/enduring-principles.asp*) and mission initiatives (see the "What Mission Means" article in this field guide). Everything the leadership team does should be grounded in the enduring principles and driven by the mission initiatives.

Third, it is crucial that the team has opportunities to grow as a team by deepening their relationships with one another and with God. Engaging in various spiritual disciplines or mission practices each time you gather will keep the team centered on Christ, listening to God's Spirit, and building your relationships with one another and God. For instance, start each team meeting with the "Dwelling in the Word" practice and consider sharing in the "Celebrating Life" or "Valuing the Other" practice once a month as a team. These can be found in the practices section following this article.

Leading as a Pastor's Leadership Team

Leading as a pastor's leadership team is different from leading as a pastor with counselors. Counselors offer advice and suggestions to a pastor but are not responsible for the final decision. With a pastor's leadership team, the pastor releases the sole responsibility and burden for making and implementing all leadership decisions. The pastor and the team members are interdependent as the leaders and shepherds of the congregation. The pastor's leadership team is like a symphony where the conductor and each musician all have a role in creating the music. The beauty of the sound is dependent on how each one functions as part of the whole.

The keys to success are to make sure that each team member understands his or her responsibilities and how each position fits together to create leadership. Likewise, it is important that team members, especially the pastor, honor and allow each one to fulfill their responsibilities.

It is wonderful to support and to cover for one another, but there is a fine line between support and micromanagement. Honoring the agreed-to responsibilities of each team member is critical for smooth team leadership.

It is also important that team members understand how the team will make decisions and lead the congregation. Developing guidelines for working and communicating with one another avoids misconceptions and failed expectations within the team. Here are examples of guidelines to get you started:

- We will use respectful words and tone in our conversation.
- We may disagree on specific ideas but these disagreements do not impact our personal commitment to each one as a child of God.
- When discussing a topic every person on the team must have the opportunity to speak before any member speaks a second time.
- We will uphold strict confidentiality about our team discussions and only discuss items with others that we agree are appropriate for sharing.
- We commit to sharing openly and honestly and will encourage any team member who is not sharing to be more vocal.
- We will not talk behind one another's backs. If one has a problem with another, conversation will be held between the two with a facilitator as needed.

It is important for the team to agree as a group how it will make decisions. The team should agree which decisions will be made by individuals based on their assignment and decisions made by the team as a whole. It is also important to consider which decisions should include the congregation as part of the decision-making process.

Before the team faces its first conflict, it is important that the team has discussed and agreed on how the team will handle disagreement and conflict. One reference to get you started in having a plan for managing conflict is to read and discuss article 29 ("Conflict in the Church," *Church Administrator's Handbook*, 2005 edition, pages 76–77, *www.CofChrist.org/policy*). Training and other resources are available through Peacebuilding Ministries, *www.CofChrist.org/peacebuilding*, phone 1-800-825-2806, ext. 2353.

Periodically evaluating how you are doing as a team is an important part of continuing to improve your team leadership. Two evaluation instruments, "Assessing Your Team Climate" and "Assessing Your Team's Communication," (Craig E. Runde and Tim A. Flanagan, *Building Conflict Competent Teams* [San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2008] 200–208) can be found below. Encourage adjustments to how you function as a team based on your periodic evaluations.

Remember that leadership in the congregational context is more than simply being effective, it is also about being faithful. Consider how you will seek God's guidance in your leadership. Use various practices such as "I Have a Dream," "Change One Thing," "Body of Christ," "My Favorite Scripture," or "Role Play Different Perspectives" to help provide space for God's Spirit to guide your leadership team. (See these practices following this article.)

Committing to a Pastor's Leadership Team

As any pastor transitions from the more traditional role of pastoring as a pastor with counselors to pastoring with a leadership team, there will be moments of doubt about the level of effort required to lead as a team. Is it really worth it? The undeniable answer is "Yes!" As stated earlier, the pastor's leadership team engages a broader spectrum of people, it models community and shared leadership, helps develop new leaders, and makes leadership transitions easier. In addition, images and understandings of leadership are changing, and younger people are experiencing shared leadership models as the most appropriate and effective way to lead. Consequently, implementing a pastor's leadership team has the potential to make congregational leadership more relevant to new generations of potential leaders.

The pastor's leadership team does not take away the pastor's authority or stewardship. It can however, enhance and deepen the pastor's effectiveness in leading the congregation in mission.

Questions

1. Who do I need to share this article with in order to build support for approaching leadership in this manner?
2. As a pastor, who might I sit down with to confidentially review the gifts and backgrounds of congregational members and participants?
3. When will I begin?

Practice

Dwelling in the Word

Objective

To read and hear scripture as a spiritual practice that leads to new understandings. "Dwelling in the Word" is a practice based on our understanding that God continues to speak to us in the context of our day and calling. Listen for God's voice in scripture to connect with God's mission in Christ. Listen to the voices of others about what God is doing in their lives. This practice is not about gaining information about scripture. Rather, it is about listening to how God is speaking, calling, and sending us to join in Christ's mission to our communities and the world.

Process

Provide a printed copy of a scriptural text. A printed copy allows participants to hear and see the words for reflection. Read the scriptural text out loud and pause for a few minutes to allow people time to reflect on what they've heard.

Read the passage a second time. Ask people to make note of a word, phrase, or image they are drawn to as they hear it read again. After a short pause, form into small groups of no more than four or five people to provide opportunities for each person to share their responses to questions like ones provided below. If someone wishes to remain silent, that is acceptable. It is important to make sure the reflections are personal and do not become an exercise in biblical interpretation.

Here are some questions:

- Is there a place I feel drawn to dwell or explore?
- What words, images, or phrases are speaking to me in this text?
- What is God's invitation to me in this scripture?
- What is God's invitation to our congregation in this scripture?

This is a practice of discovery, be expectant that God's mission in Christ is among you as you gain insights from listening to one another and to God.

Process Tip

Be patient with the practice. Encourage participants to remember it is a spiritual practice that invites scripture to transform our understanding and our way of being and doing. Do not let this become an intellectual exercise which will limit the transformative impact of this practice. Like any practice, this will take time to fully understand.

Notes, Journal

Practice

Celebrating Life

So God created humankind in his image,
in the image of God he created them;
male and female he created them.
—Genesis 1:27

Objective

To celebrate the gift of our own life and the lives of others who are part of our community. We are children of God created in God's own image. We need to celebrate our life as a gift from our loving and generous creator. Often in the midst of our busy schedules, we forget to stop and celebrate our life as well as the lives of others who are important to us. Celebrating one another's lives is an important aspect of community building and remembering whose we are.

Process

Once a month plan a party to celebrate everyone's life who has a birthday that month. Use one of the following methods to express your gratitude for each celebrant or create your own way:

- Have everyone make a thank-you card for each celebrant identifying what they celebrate most about the person having a birthday. Share the cards with the birthday celebrants.
- Take a picture of the birthday celebrant and create a print with a white border. Have everyone write one word compliments about what they appreciate about the person.
- Create a "gift of gratitude" by filling a gift bag with small colored pieces of paper that people write their compliments on for the birthday celebrant.
- Create a "bouquet of thanks" by having each participant place a single stem flower in a vase and share a story about why they appreciate the celebrant. Give the bouquet to the birthday celebrant.

Process Tip

Sometimes we are "shy" about sharing our feelings of gratitude or affirmations about each other. Encourage everyone to be extravagant in their sharing. Trust that the process of celebrating life will become easier and more comfortable each time it is practiced.

Notes, Journal

Practice

Valuing the Other

Objective

To deepen conversation and understanding by developing active listening skills.

Process

Use an object such as a rain stick or ball that will pass easily from person to person and be visible to the whole group. Outline the following ground rules for group discussion:

1. When a topic or question is before the group, the person holding the object has the floor. Set a time limit for speaking such as three minutes unless the questions or sharing need more time. It is the responsibility of each person to listen carefully to the person speaking.
2. For a person to speak he or she must receive the object from the person speaking. To receive the object from the person speaking, one must be able to restate what that person just shared in summary fashion to that person's satisfaction. Note: it is important the person feels *heard and understood*. This is a critical part of the journey of deepening relationships and creating a safe place.
3. This process continues until the group is ready to move on to another question or topic.
4. At the end of the meeting provide time for discussion about how people felt about the experience. Some people will feel the process was cumbersome. We often feel that we already listen carefully to others when often we are formulating our own thoughts while someone else is speaking.

Process Tip

The facilitator should be alert to how people are responding both verbally and nonverbally. Be sure participants feel they were truly heard before they pass the object to the next person. Listening with all our senses so we not only hear but feel what the other person said is a practice that takes concentration and time to develop.

Notes, Journal

Practice

I Have a Dream

In the last days it will be, God declares, that I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh, and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams.

—Acts 2:17 NRSV

Objective

To stay focused on the possibilities that await us in the future and to unite our decision-making processes by the guidance of our collective dreams. Sharing our dreams helps us envision new possibilities for the future. It also helps us find ideas and hopes that we have in common with each other. When we prayerfully combine our dreams, it helps us discover how God is leading us into the future.

Process

Give everyone who will be gathering a question to pray about in preparation for their time together. The question should focus on the future and what people are sensing about that future. Some example suggestions are:

- What do you envision as you dream about our community in the next few years?
- Who do you dream about providing leadership during the next five years?
- How do you dream about our congregation living out mission in the next few years?

Process Tip

The facilitator will need to encourage people to dream big. Sometimes the "realities" of our current situation take away our imagination and our ability to envision a better future.

Notes, Journal

Practice

If I Could Change One Thing

For everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven: a time to be born, and a time to die; a time to plant, and a time to pluck up what is planted; a time to kill, and a time to heal; a time to break down, and a time to build up; a time to weep, and a time to laugh; a time to mourn, and a time to dance; a time to throw away stones, and a time to gather stones together; a time to embrace, and a time to refrain from embracing; a time to seek, and a time to lose; a time to keep, and a time to throw away; a time to tear, and a time to sew; a time to keep silence, and a time to speak; a time to love, and a time to hate; a time for war, and a time for peace.

—Ecclesiastes 3:1–10 NRSV

Objective

To listen to each other about the one item that each one would change if given the chance so that collectively the group can decide what might be the best activity to focus on next as a group. Sometimes life and leadership become overwhelming. We feel consumed by everything we sense we need to do. Yet, there is a rhythm to life and sometimes we just have to stop, breathe, and rediscover that rhythm. Stopping and focusing on what one item we would like to change can help us break the frozen nature of being overwhelmed.

Process

Each group member is given a few moments to consider what one item he or she would change if given the opportunity. To allow more time for reflection, group members could be asked this question before the meeting. Each member then shares what she or he would change and how she or he would approach making the change.

Process Tip

Sometimes we are hesitant to share what we would change. We are afraid that we might accidentally offend another person in the group. Help the group create a safe environment where everyone is open to anything that might be shared even if the item that someone else would change is one of our "sacred cows."

Notes, Journal

PRACTICE

ROLE PLAYING DIFFERENT PERSPECTIVES (BASED ON SIX THINKING HATS®)

OBJECTIVE

To look at challenges and opportunities from different perspectives. This can be very effective with a leadership team where individuals who fulfill a variety of roles in the congregation can bring new and useful insights to discernment and decision making by role playing different perspectives.

PROCESS

Go to *Edward de Bono Thinking Methods* at *www.debonogroup.com/six_thinking_hats.php*. In your leadership team meetings, use Six Thinking Hats® to improve the quality of your conversation and decision making. Look at the conversation, issue, or decision "wearing" each of the thinking hats in turn. You can assign hats to team members and even change hats in the midst of the meeting.

PROCESS TIP

Six Thinking Hats® is a good technique for looking at the effects of a decision from a number of different points of view. It allows necessary emotion and skepticism to be brought into what would otherwise be purely rational decisions. It opens up the opportunity for creativity within conversation and decision making. The technique also helps, for example, persistently pessimistic people to be positive and creative.

Notes, Journal

Practice

Body of Christ

Objective

To affirm the gifts that each person brings to the team or group. Everyone on a team or in a group brings gifts to that team. Sometimes we forget what we have to share or how we are an important part of the body.

Process

Read 1 Corinthians 12:12–31 aloud.

> For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. For in the one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and we were all made to drink of one Spirit. Indeed, the body does not consist of one member but of many. If the foot would say, "Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body," that would not make it any less a part of the body. And if the ear would say, "Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body," that would not make it any less a part of the body. If the whole body were an eye, where would the hearing be? If the whole body were hearing, where would the sense of smell be? But as it is, God arranged the members in the body, each one of them, as he chose. If all were a single member, where would the body be? As it is, there are many members, yet one body. The eye cannot say to the hand, "I have no need of you," nor again the head to the feet, "I have no need of you." On the contrary, the members of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable, and those members of the body that we think less honorable we clothe with greater honor, and our less respectable members are treated with greater respect; whereas our more respectable members do not need this. But God has so arranged the body, giving the greater honor to the inferior member, that there may be no dissension within the body, but the members may have the same care for one another. If one member suffers, all suffer together with it; if one member is honored, all rejoice together with it.
>
> Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it. And God has appointed in the church first apostles, second prophets, third teachers; then deeds of power, then gifts of healing, forms of assistance, forms of leadership, various kinds of tongues. Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Do all work miracles? Do all possess gifts of healing? Do all speak in tongues? Do all interpret? But strive for the greater gifts. And I will show you a still more excellent way.

The person selected to start identifies another person on the team, states a gift that person brings to the team, and thanks that person for sharing that gift.

The person whose gift was identified now picks another person, identifies a gift that person brings to the team, and thanks that person for sharing that gift.

Then the person whose gift was just identified chooses another person and the process continues until each person on the team has had gifts identified about them and been thanked for their contributions.

Process Tip

Sometimes it can be awkward for a person to hear positive information about one's self. Help people understand that it is important for the group to affirm one another and identify the giftedness in one another.

Alternative:
If this process is too awkward for the team or group, a variation would be to provide a sheet of paper with all team members' names on it. Then give each team member a stack of small papers and a small sack. Have them write a person's name and identify a gift in that person for which he or she is thankful. Have them create a paper for each person and place their notes in each person's sack. Then everyone gets to take home a sack full of affirmations and gratitude.

Practice

My Favorite Scripture

All scripture is inspired by God and is useful for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, so that everyone who belongs to God may be proficient, equipped for every good work.

—2 Timothy 3:16–17

Objective

To deepen our relationship with one another and with God by sharing important scripture passages. Scripture is a formative part of our lives as faithful disciples. We learn about one another, connect in deeper ways, and gain various understandings of scripture by sharing our experiences with scripture.

Process

Focus on a particular section or book of scripture such as the Hebrew Scriptures, the Gospels, or the Book of Mormon. Give every participant two to five minutes to think about a scripture from the focus area that is of particular importance to them now in their lives. Have each participant take turns sharing their favorite scripture and why it is important to them.

OR

Ask a particular question of the group such as:

- What scripture brings you hope?
- What scripture gives you a sense of peace?
- What scripture gives you energy and excitement for missionary outreach?

Give every participant two to five minutes to consider their response, and then have each participant share.

Process Tip

It might be helpful to have several copies of Community of Christ's three books of scripture available for the group to look through as they consider their response.

Notes, Journal

Tool

Assessing Your Team Climate: Components for Establishing the Right Climate

Five essential components for establishing the right climate are considered in the questions below. Use the following scale to indicate your level of agreement with each item. Give each item a rating or numerical score. Next, add the items to arrive at a total score for each component. This tool is from Craig E. Runde and Tim A. Flanagan, *Building Conflict Competent Teams* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2008) 200–208.

Scale:

4=I agree

3=I agree more than I disagree

2=I disagree more than I agree

1=I disagree

Attitudes

_____ Most team members approach conflict as an opportunity rather than an obstacle.

_____ Most team members have had experience dealing with difficult conflicts in the past.

_____ As a general rule, nobody on the team fears or avoids conflict.

_____ We have shared our perspectives and views about conflict.

_____ My teammates would agree that the differences should be embraced, not eliminated.

_____ **Attitudes Total**

Trust

_____ I believe that my teammates have my best interests at heart.

_____ My teammates are skilled and capable of producing excellent results.

_____ My teammates share the same basic values.

_____ Our team leader is trustworthy.

_____ I believe that my teammates have integrity and communicate with me honestly.

_____ **Trust Total**

Safety

_____ Team members show genuine empathy and concern for one another.

_____ I am willing to take risks and be vulnerable with my teammates.

_____ Team members are willing to disagree even when in the minority.

_____ Team members are never taken advantage of by others on the team.

_____ Team members have a strong sense of mutual respect.

_____ **Safety Total**

Working Together (Behavioral Integration)

_____ My teammates share information freely and frequently.

_____ Team members readily give each other the benefit of the doubt when sharing views.

_____ Teammates explore issues deeply and engage in vigorous debate.

_____ Team members are interdependent and rely on each other heavily.

_____ Individual team members identify themselves as members of this team to others.

_____ **Working Together Total**

Emotional Intelligence

_____ My teammates recognize that internal conflicts are inevitable and natural.

_____ My team has discussed how we will deal with emotional issues.

_____ Team members have shared their personal hot buttons with each other.

_____ Most team members are adept at displaying empathy with one another.

_____ My team knows how to cool down and slow down when things get intense.

_____ **Emotional Intelligence Total**

Individual Summary

_____ Attitudes

_____ Trust

_____ Safety

_____ Working Together

_____ Emotional Intelligence

Team Total Summary

_____ Attitudes

_____ Trust

_____ Safety

_____ Working Together

_____ Emotional Intelligence

Team Averages

_____ Attitudes

_____ Trust

_____ Safety

_____ Working Together

_____ Emotional Intelligence

Analysis and Suggestions [for Assessing Your Team Climate]

Add all team members' total component scores together to determine a team total for each component. Then divide each team total by the number of team members who completed the checklist. This results in a team average score for each component. The components with the lowest relative averages are most in need of attention for establishing the right team climate.

Use the following guidelines to assess your team's effectiveness:

3.5 and higher: This is a team strength area.

- Actively reinforce teammates who demonstrate effectiveness.
- Consider how this strength can be leveraged in other areas for improvement.
- Celebrate!

2.9 to 3.4: This score range is solid but could be improved.

- Schedule time during a team meeting to discuss this area.
- Actively reinforce teammates who demonstrate effectiveness.

2.0 to 2.8: This area is in definite need of improvement.

- Schedule a single topic team meeting to address this area.
- [Consider consulting the mission center president.]

1.9 and lower: This is cause for real concern.

- Ask all team members to spend time reflecting on this issue.
- [Contact mission center president to request facilitator for assistance.]

Tool

Assessing Your Team's Communication: An Examination of Behaviors and Skills

Four major communication sets are critical for conflict competent teams. This tool enables you to assess your team's current effectiveness in these areas. Use the following scale as you analyze each question. Give each item a rating or numerical score. Next, add the items to arrive at a total score for each category. This tool is from Craig E. Runde and Tim A. Flanagan, *Building Conflict Competent Teams* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2008) 200–208.

Scale:

4=Excellent or almost always; we perform very well.

3=Good or usually; but we could improve.

2=Average or sometimes; we could definitely benefit by improvement here.

1=Below average or seldom; this is cause for real concern.

Reflective Thinking and Delay Responding

_____ My teammates call for time-outs when discussions become too heated.

_____ Our team leader senses when we need a break.

_____ Our team temporarily tables decisions when we have significant disagreements.

_____ Team members coach each other to cool down, slow down, and reengage.

_____ We give each other opportunities to think things over.

_____ **Reflective Thinking and Delay Responding Total**

Perspective Taking and Empathy

_____ During important discussions, we ask many questions.

_____ When differences arise, we explore them fully.

_____ My teammates go out of their way to check for understanding.

_____ Teammates are good at acknowledging and describing each other's feelings.

_____ Our team leader effectively summarizes key points made during meetings.

_____ **Perspective Taking and Empathy Total**

Expressing Emotions

_____ Team members are honest about their feelings and emotions.

_____ My teammates seldom raise their voices, swear, or use accusatory language.

_____ When asked by others, teammates admit feelings such as frustration or concern.

_____ We routinely engage in straight talk with each other.

_____ My teammates share good news and accomplishments freely.

_____ **Expressing Emotions Total**

Listening for Understanding

_____ Team members leave team meetings with a good sense of where everybody stands.

_____ We seldom interrupt or cut one another off.

_____ My teammates ask lots of questions when trying to understand other points of view.

_____ Team members encourage the use of examples, analogies, and metaphors.

_____ On the whole, we are a team of very good listeners.

_____ **Listening for Understanding Total**

Individual Summary

_____ Reflective Thinking and Delay Responding

_____ Perspective Taking and Empathy

_____ Expressing Emotions

_____ Listening for Understanding

Team Total Summary

_____ Reflective Thinking and Delay Responding

_____ Perspective Taking and Empathy

_____ Expressing Emotions

_____ Listening for Understanding

Team Averages

_____ Reflective Thinking and Delay Responding

_____ Perspective Taking and Empathy

_____ Expressing Emotions

_____ Listening for Understanding

Analysis and Suggestions [for Assessing Your Team's Communication]

Adding all team members' total component scores together gives a team total for each component. Divide each team total by the number of team members who completed the exercise to get a team average score for each component. The components with the lowest relative averages are most in need of attention for establishing the right team climate. Use the following guidelines as you consider your team's results and action steps:

3.5 and higher: This is a team strength.

- Actively reinforce teammates who demonstrate effectiveness.
- Consider how this strength can be leveraged in other areas for improvement.
- Celebrate!

2.9 to 3.4: This area is solid but could be improved.

- Schedule time during a team meeting for discussion of this area.
- Use team-building activities and exercises to enhance development in areas for improvement.

2.0 to 2.8: This area is in definite need of improvement.

- Schedule a single topic team meeting to address this area.
- [Consult mission center president to consider the use of a facilitator for assistance.]

1.9 and lower: This is cause for real concern.

- Ask all team members to commit to improving their skills in this area.
- [Contact mission center president to request facilitator for assistance.]

Caring for the Most Vulnerable

by Katie Harmon-McLaughlin

PRACTICES

1. Walking the Neighborhood
2. Holding in the Light
3. Justice in the Bible
4. Praying the News

> How do we measure our depth of responsiveness to the cause of Zion, the peaceable kingdom? The scriptures tell us that we need to be especially aware of the condition of the most vulnerable in our midst: the aged, the young, the sick, the poor, the marginalized, and the oppressed. How are *they* doing? Are *they* experiencing well-being? Do *they* have full opportunity to become who God created them to be, which is the heart of justice? Are *they* unfairly hindered by the attitudes and actions of others who have a more secure or powerful place in society? Do *they* live in conditions of poverty and disease that cause them fear and suffering?
>
> —Stephen M. Veazey, "Share the Peace of Jesus Christ," 2005 World Conference Address

When caring for the most vulnerable, congregations enter the sacred reality of others. Caring for the vulnerable can be intimidating and may produce feelings of awkwardness and inadequacy. No amount of training can adequately prepare a congregation for the real and raw ministry of caring for the most vulnerable. Yet, it is this important ministry that is at the heart of our Christian faith.

> Stating doctrines inside the Church will not liberate unless the Church gets out into the streets, heals the sick and confronts the unjust. The Church is in the world that God loved…for the well-being of the world. The Church does well to see where God is at work and to promote those salvific acts.
>
> —Mercy Amba Oduyoye, *Introducing African Women's Theology*, (Cleveland, OH: Pilgrim Press, 2001) 89.

Four Steps for Congregational Leaders in Caring for the Most Vulnerable

Step One: Awareness—Who are the vulnerable?

The vulnerable are the aged, the young, the sick, the poor, the marginalized, and the oppressed. The vulnerable are families who are wondering how they will afford groceries and other daily necessities. The vulnerable are people encountered every day; a checker in the grocery store or a server at a restaurant. To care for the most vulnerable is to pay attention in the details of daily life and to begin asking questions. Are people getting paid fair wages and affordable health benefits for their work? Are people treated with dignity and respect in the workplace? Are the children safe? Do people have full opportunity to become who God created them to be?

The only way to truly find the answers to these questions is by engaging in relationships with the people in our shared communities. Surveys and statistics highlight some of the need, but congregations can only learn about who the vulnerable are by talking with them.

(See "Walking the Neighborhood" in the practices section following this article.)

Caring for the vulnerable often requires the congregation to address difficult issues not only in society, but within themselves. There is a common tendency in congregational life of overgeneralizing justice

issues to avoid complexity and discomfort. Congregational leaders can help congregations peel back the multiple layers of bias within themselves to get to the heart of the matter where God calls them to be.

Creating awareness is the first step toward moving beyond complacency to intentional acts of compassion. Congregational leaders are called to lead the way in revealing the faces and stories of those who are often forgotten in congregations and neighborhoods.

Questions for Pastors and Leaders:

- Who are the people in our own congregation and community who are suffering? Does everyone have enough to experience well-being?
- Are the aged in the congregation and community receiving proper care, surviving financially in retirement, and being supported emotionally?
- Is anyone visiting the sick, preparing them meals, or supporting their families?
- How are our children doing? Do they feel like valued, loved, significant members of the congregation?

(See "Holding in the Light" and "Justice in the Bible" in the practices section following this article.)

Step Two: Discipleship—How do our daily choices affect the most vulnerable?

One of the greatest myths of our time is that religion, society, and politics need to remain totally separate. One cannot read far in the Bible without the profound realization that God has called people throughout history to be engaged in their societies (socially and politically) for the sake of God's kingdom in this world.

> When Moses saw the glory of God in the flaming bush and learned the ineffable name of the Eternal, it was not the salvation of Moses which was in question but the salvation of his people from the bondage of Egypt.
>
> —Benjamin E Mays (ed.), *A Gospel for the Social Awakening: Selections from the Writings of Walter Rauschenbusch* (New York: Association Press, 1950) 109.

How do we go about freeing the vulnerable here and now from bondage? The "Egypts" of our time are not always as clear. In April 2011, President Veazey shared with us that to care for the vulnerable is not enough, we must also work to free people from "unfair or crushing conditions" by addressing "the root causes of poverty, hunger, discrimination, and conflict."

Discipleship is a daily lifestyle choice. Although the mission initiative to Abolish Poverty, End Suffering can seem overwhelming, the work begins in the details of our lives. Leaders of congregations are called to model lives of faith and integrity. This is the most powerful witness and effective tool for leading others in mission. Many in congregations will not immediately connect caring for the vulnerable and living their discipleship. Raising awareness provides critical educational opportunities for the congregation to learn about how their choices affect others, and why this is a matter of faith. This is not about evoking guilt, but practicing Christian confession in a way that leads to awareness, restoration, and healing for the brokenness between one another and God.

Questions for Pastors and Leaders:

- In what ways are we benefiting from and contributing to current systems that oppress and marginalize?
- Have we taken the time to know how and where our clothes, food, and other necessities were made? Do we consider the impact of the products we use daily on the environment and the poor?
- Do we vote on public policy in line with our Christian values and ethics, with the most vulnerable in mind?
- Do we give generously out of our true capacity or live more in tune with the lure of consumerism?

Step Three: Listen and Act

Congregational leaders must listen thoroughly to the issues in their community to discern how to confront the unjust systems and structures in which those communities may be rooted. Listening thoroughly means being open to all sides of difficult issues with a constant bias for the most vulnerable. To care for the most vulnerable, congregations must listen thoroughly, and then actively participate in God's movement toward justice and reconciliation.

Christians must avoid the tendency to demonize those who uphold unjust laws and systems. Appealing to a person's goodness out of love and genuine concern opens the potential for authentic healing to occur. Yet, Christians are also called to stand and speak for and with the most vulnerable in ways that may be uncomfortable and controversial.

Questions for Pastors and Leaders:

- What issues in our community are calling for our prayerful response?
- How well is the congregation listening, individually and collectively, to the issues affecting the most vulnerable in our community?

(See "Praying the News" in the practices section following this article.)

> We must give ourselves to the task of bringing about God's peaceable kingdom, wherever we are, in whatever we do. There is no one in need within earshot of our hearts whom we may ignore—because in each of them is the living plea that we do the will of God.
>
> —Joan Chittister, *The Monastery of the Heart: An Invitation to a Meaningful Life*, (Katonah, NY: BlueBridge, 2011)

Step Four: Aligning Congregational Gifts with Community Needs

Congregational leaders can help congregations discover how their gifts best align with the needs in their community. Remember, needs are only truly realized through growing in relationship with the people in the community. There is no specific model to follow. Think creatively and experimentally!

Pastors and leaders may need to help the congregation realize that congregational gifts may be quite simple, though profound. For instance, my congregation shares a parking lot with a children's hospital. We have discovered that there was need for a place where families visiting the hospital could simply come, relax, and pray. They needed hospitality.

The congregation responded quickly by scheduling volunteers who would sit at the church during the week with the door wide open. We set up stations in the sanctuary for people to engage in spiritual practice and prayer. It was simple and easy. It gave our retired congregation members something to do during the week that utilized their gifts and met their desire to serve. People from our community, whether they wanted to pray or not, began wandering in through the open door.

Through this experience, we learned that as we care for the most vulnerable, our practice of hospitality is key. Even simple decisions, such as leaving the church doors open, can change a community's perception of a congregation's desire to serve.

Pastors and leaders may want to also read the article "Orienting Mission around the Gifts of All Ages" in this field guide.

Questions for Pastors and Leaders:

- What does our physical presence say about our desire to care for the most vulnerable? Is our building an inviting, inclusive space?
- How do the gifts of the congregation align with the needs of the community?

Questions

Truly caring for the most vulnerable will require us to ask significant questions about ourselves and our communities. Wise pastors and leaders are willing to engage such questions.

Please take a moment and review the questions under each step in this article. You may choose to ponder them by yourself, but they may be most powerful when discussed as a leadership team or congregation.

The practices following this article will also be helpful.

Practice

Walking the Neighborhood

Objective

To learn to listen and pay attention to what is happening in the lives of people in your community in a familiar setting. Additionally, it is an opportunity to discern ways you and your congregation can respond to the needs and opportunities where God is moving in your neighborhood.

Many times people in the neighborhood watch us come and go to our church facility. Often there is very little conversation with those in the neighborhood but God is moving in their lives and we are being invited to connect with where God is moving.

The foundation for this practice is one of our enduring principles, the Worth of All Persons. We engage with people because we are called to be in relationship with others and discover the blessings of relationships and community. This is not about engaging in relationships with a motive other than connecting with other people and being open to what God is up to in these relationships.

Process

Take a family member or go with a friend and begin walking in your home neighborhood or in the neighborhood around your church facility. As you walk, pray about each home and the blessing of God in the lives of the people who live there. Also, if people are out in their yards or on their porches, greet them and wish them a good day.

As you become a regular presence in the neighborhood, begin to have conversations with the neighbors. As you walk through your chosen neighborhood, ask God to lead you to the people with whom God wants you to share in conversation. Listen for where God is moving in their lives. Consider offering the following prayer as you walk in the neighborhood: "God, who's out there that you want me to trade stories with? I need to listen to their story and they need to hear mine. God, bring me together with the people you would like for me to be in a witnessing relationship with. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen."

Be creative by taking some cookies to offer to people on your walk, or some freshly picked vegetables—anything you can offer them as a way of sharing God's love in a practical way. Listen for what God is doing in their lives or what their experiences have been in their individual walks of faith. Between walks share with your partner in prayer and conversation about the people you meet and where God may be leading you in mission.

Now… "step out" in faith!

Process Tip

Read Doctrine and Covenants 161:3, 4.

Notes, Journal

Practice

Holding in the Light

Objective

To help raise awareness of individuals, their needs, and their desires.

Process

This practice originates in the Quaker tradition and can be done individually or in a group setting. It has been adapted here for use in local congregations.

Write or type everyone's names in the congregation on a sheet of paper. You could also use a congregational directory. Read each name aloud and spend a few moments in awareness of that person, their needs and desires. Hold them in God's love and light. In a group setting, you can divide up the names so that each person has a section of the congregation that they are specifically praying for.

Use this as an intentional opportunity to grow in awareness of each member of the congregation.

Notes, Journal

Practice

Justice in the Bible

Objective

To raise awareness of justice and peace in our scriptural tradition.

Process

Each week, select a different scripture from the Poverty and Justice Bible (CEV) published by the American Bible Society to share with your congregation. As a community, decide how that scripture calls you to respond to current needs in your own community. People can do this in a worship setting or individually throughout the week. Create a space to share together in thoughts about the chosen scripture.

This practice will help raise awareness of the importance of justice and peace in our scriptural tradition and why it needs to be an active, living part of our Christian faith.

Notes, Journal

Practice

Praying the News

Objective

To help make community conditions and happenings an integral part of congregational spiritual practice.

Process

For this practice, make sure that you are getting your news from a number of different sources so that you can try to get the whole story. Search through your local newspaper, websites, or television stations to hear what things are happening in your community. As you take in what is happening in your local community, pray over the people and situations. Ask God to help you discern where and how God may be calling you and your congregation to get involved.

Notes, Journal

Cultivating Individual and Group Spiritual Practices

by Dick Young

In a way, pastors and congregational leaders are leaders of pilgrims on a journey. John Bunyan in *The Pilgrim's Progress* writes about a pilgrim, named Christian, who leaves his "city of destruction." He is guided to go toward the light and to keep the light in his eyes and walk toward it. In essence, a spiritual practice is keeping the light in one's eye and walking toward it.

All pastors and congregational leaders of Christ's mission are to have their leadership shaped by God's Spirit. Why? This is the way of Christ who cultivated individual and group practices to create communion with the God he loved and served. Through spiritual practice pastors and leaders open their hearts and minds to the heart and mind of Christ. And when they lead the congregation in group spiritual practices they create opportunities for people to sense God's presence and will. Deepening the congregation's spiritual life and practice allows God to shape the congregation as prophetic people of Christ's peace.

When pastors and their congregations adopt the way of Christ, they enter the sacred rhythms that shaped Jesus into the embodiment of God's shalom. These rhythms take the congregation into the inseparably connected dimensions of Christ's mission embodied in the life of Jesus Christ. His active life of proclamation, healing, and peacemaking was seamlessly interwoven with his receptive life of prayer, discernment, and spiritual attentiveness.

Jesus went *inward* so he could go *outward*. For Jesus these did not seem to be separate movements or actions. The interior movement to encounter the Holy Spirit and explore the geography of one's inner being is as essential and demanding as the mission that impels going out to the urban and village landscapes of humanity. The two movements feed and inform each other rather than compete with or contradict each other.

Mission done in the manner of Jesus is grounded in spiritual intimacy and passionate obedience to God's restorative action in the world.

The *mission inward* for spiritual work and grounding was a central part of Jesus' life. It was the anchoring point to which he returned in the middle of compassionate service and transformative action. Jesus' journey into solitary places to meet the Divine was his spiritual touchstone for *mission outward*. He depended on God's Spirit to shape his way of being in the world, anoint him for ministry, fill and bless him when he was weary, give him direction and courage, and heal his grief in times of loss.

Jesus was intentional about creating spaces for God through prayer, meditation, silence, and solitude. He was also intentional about physical acts of service and generosity, focused acts of teaching and mentoring, outward acts of compassion and healing, communal acts of relationship and spiritual friendship. In Jesus we find the inner–outer balance of a life integrated around identity in God.

PRACTICES

1. Lectio Divina
2. The Prayer of Examen
3. Reading and Writing Psalms
4. Encounter Scripture as Continuing Revelation
5. Walking in Nature
6. Holding in the Light
7. Centering Prayer

Spiritual Practices

A spiritual practice includes any activity that cultivates… "being conformed to the image of Christ for the sake of others" (M. Robert Mulholland Jr., *Shaped by the Word: The Power of Scripture in Spiritual Formation*, rev. ed. [Nashville, TN: Upper Room Books, 2001]). Spiritual practices shift one's center to God and open people to the healing, transforming, and empowering influence of the Holy Spirit.

It is important that pastors and leaders understand that all spiritual practices will not appeal to everyone. Care must be exercised to resist the idea that "my" favorite practice should be used by everyone else.

Pastors and leaders do well to help people learn, explore, and experiment with various spiritual practices, remembering that sometimes what seems at first unproductive and unappealing may turn out to be meaningful and challenging. Of course, pastors and leaders can only lead people effectively in this matter if they themselves are in the process of learning.

Pastors and congregational leaders should model spiritual practices and discernment in ministry and mission.

There are a variety of ways to do so, including the following.

- Learn about spiritual formation and become familiar with core spiritual principles and disciplines. Reviewing this article and the accompanying practices can help.
- Engage in regular personal spiritual practices and patterns (prayer, scripture reading, and meditation are a few examples).
  - Set a daily time and place for solitude and spiritual "work" like Jesus did.
  - Explore what nourishes your spirit and experiment with practices that nurture *and* stretch. (See the practices section for suggestions.)
  - Schedule special times for spiritual renewal meaningful for you, such as a spiritual retreat in a quiet place in nature or a retreat center.
  - Consider meeting with a spiritual director or an evangelist to discuss your own spiritual journey.
- Frame meetings of the pastor's leadership team with spiritual practices centering on God's presence and purposes.
- Invite different team members to lead spiritual practice(s) each time the team meets.
  - Schedule this as an important part of the meeting, as opposed to being an "add on." This means that you're allowing at least 10–15 minutes for spiritual practice together. This time may come at the beginning, closing, or central part of the meeting.
- Use a variety of spiritual practices to meet the diverse needs of members. During meetings, stop for periods of prayer, receptive listening, or allot other discernment time as appropriate (especially when discussing weighty matters or times in which the group gets "stuck").
- Work with the pastor's leadership team to develop a plan for the team's spiritual formation and group practice. For instance:
  - Talk about the importance of the above team practices.
  - Consider meeting as a covenant discipleship group for spiritual practice, discernment, and disciple formation.
  - Consider periodic group spiritual direction for the team (with a trained spiritual director).
  - Invite a trusted evangelist to serve as a team member.

Pastors and leadership teams do well to discern and implement a plan for holistic disciple formation in the congregation, based on Christ's integrated rhythms of "mission in" (spiritual practice and discernment) and "mission out" (proclamation, compassionate action, and peacemaking).

The following are a few ways to do this.

- Designate a period of time for the congregation to focus their prayers (both personal and when together) on the spiritual needs of the congregation. At the end of that period (several days or a few weeks), invite the congregation to share reflections and insights.
- Create opportunities for congregational conversation and learning on topics such as: spirituality and its relationship with mission, the spirituality of Jesus, spiritual needs and questions, spiritual practices and discernment, and spiritual formation resources.
- Using the resources in the Exploring Mission section of this field guide, use spiritual practices to help the congregation "discern" its mission.
- Consider selecting a congregational "spiritual formation minister" or "spiritual formation advocate" who will keep track and share resources on spiritual formation that are found on the church's website.
- Consider an annual spiritual retreat for the congregation to deepen spirituality, engage in discernment of God's call, and be encountered by the Holy.
- Consider developing covenant discipleship groups, scripture study groups, and other discipleship deepening groups led by persons who have been trained to lead them.

- Consider incorporating a spiritual practice in the weekly worship experience of the congregation. (See the practices following this article or the church website for ideas.)

Cultivating Spiritual Practices Moves the Congregation Forward in Mission

Paying attention to spiritual formation practices is essential for mission. Consequently, leaders do well to read this article alongside of the articles in the Exploring Mission section of this field guide. A measure of how the congregation's spiritual journey is progressing is to consider whether the "fruits of the Spirit" are becoming more apparent as expressed in The Message:

> But what happens when we live God's way? He brings gifts into our lives, much the same way that fruit appears in an orchard—things like affection for others, exuberance about life, serenity. We develop willingness to stick with things, a sense of compassion in the heart, and a conviction that a basic holiness permeates things and people. We find ourselves involved in loyal commitments, not needing to force our way in life, able to marshal and direct our energies wisely. Legalism is helpless in bringing this about; it only gets in the way.
>
> —Galatians 5:22–23

Questions

Pastors and leaders need to be aware of what nourishes their own spirits. It is good to ask "What feeds my soul?" It is equally good to ask ourselves how we are doing in our personal spiritual practice and what we can do to become more centered in Christ. Sometimes, engaging in known spiritual practices is just what we need. At other times, trying something new may open us to new possibilities and blessings.

Many times leadership team meetings are consumed with planning, discussing, and troubleshooting congregational programs, budgets, administrative matters, and other logistical details. Sometimes, actual discussion about our relationship with Christ does not get much time. Wise pastors and leaders will ask: "How can the pastor's leadership team become more grounded in spiritual practices in order to discern more clearly God's presence and guidance?"

Ultimately, the pastor's leadership team is called to help people grow in the image of Christ. It is good for pastors and leaders to ask: "Are we helping the congregation to learn and sustain spiritual practices that will help them deepen their relationship with Jesus Christ?"

These are important questions. The following practices can help.

Practice

Lectio Divina

Objective

To let scripture soak deeply into us as we interact with a particular passage or story. To help persons listen prayerfully for what God wants to say to us through scripture. (*Lectio divina* is a Latin term for sacred reading.)

Process

1. Select a passage of scripture. Scripture stories may be especially helpful as people are learning this exercise.
2. Invite the group to sit quietly and enter a time of prayerful reflection. Breathe calmly, relax your body, and offer a prayer for guidance as you interact with the selected scriptural text.
3. If in a group, briefly describe the four ways in which the scripture will be read and reflected on. Don't worry about the Latin words—they are there simply to help us talk about the four ways of experiencing the scripture.
4. Read the scripture four different times, allowing time for meditation and prayer between each reading. Before each reading, remind the group of instructions for praying with the scripture through ***lectio, meditatio, oratio,*** or ***contemplatio,*** as you proceed.
   - *Lectio*—read the passage to get a **sense of the story**. Who are the characters, what is the setting? Imagine the scene, the sights, sounds, smells, emotions, and tensions involved in the story. Enter the scene and allow it to become real to you.
   - *Meditatio*—read the scripture again but this time for **meaning and understanding**. Ask questions. Why was this story recorded? What are the surface and underlying meanings? What does this story tell me about God? If I were in the story, who would I be? Whom do I most relate to in the story?
   - *Oratorio*—read the passage again, and this time pay attention to your emotional responses. What feelings surface as I read this scripture? Do I feel joy, sorrow, fear, anger, or guilt? Share your feelings with God in prayer. Ask for help in listening deeply to these emotions and meanings.
   - *Contemplatio*—enter a time of **receptive prayer.** Let go of the images from the scripture and all other thoughts, interpretations, and worries. Breathe deeply and calmly, entering a profound silent state of listening. Wait for whatever God may bring to you in the quietness. If any insights or impressions come, note them with gratitude and then return to receptive listening. If no particular awareness comes, let your mind return to the scripture passage. When you feel your prayer and meditation has ended, offer a word of thanks to God, open your eyes, and return to the room around you.

Notes, Journal

Practice

The Prayer of Examen

Objective

To help persons review the day with God with the intent of examining our need for forgiveness and healing, reconciliation and recommitment. To help persons pay attention to the characteristics and quality of their lives as followers of Jesus.

Process

This prayer form was developed by St. Ignatius of Loyola (1491–1556) as part of his work on "spiritual exercises." It is often used as a prayer to end the day but may be used any time.

1. Read scripture reflections such as Psalm 139:1–3, 7 and Psalm 51:10–12, 15–17.
2. Review the process for the Prayer of Examen in its entirety (see number three below) to become familiar (or to familiarize a group) with the process. Then, begin the process of the prayer.
3. The Prayer of Examen—adapted from Marvin Rice, "Open Our Eyes," *Healing the Body of Christ* (Independence, Missouri: Herald Publishing House, 2003).
   - First, I come before God in humble prayer. I am thankful for God's Spirit and for all God does for me and for all people. I gently enter into this time of prayer with God.
   - Second, after asking for God's enlightenment, I review my day. Where do I recognize God's presence? Where was God's Spirit touching me or someone else? In my thoughts and actions, when was I the most Christ-like? When did I fall short?
   - Third, I trust and receive God's grace, forgiveness, and healing for any actions that may have been uncaring or harmful to other people, creation, or myself.
   - Fourth, I look forward to tomorrow, with a decision to be more conscious of all of my thoughts, words, and actions. I determine to be more aware of God's presence living within me and to act and respond as the Lord Jesus would.
   - Fifth, I gently exit this prayer time by thanking God for this experience with God in remembrance, in gratitude for the gift of this day, and in determination that I will be more conscious of God's presence tomorrow.
4. Spend time reflecting on the events, interactions, and emotions of the day.
5. Ask for insight into the ways your responses were good, life-giving, or healing. Ask for insight into the ways your responses may have been insensitive, unloving, or damaging to others, creation, or self.
6. Pray for forgiveness, healing, reconciliation, and release.
7. Offer God the next day. Ask God to be present in your thoughts, actions, and relationships as you move on to live a new day more fully alive to the presence of Christ.
8. Close the Prayer of Examen with a brief benediction and invite individuals (if done in a group setting) to draw their attention back to the group.

Practice

Reading and Writing Psalms

Objective

To help people prayerfully express their deepest thoughts and feelings by modeling the Psalms.

Process

The Psalms express human emotions of joy, praise, anger, fear, grief, and love. Select a Psalm to read. Offer a prayer for guidance and read the Psalm slowly two or three times. What images or insights come as you read? What kind of Psalm is this: a psalm of peace and joy or lament and anger? Is it both?

What Psalm fits for you today? Write a short psalm in your journal or on a piece of paper. Create an honest "psalm prayer" expressing the emotions you are feeling today. Offer your psalm to God in trust and hope.

Notes, Journal

Practice

Encounter Scripture as Continuing Revelation

Objective

To help people open themselves to God's presence and guidance through prayerful attention to scripture.

Process

Read and pray with the Doctrine and Covenants as continuing revelation of God's vision for the church and creation. Choose a favorite section or focus on more recent counsel in Doctrine and Covenants 161–164.

Read a few selected paragraphs from one section, slowly three or four times.

1. Pause to pray for deep understanding of meaning after the first reading.
2. Pray for opening your heart and emotions to the text after the second reading.
3. After the third reading, prayerfully ask to hear the particular phrase or word that speaks to you or touches your life. Stay with this word or phrase. Listen to it as fully and openly as you can. What sense of divine presence or invitation comes? What do you sense being revealed?
4. Offer a prayer of thanks. Write insights in your journal.

—Disciple Formation Guide,
www.CofChrist.org/dfg/ad_revelation.asp#personal

Notes, Journal

Practice

Walking in Nature

Objective

To help people become aware of God's presence through being attentive to nature as a revelation of God.

Process

Meister Eckhart (ca. 1260–ca. 1328) said, "Every creature is a word of God and a book about God." The natural world is a revelation of God. Through nature, God can calm, quiet, and heal us. It is a good place to discern God's presence and wisdom.

Choose a time and place to walk in a quiet natural setting. If you live in a city, find a park or a quiet street. Allow 20 minutes or longer for walking.

Let go of any discernment questions during your walk. Turn your questions over to God and trust God to be in and around you as you walk. Ask God to give you eyes to see and ears to hear signs of God.

Begin walking with reverence and gratitude. Stop and spend time if a plant, leaf, insect, flower, cloud, tree, animal, bird, stone, or pool of water draws your attention. Touch, smell, look, and listen. See if it has something to teach you. How does this natural object make you more aware of God and yourself? What insights come to you?

If done as a group activity: Ask your group to walk with the instructions above. Journal any observations and share with the group.

Notes, Journal

Practice

Holding in the Light

Objective

To help persons pray for one another, or for persons of mutual concern. The scriptural image of light is used in combination with prayer.

Scriptures for Reflection

> …Live as children of light—for the fruit of the light is found in all that is good and right and true.
>
> —Ephesians 5:8–9 NRSV

> And if your eye be single to my glory, your whole bodies shall be filled with light, and there shall be no darkness in you, and that body which is filled with light comprehendeth all things.
>
> —Doctrine and Covenants 85:18a

Process

1. Gather in a circle. You may want to place one or more candles in the center.
2. Invite people into a period of intercessory prayer in which specific people and needs are placed in God's loving, healing care.
3. Spend a few moments centering on God's presence and the group's intention of praying for others. This may be done by reading scripture for reflection, offering a verbal prayer, or using silence to become quiet inside and out.
4. Enter a period of silent prayer on behalf of those individuals and concerns the group desires to lift up. The whole group may choose to focus on one particular person or concern or group members can make individual choices about the focus of their prayers. The names of those being prayed for can be made known or kept private.
5. A central element of this form of intercessory prayer is to see or sense the person prayed for being surrounded by and held in God's light. Ask those praying to focus on this image or awareness as they engage in silent prayer.
6. Encourage the "pray-ers" to trust God to know the needs of those being prayed for without a lot of words or explanations. Rather than use words for prayer, encourage the "pray-ers" to see in their mind's eye the person being held and healed by God's light. Short prayer phrases can be used to keep attention focused on God as the Source of all healing and blessing.
7. Continue in silent intercession for 10 to 15 minutes.
8. Offer a brief prayer of thanks to close your prayer experience. This prayer practice can be done in private anytime one wishes to hold a particular person or need up to God. It can be done in scattered locations by a group of people wanting to join in prayerful solidarity for a particular person. The group may want to set a specific time when they will participate in prayer by "holding in the light" the one for whom they seek God's blessing. Obviously, this practice can be done in a gathered group as well.

Notes, Journal

Practice

Centering Prayer

Objective

In centering prayer the emphasis is on creating a space of quiet openness in which we become aware of God's presence with us. It is called centering prayer because our attention is gathered in and centered on perceiving and receiving God. Centering prayer uses two "tools" to help us pull away from distractions and move us to listening. These two tools are breath and a prayer word (sometimes called a sacred word).

Process

1. Sit with relaxed but erect posture in a comfortable chair, both feet on the floor, hands open in lap. Close your eyes.
2. Offer a brief prayer to state your intention to God and to ask for help and guidance. (For example: "I'm here, God, waiting, listening, open. Empty me of fear, worry, and inner noise. Allow me to rest and rejoice in the awareness of your presence.")
3. Use your breath to create a sense of peace and letting go into God. Breathe deeply, slowly, calmly, starting with several cleansing breaths that end in an audible sigh. As you fill your lungs and exhale, feel the tension in your muscles and your entire body flow out with the air. Continue to breathe in a regular, natural rhythm from your abdomen rather than your chest.
4. Focus on breathing God in, breathing all else out until you feel calm and centered.
5. Continue paying attention to your breath as you focus your body, mind, and spirit on the reality that God is present and that you are here with the intention of loving and being loved by God.
6. Listen beneath or within your breath for a prayer word (or phrase) that expresses the desires and needs of your heart in this time. Don't struggle for the word. Trust that it will arise as you continue to be still and open.
7. When you have been made aware of the prayer word or phrase, repeat it silently to yourself in rhythm with your breathing.

   Example:

(breathing in)	Fill me…
(breathing out)	…O God
(breathing in)	[silence]
(breathing out)	…peace

8. When distracting thoughts pull you away from centering in God (for example, laundry, work deadlines, a phone call you need to make), bring yourself back by returning to your prayer word and the rhythm of your breathing. Don't fight the thoughts so much as recognizing and letting them go as you re-center on God through your prayer word and breathing.
9. Continue in this quiet pattern of presence before God for approximately 20 minutes. (Beginners may want to start with 5–10 minutes.) You may want to set a timer so you will not have to keep checking the time.
10. When the time for prayer has elapsed, offer a brief word of thanks to God, take several more deep breaths, become aware of the room around you, move or stretch in your chair, and open your eyes when you feel ready.

Disciple Formation

> Lifelong disciple formation in Community of Christ is the intentional shaping of persons in the likeness of Christ at all stages of life. It begins with our response to the grace of God in loving community and continues as we help each other learn, grow, and serve in the cause of the peaceable kingdom.
>
> —2007 Lifelong Discipleship Formation Team

> Disciple formation is *the intentional shaping of persons in the likeness of Christ at all stages of life*. Congregations engage in Christ's mission by equipping persons of all ages *to be true and living expressions of the life, ministry, and continuing presence of Christ in the world.*
>
> —Mission Initiatives: Develop Disciples to Serve

Disciple formation includes, but is much more than, "Christian education." This article has two purposes:

- To help pastors and congregational leaders as they lead disciple formation in ways that propel the congregation and its disciples into mission.
- To identify Christian education opportunities related to disciple formation, built upon the eight practices of discipleship and mission.

Disciples are formed in faith for Christ's mission.

The whole point of being a disciple of Jesus is to live out Christ's mission. Therefore, a critical question for pastors and congregational leaders is: "How can we *intentionally* plan and develop experiences in the congregation and community that shape disciples in the likeness of Christ and equip them for Christ's mission? The essential experiences for this type of formation are those that provide opportunities for three things—deepening, equipping, and ministering.

Deepening means growing in relationships with God, self, and with others in community. As growth happens in one relationship; it is enhanced in the others. These relationships are intricately related to one another.

Equipping means helping disciples grow in ability and knowledge. It includes helping disciples discover, develop, and share their God-given gifts, so that all may be aware of the gifts available for Christ's mission. See Ephesians 4:11–12.

Ministering means growing in service, putting faith into action, and continuing to grow and be shaped into the likeness of Christ. It is the means through which people bear the fruit of their discipleship.

To foster deepening, equipping, and ministering, Community of Christ upholds eight practices of discipleship. Each practice is an opportunity for the congregation to provide education that supports Christ's mission—our mission!

Disciple Formation (Christian Education) for Mission

by Mike Hoffman, with contributions from Mary Gill and Diane Sadler

PRACTICES

1. Exploring Your Culture
2. Reflecting on Our Own Disciple Formation for Mission
3. The Disciple Formation Guide

Eight Practices of Discipleship

Scripture and Theological Study

—responsible interpretation and faithful application of scripture and theology. The purpose of this discipleship practice is to ground disciples and congregations in God's good news as they prepare for and participate in Christ's mission.

Key Questions:

- How is your congregation's study of scripture and theology preparing the congregation and its members to serve Christ's mission?
- How is your congregation currently studying scripture and theology?
- What other approaches could your congregation explore to study scripture and theology?

Missional Encounters

—applying a Christ-like response to the needs of humans and creation. The purposes of this discipleship practice are for congregations and disciples to provide ministries directly related to the mission initiatives and to learn by doing.

Key Questions:

- What is your congregation studying that supports your congregation's mission or that of its members?
- As your congregation reflects on doing missional encounters ask, "How does this activity relate to the life, ministry, and mission of Jesus Christ?" or "What scripture comes to mind after having just participated in a missional encounter?"

Personal Spiritual Practices

—engaging people in disciplines which help them connect with or relate to God for renewal and focus on Christ's mission.

Key Question:

- What personal spiritual practices need to be taught or strengthened in your congregation?

Community Spiritual Practices

—connecting gathered people with God and one another through spiritual disciplines to deepen their relationships with others and with God for renewal in and focus on Christ's mission.

Key Question:

- What community spiritual practices need to be taught or strengthened?

Personal Relationships

—developing one-on-one mutually transformative relationships for sharing joys and concerns and for accountability to one another as disciples.

Key Question:

- What relationships does your congregation need to focus on to promote inviting people to Christ and working side-by-side with others in mission?

Shared Experiences in Community

—experiencing fellowship and building relationships in Christian community.

Key Questions:

- How is your congregation helping its members know one another, learn about others' giftedness, become vulnerable to one another and to Christ, and share positive witness of Christ's mission in the community?
- What learning is needed for intentional relationship-building activities key to focusing on the mission of Christ?

Witnessing and Storytelling

—is to hear, tell, and live the sacred story. It includes sharing personal and community stories of God's grace and the invitation to others to share in the peace of Jesus Christ.

Key Question:

- Would classes in public speaking, storytelling, developing a testimony, or hospitality help the congregation grow further gifts in this area? Help in getting started can be found in the personal witness training resource *Vibrant Witness: Who Me?* (Order from *www.HeraldHouse.org.*)

Lifelong Learning

—deepening discipleship through specific instruction and training throughout all of life.

Key Question:

- What are some of the subject areas that need attention in the congregation in order to close the gap between the giftedness of its members and the needs in the community?

Questions

1. *What are ways a congregation can help people learn and grow in the likeness of Christ?*

   Disciple formation for mission includes many aspects of congregational life and witness in the community beyond what we consider Christian education. Use of the Disciple Formation Guide (*www.CofChrist.org/dfg*) is one way to explore this question.

2. *How can disciple formation become an integral component of discerning and leading a congregation in mission?*

   When you think about all that shapes us into the likeness of Christ, you realize that disciple formation is already an integral component of congregational life. The challenge is how to be intentional—remember we will be shaped into some image. If we are shaped into the likeness of Christ, we will do Christ's mission. As a leader of a congregation you have a responsibility to help those in your congregation engage in mission.

3. *How can the pastor's leadership team proactively work with those responsible for disciple formation (Christian education) to ensure alignment with the congregation's emerging mission?*

   It is important to be proactive and inclusive in leadership. Those responsible for disciple formation should be on the leadership team for your congregation. It's important to frequently ask questions to determine if disciple formation (and all areas of congregational life) is in alignment with the congregation's response to the church's five mission initiatives.

4. *Where can the leadership team find good resources to support disciple formation that leads to mission? How can the Disciple Formation Guide be utilized as a strategic tool for mission?*

   A good place to find resources for disciple formation is to ask your mission center officers, field officers, and specialists at International Headquarters.

   In general, to help determine if a resource fits with Community of Christ identity, message, mission, and beliefs, use the Resource Assessment Tool. It's available on the Disciple Formation Guide at *www.CofChrist.org/dfg/tools.asp*.

   No single place however, is more helpful for finding good resources than the Disciple Formation Guide (*www.CofChrist.org/dfg*). Pastors and congregational leaders should become familiar with this important asset. It is updated at least quarterly. Pastors and leaders should not only review it regularly for ideas and resources but submit ideas, best practices, and resources that have been successful in their congregations.

The following are only three examples of what you can find in the Disciple Formation Guide.

Disciple Profile

Through reflective responses to key questions, this tool helps individuals of all ages, reflect on and focus their use of discipleship practices. Members of ministry teams, entire congregations, and mission centers can benefit by completing this tool and looking at trends related to practices of discipleship. It's available for adults, youth, and children. Copies of the forms, a how-to video, and a sample Disciple Formation Service that integrates the use of the Disciple Profile are available at *www.CofChrist.org/dfg/tools.asp*.

Disciple Formation Growth Plan

This tool, a companion piece to the Disciple Profile, helps all ages customize and personalize a plan for disciple formation. Individuals set a goal for a specific length of time (such as one month, three months) then write down ways to grow in disciple formation through the practices of discipleship. Use this tool to bring the practices into tangible goals that are personally geared to the opportunities and realities of life. It may be done in groups or in a class. This is also available at *www.CofChrist.org/dfg/tools.asp*.

Lesson Template

To create specific lessons or a series of lessons based on needs determined through the Disciple Profile or other means, use the Lesson Template. It helps pull together ideas, activities, and resources from the Disciple Formation Guide in a proven method for lesson construction. It can be used for church school classes, retreats, small group study, and age-specific activities. A copy of the form, a sample lesson, and instructions on how to use it is available at *www.CofChrist.org/dfg/tools.asp*.

Practice

Exploring Your Culture

Objective

To help your congregation get better acquainted with its community in order to understand more clearly needs that the congregation may be called to address.

Process

Exegeting Your Culture[1]*:* As your congregation focuses on Christ's mission and works to determine its response, it's important to know your community. This practice, adapted from scriptural exegesis [learning about the history, culture, and language relative to a specific scripture], helps your congregation develop a deeper relationship with your community and to discern what God is calling you to do.

Ask your neighbors and people in the surrounding community lots of questions. Anecdotal information about your city, town, or village and its people is unbeatable. Ask them the what, how, and why questions: What do you think is broken in our neighborhood or city? What gets you excited about life? What do you think should be done about economic decline in our city? Why do you drive across town to do _____? Why do you like or dislike traditional Christianity? Adapt questions or create new ones to fit your specific situation. This can be done by people of all ages and across the generations.

Read local, independent publications. Very often the stuff that looks like a waste of time contains some of the clearest voices from within your culture. Get local (not just national) opinions and reviews on movies, books, culture, and politics. These can be studied during church school classes, study groups, groups focusing on discernment, and the pastor's leadership team.

Gather historical information on your city and neighborhood. How did your neighborhood, community, or city come to be the way it is? What political, cultural, and economic issues have shaped the character and beliefs of your city? Read local authors and histories.

Participate in local art, music, and business. Support local business, go to art shows, and listen to local bands. Examples are endless. Be aware of and part of your community.

As a congregation, discuss what you're learning. Does any of the learning shed light on what God may be calling members of the congregation to do?

[1]Adapted from Jonathan Dodson, "Exegeting Your Culture" (blog), accessed January 14, 2009, *http://jonathandodson.org/2009/01/exegeting-your-culture/*.

Notes, Journal

Practice

Reflecting on Our Own Disciple Formation for Mission*

Objective

To help leaders think about their personal formation as disciples and what they may need.

Process

We are being formed as disciples even as we provide leadership for disciple formation for mission. This is especially important as we think about the demands of leading the church, and how leaders must balance career, ministry, family, and other interests. The elements and practices of discipleship that shape community also shape our own lives. Our concern is how each of these is occurring in our own lives. One way we can evaluate our personal growth is to periodically reflect on the following questions:

How has deepening been a part of my life these past weeks?

1. How have I grown in my relationship with Christ? My understanding of Christ's mission?
2. How have I become more aware of myself as a person—my strengths, weaknesses, struggles, fears, hopes, temptations, avoidances, challenges, and dreams?
3. How have I developed a stronger community in which to share my own faith journey and encourage the journeys of others?
4. How can I go deeper in my own discipleship?

How has equipping been a part of my life these past weeks?

1. How have I discovered new gifts or used old ones in new ways?
2. How is my call being lived out? Is it still vital? Am I sensing a new call?
3. What have I learned that is important to my living as a disciple?
4. What skills have I acquired or improved that increase my ability to live as a disciple?
5. What I can do to enhance my own equipping?

How has ministry been a part of my life these past weeks?

1. How is the leadership role I play expressed in my ministry?
2. In what new ways am I living out my discipleship—at home, in the church, at work, in the community?
3. How has my ministry strengthened my life as a disciple?
4. What can I do to enhance my ministry?

*Adapted from, Jeffrey D. Jones, *Traveling Together: A Guide for Disciple-Forming Congregations,* (Herndon, VA: The Alban Institute, 2006) 117–118.

Notes, Journal

Practice

The Disciple Formation Guide

Objective

To help leaders become familiar with the Disciple Formation Guide as a tool for growing disciples.

Process

Ask someone from your congregation to invest some time on the church's website getting familiar with the Disciple Formation Guide (*www.CofChrist.org/dfg*). Once they feel comfortable using it, invite them to demonstrate its use to the pastor's leadership team. If that's a small group of two to three people, you can sit around a common computer for this. If it's a larger group, project the guide on a wall or show it on a larger monitor. Be sure to include the pastors/leaders section of the guide in the presentation.

Explore the guide together and talk about its use in the congregation for lesson planning, study groups, or other ways of addressing disciple formation.

Notes, Journal

Foundational Concepts

Some pastors may ask "Why would I want my congregation to get involved in ecumenical or interfaith endeavors? We are overloaded with congregational life as it is." This is a good question. Many congregational leaders feel overloaded and strapped for time. So for them, the idea of additional involvement, no matter how meaningful and relevant, just doesn't seem doable. Maybe you are one of those leaders. My experience with ecumenical and interfaith groups is exactly the opposite: it energizes and brings a sense of wholeness to not only those who engage, but the congregation as a whole.

Ecumenical ministries is about Christians and Christian communions (denominations) working together, seeking opportunities to express the unity of the church and the witness of the gospel in complementary and responsible ways. Ecumenical ministries happen when churches work together to support common causes in neighborhoods, cities, states, and nations. They are empowered in this by the mutual witness of Jesus Christ as they rely on the transforming power of the Holy Spirit to serve all creation to the glory of the Lord.

Ecumenical ministries often provide opportunity for dialogue about the various traditions that comprise ecumenical Christianity. This includes Orthodox, Anglican, Protestant, historic African American, Roman Catholic, and Living Peace Churches. These communions often advocate for economic justice for all people. They also advocate for policies that protect God's good creation and the environment, and often offer a moral witness about social conditions and issues that exist in the communities where the church lives out its life and witness.

Interfaith ministries have to do with working with other religious traditions not usually associated with Christianity. This would include working alongside communities of faith such as Buddhists, Muslims, Sikhs, Hindus, and many other worldwide religious traditions. Interfaith ministries also seek to promote mutual understanding and dialogue about various religious traditions and beliefs. Like ecumenical efforts, interfaith ministries seek to collaborate on working for a more just world in light of the mutual witness of the world's religious traditions.

Given the above, ecumenical and interfaith groups:

- strive to bring people and groups together to accomplish what cannot be achieved alone;
- share responsibility for addressing needs of the community;
- promote understanding and connectedness between faith groups;
- offer a combined witness of hope.

Asking, "Where does God need me?" opens us to see and hear with new eyes. When done with sincere intention the opportunities abound. I had this experience when living in Southern Illinois. We had recently moved to the area and I was looking for ways to engage in the place where we lived. I began the practice of opening myself up with new eyes and new ears. When out around people, I would "listen" for the answer to the question "where does God need me?" My

Ecumenical/ Interfaith Ministries

by Barbara Carter

PRACTICES

1. Hearing with New Eyes and New Ears

husband and I were checking out at the grocery store one day. The checker was a member of the local congregation. She made comment on how "healthy" our food was. She told us of her concern about the health of the community because she sees what they eat. She was deeply concerned there is a generation that doesn't know how to eat natural, unprocessed foods and the impact that is having on juvenile diabetes. As we were driving home, I realized the conversation was one of those moments when God was saying "you are needed here."

Getting started in ecumenical and interfaith work may seem daunting. It starts through an individual's awareness and resolve to seek connections with others for bringing resources together. It can also start when a congregation identifies that being part of a larger faith voice in their community is important to them.

If this happens through an individual it usually centers on an identified need in the community. The person contacts others who are being led to respond to the need and dialogue begins. Contact can occur through several ways: personal friendships, advertising, calls or visits to other faith groups, and intentional visits with people who have skill sets needed. This can be a difficult time for individuals because it is time-consuming and progress may seem slow. Not all individuals that hear about the endeavor and receive the invitation to join will respond and that can be discouraging. Perseverance and steadfastness are important, as is a good support group.

It is important for the individual who is beginning an ecumenical/interfaith coalition to communicate with the leadership of the congregation so they are aware of this opportunity.

If members of a congregation sense the leadings of the Holy Spirit to engage in ecumenical/interfaith work, it can begin either by connecting with existing coalitions or by starting one. Either way the starting point is research. The Internet is a ripe source to begin with. In searching on the Internet the key words are *ecumenical* and *interfaith*. Research each search result carefully before making contact because there are many groups that are not ones that would support the enduring principles of Community of Christ. I would then recommend that you make an appointment with a few clergy members involved in one of the groups to introduce yourself and find out more about the group. Questions you might ask are: What is their mission statement, what are they currently focused on, who are members of the group, how long has the group been in existence? It is important to interview them. If this is a group you would like to explore further, ask if you can attend a meeting as an observer. I have found that clergy from United Church of Christ (UCC) and Presbyterian, Methodist, Lutheran, Episcopal, and Roman Catholic ministers are especially good contacts to seek out when you are staring to explore the possibilities.

If you do not find a group or you don't find one that has the focus or intent that you believe God is leading your congregation to, then it may be time to start a new ecumenical/interfaith group in your community. Begin by creating a purpose statement for the group. This may be as simple as: "We are going to have three community worship services a year: Easter, Thanksgiving, and Christmas." Or "We will provide school supplies for 25 children." Or "We will create three opportunities for the community to learn about faith organizations in our community." Over time this purpose statement will change and develop as you are responding to where God is at work.

It is also necessary to understand that ecumenical and interfaith associations are fluid and transitional. This is because people taking part in the group change and because the needs of the community change. This fluidity can be one of its strengths and for some, one of its frustrations.

Community of Christ has wonderful blessings and a powerful witness to offer the ecumenical and interfaith community. Please do not hesitate to engage and receive.

Questions

When considering ecumenical or interfaith involvement, there are some helpful questions for the pastor to consider.

1. *What ecumenical or interfaith ministries are active in this community?*

   In some areas, there may be no ecumenical or interfaith organizations at all. In many places, there is more than one. Find out what ecumenical and interfaith organizations are in your community. You might find this information on the Internet or in the phone book. Most likely though, your best source of information will be local pastors. Make sure that you ask them if there is more than one organization in your area.

2. *Which ecumenical/interfaith organization should I associate with?*

   As alluded to above, not all organizations are the same. Sometimes, ecumenical organizations have different purposes. It is important to keep in mind the principles voiced in this article when considering what group(s) to associate with.

3. *Who should represent our congregation?*

   Many times, ecumenical and interfaith groups meet during the daytime when many self-sustaining pastors are at work. Is there another minister in the congregation who could represent the congregation? This should be a person who is well-grounded in Community of Christ identity and who is appreciative of ecumenical/interfaith relationships. Ask them to read this article. Meet with this person from time to time to keep abreast of what's happening.

Notes, Journal

Practice

Hearing with New Eyes and New Ears

Objective

To help pastors and leaders be intentionally open and receptive to the Holy Spirit in hearing and seeing the needs of people in the community where we live, work, and play.

Process

1. Spend time in daily prayer and meditation about the needs of others in your community.
2. When going out in public, remind yourself to be fully aware of what is going on around you. Subtle reminders may be helpful, such as placing an object or "sticky note" in your car. Or, choose to associate a common action with the reminder of your commitment to be more aware: such as, holding keys in your hand, fastening your seat belt.
3. Observe the witness being offered by the churches in your community. Try to understand others as you hope to be understood by them. How do Community of Christ's identity, mission, message, and beliefs call you and your congregation to a "unity of witness" with others?
4. When you hear or see needs, make a mental or written note. What did you hear? What ideas of ministry came to mind? Where were you? Were others with you?
   - When a particular need strikes you, begin praying about this need, seeking God's direction. How might Christian unity be advanced through common mission? Observe, pray, then act accordingly.
5. Seek counsel and support from your mission center ecumenical/interfaith minister or your mission center president. Also, you may seek counsel from the Ecumenical and Interfaith Ministries Office at International Headquarters. Contact: Ecumenical and Interfaith Officer, Dale E. Luffman at (816) 833-1000, ext. 3028 or *dluffman@CofChrist.org*.

Notes, Journal

Foundational Concepts

But now more than ever the word about Jesus spread abroad; many crowds would gather to hear him and to be cured of their diseases. But he would withdraw to deserted places and pray.

—Luke 5:15–16

All who actively engaged in prayer, discussion, and discernment about important issues in the church's life are commended for your faithful response. Your disciplined effort to open your lives more fully to God's Spirit in response to the call to be a prophetic people has become a blessing to the entire church. Your spiritual yearning for light and truth has created a favorable environment for the Spirit's movement to provide inspired counsel as authoritative guidance for the church.

—Doctrine and Covenants 164:1

Luke 5:15–16 reminds us of the high priority Jesus placed on personal renewal. The second scripture reminds us of the close relationship between spiritual practices and engagement in mission. Taken together, these scriptures provide a model for finding balance and renewal amid the unending list of demands all leaders face. These scriptures provide insight to the connection between spiritual practice, congregational mission, and congregational leadership. The connection addresses what a pastor or congregation leader can do to effectively lead the congregation in mission. Elements of this model include:

- Actively engaging in prayer and discernment
- Focusing on what matters most
- Becoming more open to the Holy Spirit
- Spiritually yearning for light and truth

Actively engaging in prayer and discernment means that the pastor and pastor's leadership team engage regularly in spiritual practices that provide renewal and direction in their lives. The emphasis here is to balance *being* with *doing*. Essential to leading the congregation in mission are pastors and leaders who nurture their inner selves. Actively engaging in prayer and discernment is essential for effective leadership.

Strengthening the soul of your leadership is an invitation to enter more deeply into the process of spiritual transformation and to choose to lead from that place (Ruth Haley Barton, *Strengthening the Soul of Your Leadership*, [Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2008], 15).

The challenge is to consciously and intentionally give time and attention to nurturing one's inner being, and seeing this not as optional but as essential to leading the congregation in mission. If you were to rank yourself from 1 to 10 in terms of time given to prayer and discernment, with 1 representing very little time and 10 representing a daily discipline, what would that number be? What might be required to take the next step in response to the balance or imbalance found in your life? Do you find yourself feeling guilty, resistant, or excited about possible change in the condition of your inner being?

In this context, the pastor and pastor's leadership team are encouraged to become familiar with and experientially grounded in spiritual

Finding Balance and Renewal

by Bob Kyser

PRACTICES

1. Action Steps for Sustaining Balance and Renewal
2. Permission to Yearn, Invitation to Dream
3. Taking Time Away
4. Caring for One's Spirit

practices. Please refer to the article titled "Cultivating Individual and Group Spiritual Practices" in this field guide.

Focusing on what matters most involves the pastors and leaders in setting priorities. Leaders cannot do everything and still have the time, energy, and discipline to give attention to personal relationships and their own well-being. Yet, the temptation is to try. This approach leads to "burnout," frustration, hopelessness, and unfulfilled relationships. Using the image of the partially filled cup, unless it is refilled it will finally become empty and dry. Pastors and congregational leaders who focus on what matters most in their personal lives will be able to draw from a fuller cup. Leaders who focus on what matters most create healthier congregations that are more effective in mission.

What are you and the pastor's leadership team currently doing to focus on what matters most?

Becoming more open to the Holy Spirit invites pastors and leaders to follow the example of Christ. Henri Nouwen in an article titled "Moving from Solitude to Community to Ministry" offers a model for those leading Christ's mission. Nouwen explores what it means for pastors and leaders to become disciplined. He says:

> By discipline I do not mean control…in the spiritual life, the word discipline means "the effort to create some space in which God can act." Discipline means to prevent everything in your life from being filled up. Discipline means that somewhere you're not occupied, and certainly not preoccupied. In the spiritual life, discipline means to create that space in which something can happen that you hadn't planned or counted on.
>
> —*www.henrinouwen.com*
> (article no longer online as of September 19, 2011)

Based on Luke 6:12–19 Nouwen identifies three ways, in essential order, that Jesus engaged in his mission:

- Solitude
- Community
- Ministry (Mission)

> Now during those days he went out to the mountain to pray; and he spent the night in prayer to God. And when the day came, he called his disciples and chose twelve of them, whom he also named apostles…. He came down with them and stood on a level place, with a great crowd of his disciples and a great multitude of people from all Judea, Jerusalem, and the coast of Tyre and Sidon. They had come to hear him and to be healed of their diseases; and those who were troubled with unclean spirits were cured. And all in the crowd were trying to touch him, for power came out from him and healed all of them.
>
> —Luke 6:12–19

In this scripture, Jesus first modeled the practice of solitude as essential to his mission. Solitude is Jesus' intentional effort to create a space in which God would act. As you prepare to lead the congregation in mission what can you do to create space in which God can act?

Second, Jesus formed community. He gathered his disciples, called some of them to specific leadership responsibility and *together* they went into mission. The practice of community connected Jesus with others in powerful ways. Jesus modeled doing mission by sharing leadership and surrounding one's self with supportive companions in mission.

As you seek to find balance and renewal, who are persons you can be vulnerable with in order to share your leadership and find the support you need?

Third, Jesus engaged in ministry (mission). Following solitude and community, Jesus and his disciples engaged in the ministries of preaching, invitation, healing, compassion for all, and ministries of peace and justice. Mission follows solitude and community.

What are the mission objectives for the congregation which matter most to Christ? Could the answer be found in solitude, community, and engaging in mission *together*? Some answers can be found in the quiet place of listening and reflection. Others are found in the voices of those called to walk with the pastor. At other times, insight comes when people engage in ministry together. It comes in the balance of the being and the doing. Becoming more open to the Holy Spirit requires the disciplines and balance of solitude, community, and ministry. The inspiration of the Holy Spirit must come first, last, and between all else.

Spiritually yearning for light and truth involves pastors and leaders going deeper. In some respects, the way congregational leaders achieve balance and renewal for mission is directly related to their spiritual yearnings. Yearning encompasses thought, emotion, and alignment of priorities at the deepest level of one's very being. But what about one's "spiritual" yearnings? Might those yearnings include such things as Zion, peace and justice, salvation of God's creation, abolishing poverty? Do pastors and congregational leaders even have time to yearn? How might one journey toward light and truth?

The alignment of the spiritual yearnings of pastors, leaders, and congregations will help bring balance and a sense of renewal to all. The congregation thereby becomes more fully empowered to respond effectively to the mission initiatives of the church.

An Invitation

It is inherent in the ministry of pastors and leaders to be a blessing to others. The Holy Spirit blesses for that very purpose. As leaders of mission, give attention to finding balance and renewal in your life and that of your congregation. As you do, you will discover together new opportunities to become the revelation of God's grace.

Blest to be a blessing,
Privileged to care,
Challenged by the need—
Apparent everywhere.
Where the world is wanting,
Fill the vacant place.
Be the means through which the
Lord reveals His grace.

—*Hymns of the Saints* 377, verse 2

Questions

Questions about ourselves, our needs, and our behaviors are sometimes the hardest questions to ask. Nevertheless, they are critical for spiritual renewal. This article has asked several questions. Here they are again:

- If you were to rank yourself from 1 to 10 in terms of time given to prayer and discernment, with 1 representing very little time and 10 representing a daily discipline, what would that number be? What might be required to take the next step in response to the balance or imbalance found in one's life? Do you find yourself feeling guilty, resistant, or excited about possible change in the condition of your inner being?
- What are you and the pastor's leadership team currently doing to focus on what matters most?
- As you prepare to lead the congregation in mission what can you do to create space in which God can act?
- As you seek to find balance and renewal who are persons you can be vulnerable with in order to share your leadership and find the support you need?
- What are the mission objectives for the congregation which matter most to Christ? Could the answer be found in solitude, community, and doing mission together?
- Do pastors and congregational leaders even have time to yearn? How might one journey toward light and truth?

These are important questions. The practices following this article can help.

Notes, Journal

Practice

Action Steps for Sustaining Balance and Renewal

Objective

To help pastors and congregational leaders take initial steps toward living a life of greater balance and renewal.

Process

Choose one of the six items below that you are either not doing or need to improve on. Make a plan for putting that step into action and hold yourself accountable. A critical "companion" question is: *What can you say "no" to in the future without compromising your goals or effectiveness as a leader?*

1. Take time off and take vacations to spend quality time alone, with family, and with friends
2. Have regular (at least annual) medical and dental checkups
3. Create opportunities for personal spiritual renewal
4. Select a spiritual companion with whom to develop a trusting and accountable relationship
5. Give attention to your mental health by seeking professional assistance for various life issues
6. Refuse to make excuses for not sustaining balance and renewal

Notes, Journal

Practice

Permission to Yearn, Invitation to Dream

Objective

To help pastors and leaders explore their yearnings and dreams in order to open themselves more fully to the inspiration of God's Spirit.

Process

Write the following questions in a journal or notebook. Take time in a quiet, private place to ponder these questions. Don't rush or force anything. It may take several visits with these questions for insight to come. Write down your reflections and thoughts regarding each of the following:

- What are the dreams for which you spiritually yearn?
- To which dream (if any) do you currently feel called to commit your life?
- What are potential sources of confirmation that will clarify with "yet more light and truth" the spiritual validity and timeliness of the dream (such as, friends, mentors, scripture, more time in prayer, looking at your gifts, and personal experiences)?
- Can this dream become a reality in the life and ministry of your congregation or is this more of a personal dream?

Notes, Journal

Practice

Taking Time Away

Objective

To plan and implement a personal retreat—a time to be away with God. This could be part of a day, a whole day, or multiple days at a time. The goal is to discover what is most important to God and to you as you fulfill your call as a servant leader.

Process

Using *Time Away: A Guide for Personal Retreat* by Ben Campbell Johnson and Paul H. Lang, (Nashville, TN: Upper Room Books, 2010) or a similar retreat resource take the following steps:

1. Read the suggested resource.
2. Determine why you want to go on the retreat and the desired outcome.
3. Make spiritual and physical preparation.
4. Create a plan for the specific type of retreat you desire.
5. Give attention to what happens following the retreat.
6. Make it a habit.

Process Tip

If you have never taken a spiritual retreat, it might at first seem to you and those closest to you as an odd thing to do. Try to articulate for yourself and others why it is important. If circumstances prevent you from following through, reschedule. Work at being open and willing to risk during the experience. An important aspect of the retreat experience is interaction with nature. Select a place (you might search the Internet for "retreat centers") and time when you can be outdoors during part of the day. Remember that this retreat is more about *being* than *doing*.

Note: While a different experience than a personal retreat, the spiritual retreat is also beneficial for the congregational leadership team. When planning such a retreat, identify a facilitator who is experienced in this type of retreat.

Notes, Journal

Practice

Caring for One's Spirit

Objective

To intentionally experience a time of prayer, study, and reflection on a regular basis. This time of solitude is designed to deepen one's relationship with God.

Process

Using *A Guide to Prayer for Ministers and Other Servants,* edited by Rueben P. Job and Norman Shawchuck (Nashville, TN: Upper Room Books, 1998), or a similar devotional resource, spend thirty minutes on a regular basis (daily or three to four times per week) in one or more of the following:

- Study of selected scriptures
- Reflection on selected readings
- Prayer
- Journaling
- Reflection on selected hymn

Process Tip

Select a time and space where you can be alone and comfortable. Do not become discouraged if there are days when your life events do not permit this devotional time. Keep trying. Participate as often as possible. Do not "force" any aspect of the model. In other words, some days you may not have anything to write about. Be encouraged to write at least a sentence or two but do not become frustrated.

Note: Share the above resource and model with congregational leaders, using one or more of the elements at the beginning of each meeting time together.

Notes, Journal

Foundational Concepts

Invitation, Witness, and Hospitality

by John Wight

When Jesus issued his Great Commission (as recorded in the 28th chapter of Matthew), he commissioned his followers to witness of the gospel throughout the world and invite people into the community of his disciples. The story of Philip and Nathanael found in John 1:43–46 illustrates witness and invitation. Philip shares the story of Jesus with Nathanael (witness). When Nathanael questions that story, Philip tells him to "come and see" (invitation). Another illustration is the woman at the well (John 4:1–20). After her transforming encounter with Jesus, she returns to town to tell others what had happened (witness) and, like Philip says, "Come and see!" (invitation). A third example found in III Nephi 9:1–3, 6 shows people having received Jesus' ministry "noised [it] abroad among the people" (witness) and told them that he would return the next day (invitation).

The scriptures provide many examples of witness and invitation. Many sections of the Doctrine and Covenants repeat the message of witness and invitation. The gospel's message of "witness and invitation" is for individuals as well as for congregations.

President Stephen M. Veazey shone a bright light on the need for witness and invitation when he reminded the church on April 10, 2011, that the mission of Jesus Christ is what matters most. He identified five mission initiatives that define mission for the church. (See "What Mission Means" in this field guide.) He clearly noted that all five initiatives are of equal importance. One of the five is "Invite People to Christ." Sharing the good news of Jesus Christ and intentionally inviting individuals into Community of Christ is as important as any other ministry undertaken by individuals or congregations!

Darrell Guder expresses how essential witness and invitation are (or should be) in a congregation's life in his book *The Continuing Conversion of the Church*. He quotes David Bosch, noted Christian missionary and missiology scholar:

> The classical doctrine on the missio Dei as God the Father sending the Son, and God the Father and the Son sending the Spirit [is] expanded to include yet another "movement": Father, Son, and Holy Spirit sending the church into the world…mission is not primarily an activity of the church, but an attribute of God. God is a missionary God…. Mission is thereby seen as a movement from God to the world: the church is viewed as an instrument for that mission…. There is church because there is mission, not vice versa.
> —quoting David Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1991, 390)

Guder observed:

> Such an understanding of mission moves the subject far beyond the level of program or method. It disallows any understanding of mission that makes it a sub-topic of the church. The church's very nature is missionary.
> —Darrell L. Guder, *The Continuing Conversion of the Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmanns Publishing Company, 2000, 20)

As Guder suggests, the church does not exist to take care of and perpetuate itself, but to take the message—the joy, hope, love, and peace—of

PRACTICES

1. Schedule Quarterly Baptismal Services
2. Regular Evaluation of Activities
3. Pastor's Leadership Team and Focused Prayer
4. Witness and Invitation Moment
5. Walking the Neighborhood

Jesus Christ into the world. The call to witness and invite is not about numbers. The goal is not to simply increase the size of the church. Samuel Proctor, a successful pastor, seminary president, and former director of the Peace Corps, has been quoted as saying:

> Interceding and seeking to lead persons into a right relationship with God admits no secondary agenda, such as swelling the church roster, recruiting another tither, saving a marriage, finding a new youth leader, or proving our skills at evangelism. The only appropriate motivation is being obedient to our calling and helping any and every person near us to know the love of God and the blessing of living in God's favor and fellowship.

Witness and invitation require intentionality. Drawing people into personal relationship with Jesus Christ and his community requires more than merely erecting a building and putting up a sign. The message promoted in the movie *Field of Dreams*—"if you build it, they will come"—is not applicable when it comes to living out the Great Commission.

An equally important part of this process is hospitality. One must ask, to what am I inviting people? Tammy Lindle, in her book *Hospitality: Sharing God's Welcome* (Independence, MO: Herald Publishing House, 2006, 18), says, "By definition, hospitality involves some space into which people are welcomed, a place where unless the invitation is given, the stranger would not feel free to enter."

Lindle goes on to say, "To offer Christian hospitality we will need to rethink and reshape our priorities. Hospitality will not occur in any significant way in our lives or congregations unless we give it purposeful attention."

It is critically important for congregations to have a palpable spirit of welcome and hospitality when individuals walk through the door. All the witness and invitation in the world will have no effect if a guest encounters a cool reception and a sense that they have invaded someone else's space.

So, what can pastors and their congregational leadership teams do to help individuals and, indeed, their congregations live out this calling to witness and invite people and make them feel welcome?

1. Create an environment conducive to inviting people to Christ.
   - Use *A Witnessing Community* which helps congregations become just that—witnessing (and inviting) communities. One specific idea included in *A Witnessing Community* is for the congregational leadership team to pray about missionary outreach regularly—at least weekly. Not only does this actively involve God, it is a good way to keep witness and invitation at the forefront of the leadership team's minds.
   - Encourage financial generosity to support witness and invitation beyond the congregation. The role of the congregational leadership team is to model and create ministries of witness and invitation within and beyond the congregation.

> Look to the needs of your own congregations, but look also beyond your walls to the far-flung places where the church must go. Each disciple needs a spiritual home. You are called to build that home and care for it, but also to share equally in the outreaching ministries of the church. In that way the gospel may be sent to other souls also yearning for a spiritual resting place. Be fervent in your witness...
>
> —Doctrine and Covenants 162:7d, 8b

   - The pastor's leadership team should promote and live by an understanding that the group's ministry must be inward and outward at the same time.
   - Regularly communicate the value in having new people enter the congregational community because they bring God-given gifts and talents that can help further the congregation's mission.
2. Educate and empower the congregation for mission:
   - Provide training opportunities that will improve the congregation's ability to reach out to and then welcome new people. Two resources available from Herald House are especially valuable. They are *Vibrant Witness: Who Me?* and *Hospitality: Sharing God's Welcome*. Each can be used as a church school class over several weeks or in a number of other settings such as a weekend workshop.
   - Utilize demographic studies and community surveys to get to know the neighborhood surrounding the congregation's building. Contact your mission center missionary coordinator and ask for free copies of demographic studies for your congregation called Percept reports. (Percept is only available to congregations inside the United States.) Knowing the neighborhood helps discern what ministries would be most effective in meeting the needs of the people in the neighborhood and provide a point of connection and entry into the congregation. (See the practice "Walking the Neighborhood.")
   - Constantly remind and encourage individuals to share their personal witness and invite their friends and family members to attend the congregation's activities and ministries. (Seventy-nine percent of people who join a church do so because a friend or family member invited them.)
   - Provide at least one Missionary Tool Kit (and other current missionary helps) for use by congregational

members. Contact your mission center missionary coordinator for help in using the Missionary Tool Kit (see *www.CofChrist.org/seventy/resources-quick.asp* for a list of Missionary Tool Kit resources).

- *A Witnessing Community* has other methods for educating and empowering the congregation for outreach. A thorough study of that resource is highly recommended.

3. Evaluate for effectiveness.
   - As the old saying goes, the definition of insanity is doing the same things over and over in the same way and expecting different results. Continual evaluation of ministries and practices is essential in helping individuals and congregations in developing effective witnessing and inviting skills and behaviors. (See "Regular Evaluation of Activities" in the practices section.)

The McDonald's Corporation would not be successful without the thousands of local outlets found throughout the world. The same is true about local congregations of Community of Christ—without them the five mission initiatives could not be lived out. Congregations and their leaders are most important in achieving the church's mission of "Proclaiming Jesus Christ and promoting communities of joy, hope, love, and peace." Therefore, it is imperative to note that *you* are critically important and highly valued.

The Apostle Paul wrote, "I planted, Apollos watered, and the Holy Spirit brought the increase" (1 Corinthians 3:6 NRSV, adapted). Leaders of the congregation may be "planting" or "watering." Whichever it is, intentional attention to witness and invitation is essential to fulfill the Great Commission and the mission initiative to Invite People to Christ. The Holy Spirit will bring the increase!

Questions

There are many questions that pastors and leaders need to ask themselves in order to help the congregation develop its witness, invitation, and hospitality.

One question is, "Do I regularly share my witness of Christ with people who do not attend the congregation?" A second question is, "How often do I invite someone to church or to a church-related activity?"

A third question is for the congregation: "What would need to be happening here at church in order for you to invite people more often?"

When these questions are accompanied by implementing the ideas in this article and in the following practices, a congregation can increase their capacity of witness, invitation, and hospitality.

Practice

Schedule Quarterly Baptismal Services

Objective

To uphold the importance of uniting with Jesus Christ and a faith community through baptism and/or confirmation. Additionally, having such services scheduled in advance provides an easier way to invite individuals to be baptized and/or confirmed because they can point to an event that is already planned rather than making the person feel like they are in the spotlight or causing disruption to the regular routine.

Process

1. Place quarterly baptismal services on your congregational calendar.
2. Refer to these upcoming events on a regular basis (perhaps as part of a *witness and invitation moment* in each service).
3. Seek the guidance of the Holy Spirit in identifying individuals in the congregation who might be considering baptism and/or confirmation. Then issue a personal (private) invitation to those individuals.
4. Whether or not an actual baptism or confirmation will occur, proceed with the service as scheduled. (Some excellent "baptismal" services have occurred when the value of the sacraments of baptism and confirmation have been explained and new and long-time members are invited to share about their baptism/confirmation.)

Process Tips

1. Always fill the font for these scheduled baptismal services. Some may think this is a waste of water, but if the font is full it shows that the invitation is truly open. It also provides an opportunity for those already baptized to come forward and dip their hands into the water and reflect on their own baptism. It also allows for the possibility that someone will decide to be baptized on the spot.
2. Have towels and clothing (such as surgical scrubs) on hand in the event that someone does decide to be baptized on the spot. This assumes, of course, that the person is familiar with and embraces the identity, mission, message, and beliefs of Community of Christ as outlined in the church's baptismal policy (*www.CofChrist.org/policy*).

Notes, Journal

Practice

Regular Evaluation of Activities

Objective

To determine to what extent congregational activities are promoting the mission initiative to Invite People to Christ.

Process

1. Schedule regular meetings of congregational leaders to evaluate worship services and other congregational activities specifically with an eye toward how inviting and welcoming they are to friends and guests.
2. Ask questions such as the following during these evaluation meetings:
   - Was our greeter ministry in place and effective from the arrival of the guests to their departure?
   - Was our language "guest friendly" or did we use terms familiar only to Community of Christ churchgoers?
   - Did the activity provide a sense of welcome and invitation to future activities?
   - Were the physical facilities clean, warm, and welcoming?
3. Make any necessary changes to the facility or practices to address any deficiencies identified in the evaluation meeting.

Process Tip

It is best to hold evaluation meetings weekly. However, if this is not possible, they should be held at least monthly. Waiting longer than this causes important points to be forgotten and only allows deficiencies to continue for a prolonged period of time.

Notes, Journal

Practice

Pastor's Leadership Team and Focused Prayer

Objective

To seek the leadings of the Holy Spirit on a regular, continuing, and united basis for ministries of invitation and witness.

Process

1. Determine together as a leadership team a time of day at which each one will pray wherever they happen to be in the world. This assists in the group feeling they are united in this process.
2. Determine together a specific witness and invitation focus, event, or concern about which the group will pray. This could include how and when to hold special events such as Invite-a-Friend Sundays, specific individuals to whom the congregation is reaching out in witness and invitation, or direction for what specific missionary programs should be started in the congregation.
3. Pray every day for a 30-day period about the agreed upon focus at the agreed upon time.
4. Schedule a time to gather at the end of the 30 days to share insights gained and determine what, if any, action steps should be taken as a result.
5. Determine as a group whether additional time is needed to focus on the current topic or if it is time to take specific action. If it is determined that specific action is appropriate, the team makes necessary assignments.
6. The group decides together what the focus of the next 30-day period will be and then repeats the process described above.

Process Tip

While there will be situations for which additional time for prayer is advisable, do not allow the team to become bogged down on one issue for too long. It may be necessary to set that issue aside and focus on a new issue for a time and then revisit the original issue.

Notes, Journal

Practice

Witness and Invitation Moment

Objective

To provide a means by which witness and invitation can be a part of every worship service so that guests hear the witness and invitation and members are constantly reminded of the need to be about these ministries.

Process

Ask worship planners to include a time in every service for a witness and invitation moment. These can include one or more of the following elements:

1. A testimony from a newly baptized/confirmed member
2. An invitation to specific upcoming events
3. An invitation to regular attendance and participation in congregational activities
4. An invitation to baptism/confirmation (it's okay to be bold!)
5. A scripture story about the joy of uniting with Jesus Christ and the faith community through baptism/confirmation

Process Tip

Provide coaching to those who will participate in these *moments* to help them understand them as invitation moments rather than an opportunity to *preach* at the people.

Notes, Journal

Practice

Walking the Neighborhood

Objective

To learn to listen and pay attention to what is happening in the lives of people in your community in a familiar setting. Additionally, it is an opportunity to discern ways you and your congregation can respond to the needs and opportunities where God is moving in your neighborhood.

Many times people in the neighborhood watch us come and go to our church facility. Often there is very little conversation with those in the neighborhood but God is moving in their lives and we are being invited to connect with where God is moving.

The foundation for this practice is one of our enduring principles, the Worth of All Persons. We engage with people because we are called to be in relationship with others and discover the blessings of relationships and community. This is not about engaging in relationships with a motive other than connecting with other people and being open to what God is up to in these relationships.

Process

Take a family member or go with a friend and begin walking in your home neighborhood or in the neighborhood around your church facility. As you walk, pray about each home and the blessing of God in the lives of the people who live there. Also, if people are out in their yards or on their porches, greet them and wish them a good day.

As you become a regular presence in the neighborhood, begin to have conversations with the neighbors. As you walk through your chosen neighborhood, ask God to lead you to the people with whom God wants you to share in conversation. Listen for where God is moving in their lives. Consider offering the following prayer as you walk in the neighborhood: "God, who's out there that you want me to trade stories with? I need to listen to their story and they need to hear mine. God, bring me together with the people you would like for me to be in a witnessing relationship with. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen."

Be creative by taking some cookies to offer to people on your walk, or some freshly picked vegetables—anything you can offer them as a way of sharing God's love in a practical way. Listen for what God is doing in their lives or what their experiences have been in their individual walks of faith. Between walks share with your partner in prayer and conversation about the people you meet and where God may be leading you in mission.

Now… "step out" in faith!

Process Tip

Read Doctrine and Covenants 161:3, 4.

Notes, Journal

Modeling and Leading Generosity

by Blair White

Stewardship is the response of my people to the ministry of my Son and is required alike of all those who seek to build the kingdom...
—Doctrine and Covenants 147:5a

Modeling and leading generosity is showing by example what it means to be a disciple. Leaders, though imperfect and limited, model and lead generosity out of their own discipleship and teach what it means to be Christ-like. In a way, it is more than teaching; it is a way of helping people, far and near, experience the kingdom of God on Earth. Generosity is a spiritual practice. Like prayer, fasting, Sabbath, and study, generosity is a practice of the heart. Practices transform God's people in mind and spirit and in words and action.

Caring for the Vulnerable and Being so Ourselves

An important aspect of generosity is the discipline of receiving and sharing. The discipline of sharing is more than doing for others. It is extending God's blessings to be received by all. Xavier Le Pichon said: "…we have to rediscover that our community is not only made of the highly motivated competing individuals as in my own scientific world, but that it includes fragile, vulnerable, suffering individuals who reveal to ourselves our own fragility, our own vulnerability, who actually lay bare our own sufferings that have been hidden in our deepest self."[1]

People who are truly generous, especially with those who are vulnerable, come to know themselves. Perhaps they even fall in love with Christ. In *that* falling in love people gain something unexpected, unexplainable, and often beyond measure.

Mission-centered pastors and leaders can model generosity by allowing themselves to be vulnerable. This does not mean that we have to unveil our deepest secrets, or put ourselves in positions to be hurt. It simply means that when we are with members of the congregation, we are "real," "human," and "transparent" to appropriate degrees. It means that we are honest about our own dreams, concerns, pain, and joy.

How is this being generous? In a world where people learn how to wear masks in order to hide their true selves, it is a gift to learn that the congregation is a place where they can be authentically human. This is a hallmark of true community, and pastors and leaders can model this way of living authentically together.

Macedonian Joy

Some people consider generosity to be a luxury of the wealthy and will excuse themselves as they can always point to others who have more. Paul describes to the Corinthians what he saw of the Macedonian understanding of generosity by using the Greek word *charis* ten times. *Charis* means grace, privilege, a generous act or undertaking, blessing, offering, and thanks to God. At first, Paul misunderstood the Macedonians. The Macedonians were poor. Paul did not expect an offering.

PRACTICES

1. The Ministry of Generosity
2. Our Own Vulnerability
3. 'Tis a Gift to be Simple: A Lifestyle Audit
4. Aligning Budgets with Mission

However, Paul came to see the Macedonians in a new way. He now saw them as an extension of God's grace to the poor in Jerusalem (2 Corinthians 8:1—9:15). By sharing beyond what others thought they could or should, they no longer allowed their meager possessions to limit their ability to be generous. By emptying themselves, they became rich in God. Their generosity didn't come out of sacrifice; rather it came out of their joy and need to worship God.

Pastors and leaders can give their congregations opportunity for such joy in the manner in which they invite people to give their offerings. The Macedonians gave because it was their joy to serve God by meeting a need they were aware of. Pastors and leaders can regularly remind the congregation that their offerings are an act of worship, because they are used for God's purposes. But be specific as Paul was specific. Tell the congregation the exciting things that Mission Tithes are doing to support local, mission center, and worldwide ministries! Give people a reason to be joyful about what they are contributing to and enthusiastically invite them to give! Use the "Generosity Stories" that your mission center financial officer receives each month from the World Church (*www.CofChrist.org/generositystories*).

Help People Explore a Different Way of Living

Wealth and possessions can be great blessings for good, or they can control us. Jesus found this issue so problematic, that some report that he spoke of it more than the topics of heaven and hell combined.[2] Today's culture bombards people with the message "we don't have enough so we need more and we need it now." Many Christians live by that message. They are imprisoned with debt. They value their stewardship of possessions over their relationships. Being generous is first about identifying God as the source and owner of all that one has such as time, possessions, love, resources, relationships, opportunities, jobs, and paychecks. Being generous is identifying oneself as simply the steward over one's gifts. When disciples recognize everything is God's, then being generous and sharing with others is no loss because they never owned it to begin with. By fasting from accumulation, disciples become free in receiving and sharing. The question is, "Are work and culture influencing us, or are we influencing work and culture as we model the kingdom of God come near?" When disciples find their hearts in God and model generosity, their work and their engagement of the culture become extensions of God's grace.

But where will people learn about this in a world filled with messages about accumulation? Pastors and leaders should create opportunities for people to consider A Disciple's Generous Response principles (*www.CofChrist.org/generosity*). Classes, worship services, youth group discussions, and numerous other places provide opportunity for congregational leaders to discuss these principles with the congregation. Of course, these discussions are most powerful if leaders can testify of their own efforts, successes, and struggles to live by these principles.

From God's Heart to Ours…and Back

For the ancient Hebrews, faith became a system of legalities. When Jesus comes on the scene he turns those legalities inside out and upside down. The Law was a good place to start, but simply obeying it by command or constraint failed to reveal the heart of God. The nature of God and the way disciples are to live, as revealed in Jesus, is not to give 10 percent of one's self, but to give 100 percent. This does not imply that disciples are to give everything away. It does imply however, that faithful stewardship calls us to look holistically at our lives.

Pastors and leaders are not concerned only about the tithing given by the congregation. Rather, they are concerned about how members of the congregation understand their relationship to their resources in the most holistic way possible. This concern rises out of the leaders' desire for people to be free from burdens of unreasonable debt, the chains of unquenchable accumulation, and to know the joy and peace of generosity.

In this regard pastors and leaders can help by planning classes and services of worship that celebrate the simple fact that we are to be generous not because of law, and not just to meet the budget. Instead, we are to be generous because that is simply what disciples of Jesus do! For followers of Jesus, generosity is joy!

In addition, pastors and leaders can share the resource *Becoming a Generous Disciple*, available from Herald House (*www.HeraldHouse.org*). This resource will help people explore the following six principles:

- A disciple practices generosity as a spiritual discipline in response to God's grace and love.
- A disciple is faithful in response to Christ's ministry.
- A disciple's financial response, while unique to individual circumstances, expresses love of God, neighbor, creation, and oneself.
- A disciple shares generously through tithing so that others may experience God's generosity.
- A disciple saves wisely in order to create a better tomorrow for self, family, the church's mission and the world.
- A disciple spends responsibly as a commitment to live in health and harmony with God and the world.

As a restoration movement the church's purpose has always been to be engaged in Christ's work of establishing God's kingdom in this life, in these days. Our hope is with Christ's that this earth would resemble heaven. "The Spirit of the Lord is upon [us], because he has anointed [us] to bring good news to the poor. He has sent [us] to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor." (Luke 4:18–19) To do so requires a generous heart; one that finds its roots, faith, wealth, heart, rest, and work in God.

> There are many lives waiting to hear the redeeming words of the gospel, or to be lifted from hopelessness by the hands of loving servants. But they will be lost to you without the generous response of disciples who share from their own bounty that others may know the joys of the kingdom.
>
> —Doctrine and Covenants 162:7a

[1]Xavier Le Pichon, *Ecce Homo: To welcome the suffering is the sign of our humanity*, http://being.publicradio.org/programs/2010/fragility/essay-eccehomo.pdf, accessed May 11, 2011.

[2]Randy Alcorn, *The Treasure Principle,* (Sisters, OR: Multnomah Publishers, 2001), 9.

Questions

The above principles are challenging because they prompt us to ask important questions about our own lives and ministry. Some of those questions are the following.

1. *To what degree am I being "real" with the congregation about my personal hopes, concerns, joys, and pain?*

   You don't have to "spill your guts" or reveal things that are uncomfortably personal. The question is, are you being "authentic," "human," and "real" when you are with the congregation, or do you feel pressure to appear close-to-perfect, immune from personal struggles, or one who has all the answers? It will be very difficult for the congregation to form true community if leaders are signaling that it's not safe to be fully human.

2. *How can we help the congregation better understand the difference for good that their tithing makes?*

   People need to know how families, neighborhoods, and villages are being changed for good because of what mission tithes make possible. They need to understand what is possible in their own community if they are generous with congregational offerings.

3. *Is the pastor's leadership team being intentional about teaching the six principles of A Disciple's Generous Response?*

   Individuals and families need the blessings that are experienced through this holistic understanding of generosity and discipleship.

   Generosity is at the heart of the gospel. The practices that follow can help give attention to generosity in practical ways.

Practice

The Ministry of Generosity

Objective

To increase generosity by helping the congregation become more fully aware of the life-changing ministries that their contributions make possible.

Process

This process is simple but important.

Every month, instruct the individuals scheduled to share offertory remarks to do four simple things:

1. Keep the remarks brief and focused on the offering.
2. Tell about the life-changing ministry that is made possible by the congregation's generosity:
   - Use generosity stories found at *www.CofChrist.org/generositystories*, or available from your mission center financial officer.
   - Share how contributions to local, congregational ministries are making a difference.
3. Invite people to give generously.
4. Thank God for the joy of giving to things that matter.

Notes, Journal

Practice

Our Own Vulnerability

Objective

To help pastors and leaders explore their own vulnerability and attitudes about generosity through relationships with people who are fragile or suffering.

Process

The previous article quoted Xavier Le Pichon regarding how our communities "include fragile, vulnerable, suffering individuals who reveal to ourselves our own fragility, our own vulnerability, who actually lay bare our own sufferings that have been hidden in our deepest self."

Exercise: Identify someone in your community that is "fragile, vulnerable [or] suffering" that you presently either don't know or only slightly know. This could be someone that is homeless, suffering from addiction issues, a parentless or troubled child, someone who suffers from emotional, physical or mental health issues, has recently lost or is losing a child, or otherwise marginalized in a host of different ways. Commit to develop a relationship with that person over an extended period of time of at least a year. This person is not your project to fix; rather they are simply a child of God who needs your generous love, acceptance, and presence. Consider appropriate ways to share your generosity with this person with the expectation of receiving nothing in return, not even an appropriate response.

- Identify a trusted friend or mentor that you debrief with when needed after sharing with your new friend.
- As the relationship develops identify how this person is revealing to you some of your own fragilities, vulnerabilities, and sufferings.
- How is this relationship impacting your ministry and life?
- What is this relationship helping you to realize about your own response to God's generosity?

Notes, Journal

Practice

'Tis a Gift to be Simple: A Lifestyle Audit

Objective

To help people consider the difference between "wants" and "needs" in order to free resources for Christ's mission.

Process

Paying for things we don't need with money we don't have needs to be replaced with remembering that it is a gift to be simple. Simplicity is not about restricting the abundance of life, but about cutting out the things that aren't really important so that life can be lived more fully. This can become both a regular practice and a spiritual discipline.

The following exercise can be used with the pastor's leadership team, the congregation as a whole, youth groups, etc.

Exercise: Review your calendar and checkbook to uncover wants vs. needs. Are your "wants" revealed in too many trips to the coffee shop? Going out to eat too much? Too much expensive entertainment? That extra car? Too many expensive vacations? Find something in your life that you know is a want rather than a need and try giving it up for a while. Next time you are shopping, before you pull an item off the shelf, ask yourself whether it is a want or need. Spend that extra time or money on other priorities in your life or give it to an organization or cause you believe in. Afterward, ask yourself again, did you really need it?

From Jim Wallis' *Rediscovering Values on Wall Street, Main Street and Your Street: A Moral Compass for the New Economy*, (New York: Howard Books, 2010), 231.

Notes, Journal

Practice

Aligning Budgets with Mission

Objective

The pastor and the pastor's leadership team meet with other congregational leaders and members to align the congregational budget to the mission initiatives.

Community of Christ has committed itself to align the World Church budget with the five mission initiatives identified in President Stephen M. Veazey's April 2011 address to the church. The initiatives are:

- Invite People to Christ—Christ's mission of evangelism
- Abolish Poverty, End Suffering—Christ's mission of compassion
- Pursue Peace on Earth—Christ's mission of justice and peace
- Develop Disciples to Serve—Equip individuals for Christ's mission
- Experience Congregations in Mission—Equip congregations for Christ's mission

Process

Invite others from the congregation into a conversation about the budget. Determine if there are pieces that don't fit. Look for ways to bring all congregational budget items into alignment with the mission initiatives (be prepared to eliminate programs and expenses that do not fit). Explore the following questions:

- What part of the congregation's budget would be the most difficult to align to the mission initiatives? Why?
- How would the budget look if it were truly aligned with the mission initiatives?
- How would a budget aligned with the mission initiatives impact life and activities of the congregation?

Share with the congregation your proposed way of aligning the budget and explore what impact it may have on supporting and doing Christ's mission. In addition to aligning the congregation budget to the mission initiatives explore with the congregation how to apply the above questions to individual household budgets and expenses.

Notes, Journal

Foundational Concepts

Pastoral care ministries are living expressions of Jesus Christ's desire that individuals and communities should be supported, cared for, and grow toward wholeness. Pastoral care is the practical application of God's grace, love, mercy, healing, and reconciling touch in all aspects of human life. Pastoral care can be a clear proclamation of Jesus Christ as living presence within, but never confined to, the community of faith.

Pastoral care ministries express the love of God for every person and declare the worthiness of each life to feel loved, to be free of bondage, to discover wholeness and to grow in relationship with the Holy. There are a variety of ministries that make up pastoral care. These ministries include:

- Caring for those in crisis or circumstances of great stress including physical, spiritual, emotional, mental, or relational dimensions of living.
- Supporting those with ongoing challenges or continuing circumstances for which there are no clear or visible resolutions.
- Guiding persons to receive assistance with a life question or problem.
- Addressing the need in each life for healing of the spirit and reconciliation of broken relationships. This includes encouraging the principles of Christ-like living.
- Celebrating life events and accomplishments.

The ministry of pastoral care lies with the members of the congregation, not just with the pastor or the ordained ministry of the church. In truth, some concerns should be addressed by those with training or specific skills. However, sacred community declares the blessings and giftedness of each life to both give and receive Christ-like love and compassionate care. It is the responsibility of leadership to explore congregational needs and discover pathways for people to provide care within congregational life. It is not the responsibility of the pastor or priesthood or leadership to provide every act of ministry.

Effective pastoral care is as much an attitude of respect and inclusion of persons as it is the practical application of specific ministries. In other words, respect for each person and inclusion of each one as a person of worth is an attitude that speaks of Christ's compassion. Approaching and paying close attention to people to understand them and listen deeply to what they are saying and what might be underlying their words is important. It conveys the worth of persons no matter the topic or focus. Respectful and inclusive attitudes linked with deep listening are foundational to a Christ-proclaiming congregation of compassionate disciples.

Pastoral Care Ministry

by Pam Cress

PRACTICES

1. Pastoral Care and Worship Ministry to Homebound Persons
2. Grief Ministry
3. Assessing Our Pastoral Care Needs

Creating and nurturing a congregational culture of deep respect and compassionate concern for every life is at the heart of being a people who proclaim Christ's love.

Who are the recipients of pastoral care?
Some think that pastoral care is in-reaching because its focus is on the members or participants of the congregation. This narrow focus forgets visitors, friends and family, and others who live in the community. When the congregation focuses pastoral care ministries on meeting human need with Christ-like love, then all receive the invitation to share in sacred community. For example, a support group for parents or a class on healthy eating can be relevant for people inside and out of the congregation. In fact, such groups and classes could be the invitational path to sacred community. Affirming care that meets real needs within the context of Christ-centered relationships is always outreaching as well as in-reaching.

Not only is pastoral care "for" everyone, but every person who desires to "give" pastoral care can do so if they are willing to 1) actively and deeply listen; 2) practice the ministry of presence; and 3) be prayerful. These three expressions of care are important and necessary, and must be present in the following functions of pastoral care.

Five Functions of Pastoral Care

1. **Supportive care.** This includes all of the ways an individual or family can be supported during a crisis or ongoing difficulty or challenge. A crisis can be an illness, injury, death, job loss, natural disaster, or other trauma. An ongoing challenge could be a difficult health diagnosis, a child born with a developmental challenge, an injury resulting in loss of employment, or some circumstance that is prolonged and not easily or quickly resolved.

   Ministry possibilities include:
   - Home or hospital visits
   - Child or elder care during the crisis
   - Meals
   - Cards with expressions of care
   - Flowers
   - Temporary shelter
   - Support group or educational class
   - Referral to professional care or community agency
   - Transportation to obtain needed resources (with companionship along the way)

2. **Guidance.** This form of pastoral care is when a caregiver comes alongside and supports those who may be struggling with moral questions or life concerns.

   Ministry possibilities include:
   - Helping to arrange a visit or series of visits with a skilled minister or pastoral counselor
   - Participation in a facilitated support group or exploration group
   - Referral to professional counseling services

3. **Wellness and wholeness.** These ministries focus on healing as a process and wholeness as a journey toward integration of mind, body, and spirit as the Creator intended for each person. Pastoral care can provide opportunities to explore healing in a holistic way, rather than seeking a cure which may not always be found. This can include helping people explore the meaning of wholeness and discovering ways to pursue it in life.

   Ministry possibilities include:
   - Educational and healthy lifestyle support groups such as classes on nutrition and exercise groups
   - Hosting recovery groups or referral to a group
   - Providing for healing-focused worship or prayer experiences

4. **Reconciliation.** This includes reconciliation with God, one another, and within one's self, which are all important pastoral care ministries. Therefore, pastors and leaders should consider making every effort to equip and train people in these ministries—especially people who feel called to peacemaking and reconciliation. Identifying persons skilled in these ministries both within the congregation and outside is critical to exploring and discovering personal and relational wholeness. Congregational life can reflect the need for grace and forgiveness in many ways. Healthy and growing congregations will always encounter differences and conflict. Embedding the importance of reconciliation in the life of the faith community and providing the means to seek it are among the tremendous blessings of pastoral care ministries.

   Ministry possibilities include:
   - Training ordained teachers (and others) for reconciliation ministries
   - Congregational or group exploration about the blessings of forgiveness
   - Peacemaking studies and activities

5. **Encouragement and celebration.** Encouraging Christ-like living and celebrating the milestones and accomplishments of life are essential to communicating the truth that each life matters. This can create a deep sense of belonging to God and to one another in the body of Christ. No one is alone. All are seen, encouraged and celebrated as persons of worth.

Ministry possibilities include:

- Birthday cards, recognition, and parties
- Post or announce school or work achievements
- Healthy marriage and relationship classes or workshops
- Thank-you's and other appreciation expressed for service and support

Note: Even when a person needs professional help, pastoral care ministers still make a difference through listening deeply, providing the ministry of presence (perhaps even being in the waiting room while a person is engaged with a professional), and prayer support.

Getting Started in Pastoral Care

Who and what are our resources?
Aaronic ministers, according to their calling and giftedness, can provide great leadership in pastoral care ministries. Of course, all who have a sense of passion, interest, skill, or gift can be engaged in these ministries. There may be medical, mental health, or educational professionals in the congregation as well who may be called upon to help. The building and its location may be a resource for meetings large and small. There may be retired people who can make time available during weekdays to help. Someone may have skills such as cooking or mechanics or assets such as a garden or large home. Take a survey. Make a list.

What are our needs for ministry now?
Look at the functional areas of pastoral care. Some needs are part of every community such as illness, injury, death, birthdays, anniversaries, and achievements at school or work. Other needs are more specific such as unemployment, or struggles with grief issues. The congregation may have newlyweds, teenagers, single-parent or blended families, or aging parents and grandparents among those who attend. All these have special pastoral care needs.

What do we need to learn?
Consider providing classes in listening skills, small group facilitation, or communication skills. Consider a class that explores prayer as intercession. (Given the spectrum of resources on this topic, you may want to consult with your mission center leaders to identify resources that are aligned with Community of Christ enduring principles and beliefs.)

Equip and prepare people for pastoral care ministry. As a congregational leader, you are not expected to have the skills to do this training yourself. But skilled trainers may be available in your mission center or community.

What other resources are available to us?
Compile a directory of community service agencies to access when needed. Include educational, counseling, recovery groups, and other programs or professionals. Invite representatives of community services to share information or consultation. When compiling a directory include meeting spaces and recreational sites.

And, finally, where do resources and needs meet?
No congregation should try to be all things to all people. However, careful exploration should reveal some priorities and some strong possibilities for ministry. Begin with ministries you can clearly support. Work to acquire the training or resources that might be needed. Always allow for debriefing experiences in order to learn as you go and stay open to new possibilities as the congregation grows. Every congregation, small or large, can create the culture of compassionate care and employ the tools of careful listening, the ministry of presence, and prayer.

Questions

Providing effective pastoral care often begins by the pastor and congregational leaders asking the right questions. This article poses several significant questions. The pastor and pastor's leadership team can have a meaningful and helpful discussion about these questions.

1. What are the congregation's pastoral care needs? (What about the community?)
2. What do we need to learn in order to effectively address these needs?
3. Where do we need to go to find help and resources to help us learn?
4. What resources are available to us right now?
5. Have members of the pastor's leadership team read and discuss books on addiction and recovery, suicide prevention, parenting, or life skills for consideration or study by the congregation.

OBJECTIVE

For pastoral care and worship ministers to blend their gifts in ministry to people who are homebound.

PROCESS

Identify church members (or members of the community) who are unable to leave their homes easily to attend services or gatherings and who have expressed a desire for fellowship.

Hold a congregational dinner on Communion Sunday. During or after the dinner, a small team takes Communion to a homebound person where they provide a short service of worship. In addition, the visiting team brings packaged meals from the congregational dinner to share with the person whose home they visit (be sure to find out about possible dietary restrictions in advance). They can leave a copy of that Sunday's bulletin, announcements, or a video of the service. In larger congregations, two or more visiting teams can go to two or more homes.

Try this each month for six months and then evaluate the experience for possible improvements or changes.

Notes, Journal

Practice

Grief Ministry

Objective

To help congregational ministers care for people who are grieving the loss of a loved one.

Process

Identify a reputable grief recovery or grief support group in the community. Next, identify a pastoral care provider in the congregation who will go with a grieving person(s) to attend the recovery or support group. If the grieving person(s) have children (and if the recovery or support group is for adults), other members of the congregation who are registered youth workers can provide childcare and perhaps a simple meal for the children during the group sessions.

When the group sessions end, pastoral care providers or members of the pastor's leadership team will listen to the grieving persons to evaluate their experience and improve on the ministry.

Notes, Journal

Practice

Assessing Our Pastoral Care Needs

Objective

To help the pastor's leadership team assess overall pastoral care needs and resources.

Process

In a meeting of the pastor's leadership team, have a discussion about the questions that appear at the end of this article on pastoral care. Take your time with this conversation. Be thorough and prayerful in the conversation.

The questions are:

- What are the congregation's pastoral care needs? (What about the community?)
- What do we need to learn in order to effectively address these needs?
- Where do we need to go to find help and resources to help us learn?
- What resources are available to us right now?

Notes, Journal

Foundational Concepts

Priesthood is a sacred covenant involving the highest form of stewardship of body, mind, spirit, and relationships. The priesthood shall be composed of people of humility and integrity who are willing to extend themselves in service for others and for the well-being of the faith community.

Truly authoritative priesthood ministry emerges from a growing capacity to bring blessing to others. Unfortunately, there are some who have chosen to view priesthood as a right of privilege or as a platform for promoting personal perspectives. Others hold priesthood as a casual aspect of their lives without regard to appropriate levels of preparation and response.

The expectation for priesthood to continually magnify their callings through spiritual growth, study, exemplary generosity, ethical choices, and fully accountable ministry is always present. How can the Spirit fill vessels that are unwilling to expand their capacity to receive and give according to a full measure of God's grace and truth?

Counsel given previously regarding the need to develop ways whereby priesthood can magnify their ministry or determine their commitment to active service remains applicable and should be more intentionally implemented. The First Presidency will provide guidelines for processes to be applied in culturally respectful ways in the various fields of the church. Fundamentally, however, the ultimate responsibility for priesthood faithfulness rests on the individual in response to the needs and expectations of the faith community.
—Doctrine and Covenants 163:6a–d

Pastors and priesthood members have a mutual responsibility to honor and celebrate one another's ministries and to discover together how they will share ministry for the sake of Christ's mission. When members of the priesthood accept their call they make a commitment to serve with others. Since pastors and priesthood serve as lay ministers with responsibilities to families, careers, and other interests the importance of serving together is essential. To serve together effectively they must have mutual understandings and expectations.

Members of the priesthood, as is true for members of the congregation, must recognize that God gives different gifts to different members of the body and calls each member to ministry. The most prominent image of the church is a body with Christ as the head. This image conveys a strong emphasis on the relationship of all the members to the body. Every member is a member of one body and is to be a functioning member (Ephesians 4:4, 15–16). Each member belongs and no one member of the body can say to another, "I don't need you." "The Holy Spirit gives complementary gifts and abilities to all disciples to equip the body of Christ for its witness in the world" (*Sharing in Community of Christ: Exploring Identity, Mission, Message, and Beliefs*, 2nd edition, Herald Publishing House, 2010, p. 16).

Priesthood in Community of Christ is comprised of many offices. They belong together and are to serve in unity. Each office has specific gifts and ministries to offer. Just as the church is comprised of many and various members, the priesthood is comprised of many offices. When ministering together in unity, the priesthood best serve Christ's mission.

Priesthood Ministry: Developing Mutual Expectations

by Ron Harmon and Tom Mountenay with contributions from Val Walker

PRACTICES

1. Permission to Yearn, Invitation to Dream
2. Centering Prayer
3. Walking the Neighborhood
4. Conversation about U.S. Percept Reports and Mission
5. Priesthood Ministry...
6. Covenant Renewal Service
7. Identifying Gifts for Mission
8. Exploring Scripture...Ministry
9. Finding My Voice...Our Voice

Pastors and priesthood share responsibility to create relationships that affirm the worth of one another, encourage the best behaviors in one another and uplift one another. In the introduction to Doctrine and Covenants 164 President Veazey writes, "the Spirit helped me see much broader dimensions of God's grace working through Christ to transform human relationships in a divided world. As a result, I have an even-greater testimony than before of the power of the gospel of Christ to birth a new creation among those who dare to live its message in sacred community." If Community of Christ is to be faithful to Christ's mission, it must itself be in the process of becoming a new creation. The dominant culture of Western society places value on individualism which is a counter-value to the new creation. Individualism denies the fundamental nature and identity of the church as given by God—namely that Jesus draws all people into relationships of faithfulness and responsibility toward one another and to God. Being Community of Christ means serving fully in community with one another. Members of the priesthood are called to model what it means to be a disciple of Christ *and* what it means to be the body of Christ.

Although developing mutual expectations is a responsibility of pastors and members of the priesthood, the pastor or the pastor's leadership team need to give leadership. Ongoing conversation is the key to developing mutual expectations over time. Make the following five commitments to build cohesion and provide clarity:

1. **Schedule time for being together.** All relationships require a commitment to invest time to communicate care and value for one another. There is little value in talking about what matters most if people do not feel respected, wanted, and valued. (See the article "Becoming Sacred Community: A Foundation for Mission" in this field guide.)
2. **Pray together.** Praying together has the potential to deepen relationships with God and one another. Praying together to center on God's purposes and seek God's guidance is essential for spiritual insight so ministry may flow out of lives enriched by God and one another. (See the article "Cultivating Individual and Group Spiritual Practices" in this field guide.)
3. **Read scripture together.** Dwell in scripture together for the indwelling of the gospel story to shape a shared vision or imagination for God's world. Take time to talk about and tell the story of faith. Ask the most fundamental question Jesus must have asked, "How am I to be faithful to God?" (See the article "Scripture in a Mission-focused Congregation" in this field guide.)
4. **Discern together.** Identify together where God is at work and calls for response. By seeing the way ahead together pastors and members of the priesthood mutually "own" the vision that God is birthing among them. Help identify, encourage, and free one another's gifts for ministries in the congregation and in the neighborhood. (See the articles "Pastoring Basics," "Orienting Mission around the Gifts of All Ages," and "Discerning God's Call for Mission" in this field guide.)
5. **Identify and agree on expectations.** Be specific rather than generalize what you have agreed to do. Effective and excellent ministry involves being intentional and honest about your priorities and time commitments. Remember each one has a *stewardship of body, mind, spirit, and relationships.*

Developing mutual expectations is hard work. It will take time. Yet if approached courageously and honestly the Holy Spirit will bless pastors and priesthood as they meet, pray, and discern together their response to Christ's mission in the congregation and the community. May the following scriptures guide and encourage you.

> Do not be fearful of one another. Respect each life journey, even in its brokenness and uncertainty, for each person has walked alone at times. Be ready to listen and slow to criticize, lest judgments be unrighteous and unredemptive.
>
> Be patient with one another, for creating sacred community is arduous and even painful. But it is to loving community such as this that each is called. Be courageous and visionary, believing in the power of just a few vibrant witnesses to transform the world. Be assured that love will overcome the voices of fear, division, and deceit.
>
> Understand that the road to transformation travels both inward and outward. The road to transformation is the path of the disciple.
>
> —Doctrine and Covenants 161:3b–d

> Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we ought, but that very Spirit intercedes with sighs too deep for words. And God, who searches the heart, knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God. We know that all things work together for good for those who love God, who are called according to his purpose.
>
> —Romans 8:26–28

Questions

1. Taking into account all your responsibilities as a pastor, what is the best way for you to approach conversations with the priesthood about mutual expectations? Do you start with a one-on-one approach or meet as a group?
2. If priesthood in your congregation do not meet together often and there is a need to build community what would help them know one another better?
3. How can the pastor's leadership team model ways to develop mutual expectations and share their experience with members of the priesthood?
4. Priesthood meetings provide many opportunities for developing mutual expectations, such as: building camaraderie, worship, fellowship, developing ministry skills, cultivating and practicing group and personal spiritual practices, sharing information relevant to the mission of Community of Christ, and being accountable to one another. In consultation with other leaders and the priesthood, what are the opportunities most fruitful for you to explore?
5. Priesthood partnering with other priesthood can be a catalyst for spiritual development and renewal. Many newly ordained priesthood want and need a more experienced minister as a supportive companion. Is "priesthood partnering together" an important topic for conversation?
6. How well do members of the priesthood know the ministry descriptions of the priesthood offices? For descriptions of the congregation-focused priesthood go to *www.CofChrist.org/priesthood/congregation-focused.asp*.
7. How can priesthood be aware of ministry opportunities in the congregation and the community? Is there a need for priesthood in your congregation to give attention to both the congregation and the community as you lead discussions about mutual expectations?
8. How can the pastor's leadership team help priesthood grow in their office-specific ministry that matches their unique set of gifts? Use the "Discover and Share Your Gifts" questionnaire in the book *Hospitality: Sharing God's Welcome* (Herald Publishing House, 2006, p. 124) or online at *www.CofChrist.org/priesthood/resources.asp*.

Practice

Permission to Yearn, Invitation to Dream (for priesthood)

Objective

To help pastors and members of the priesthood explore their yearnings and dreams in order to open themselves more fully to the inspiration of God's Spirit.

Process

Invite those willing to prayerfully give personal time and to make a commitment to meet several times with the pastor or other members of the priesthood.

1. **Take time for personal reflection.** Write down the following questions in a journal or notebook. Take time to ponder these questions. Don't rush or force anything. It may take several visits with these questions for insight to come. Write down your reflections and thoughts regarding each of the following:
   - What are the dreams for which you spiritually yearn?
   - To which dream (if any) do you currently feel called to commit your life?
   - What are potential sources of confirmation that will clarify with "yet more light and truth" the spiritual validity and timeliness of the dream (such as, friends, mentors, scripture, more time in prayer, looking at your gifts, and personal experiences)?
   - Can this dream become a reality in the life and ministry of your congregation or is this more of a personal dream?
2. **Share reflections in conversation.** Meet and discuss one another's personal reflections. This can be done one on one or by a group.
3. **Identify and agree on mutual expectations.** It may take several conversations to achieve this difficult part, yet make a commitment to one another to reach agreement on identifying mutual expectations for supporting one another and sharing with one another Christ's mission. Be specific and honest with one another.

Notes, Journal

Practice

Centering Prayer (for priesthood)

Objective

In this application there are three objectives as the pastor and priesthood share prayer and conversation:

1. Create space to become aware of God's presence.
2. As you breathe, be open to God's Spirit moving through your life and listen for the breath of God (a word or phrase that comes to you).
3. Experience God's Spirit centering, calming, and revitalizing your whole being.

It is called *centering prayer* because our attention is gathered in and centered on perceiving and receiving God. Centering prayer uses two "tools" to help us pull away from distractions and move us to listening. These two tools are *breath* and a *prayer word* (sometimes called a *sacred word*).

Process Tip

Imagine that Jesus is breathing in and through you as he did with his disciples. A helpful scripture to reference is John 20:19–22 NRSV.

> When it was evening on that day, the first day of the week, and the doors of the house where the disciples had met were locked for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you." After he said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples rejoiced when they saw the Lord. Jesus said to them again, "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you." When he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit."

Process

1. Sit in a relaxed position. Close your eyes.
2. Offer a brief prayer to ask for help and guidance. (For example: "I'm here, God, waiting, listening, open. Empty me of fear, worry, and inner noise. Allow me to rest and rejoice in the awareness of your presence.")
3. Use your breath to create a sense of peace and letting go into God. Breathe deeply, slowly, calmly, starting with several cleansing breaths that end in an audible sigh. As you fill your lungs and exhale, feel the tension in your muscles and your entire body flow out with the air. Continue to breathe in a regular, natural rhythm from your abdomen rather than your chest.
4. Focus on breathing God in, breathing all else out until you feel calm and centered.
5. Continue paying attention to your breath as you focus your body, mind, and spirit on the reality that God is present and that you are here with the intention of loving and being loved by God.
6. Listen beneath or within your breath for a prayer word (or phrase) that expresses the desires, needs, or concerns of your heart. Don't struggle for the word or phrase. Trust that it will arise as you continue to be still and open.
7. When you have been made aware of the prayer word or phrase, repeat it silently to yourself in rhythm with your breathing.

(breathing in)	Fill me…
(breathing out)	…O God
(breathing in)	[silence]
(breathing out)	…peace

8. When the time for prayer is over, offer a brief word of thanks to God, take several more deep breaths, become aware of those around you, and trust God's presence to bless you as you share with one another.

Practice

Walking the Neighborhood (for priesthood)

Objective

For priesthood to partner together to listen and pay attention to what is happening in the lives of people in their community. This gives priesthood an opportunity to discern ways they and their congregation can respond to specific needs where God is moving in their neighborhood.

Process

Two or more priesthood members walk their or the church's neighborhood. Pray seeking God's guidance for how the priesthood or the congregation can bless the neighborhood.

Also, ask God to lead you to people with whom God wants you to share in conversation. Listen for where God is moving in their lives. Consider offering the following prayer as you walk in the neighborhood: "God, who's out there that you want us to have a conversation with? We need to listen to their stories and they need to hear ours. God, bring us together with the people you would like for us to visit with. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen."

In between walks share prayer and conversation about the people you meet and where God may be leading you in mission. Be patient, take your time and do this practice on a regular basis. Now…"step out" in faith!

Process Tip

Read Doctrine and Covenants 161:3

3a. Open your hearts and feel the yearnings of your brothers and sisters who are lonely, despised, fearful, neglected, unloved. Reach out in understanding, clasp their hands, and invite all to share in the blessings of community created in the name of the One who suffered on behalf of all.

b. Do not be fearful of one another. Respect each life journey, even in its brokenness and uncertainty, for each person has walked alone at times. Be ready to listen and slow to criticize, lest judgments be unrighteous and unredemptive.

c. Be patient with one another, for creating sacred community is arduous and even painful. But it is to loving community such as this that each is called. Be courageous and visionary, believing in the power of just a few vibrant witnesses to transform the world. Be assured that love will overcome the voices of fear, division, and deceit.

d. Understand that the road to transformation travels both inward and outward. The road to transformation is the path of the disciple.

Notes, Journal

Practice

Conversation about U.S. Percept Reports and Mission

Objective

To have conversations about demographic data for your congregation's neighborhood to discern opportunities for mission.

Process

Contact your mission center missionary coordinator and ask for free copies of demographic studies for your congregation called Percept reports (only available to USA congregations). You can request this information based on zip codes or a radius around your church address. Ask your missionary coordinator to meet with you and the priesthood to learn how to use and apply demographic studies for mission.

Process Tips

1. Use the practice "Finding My Voice, Finding Our Voice" listed with this article.
2. Review the field guide article "The Congregation Embodies Christ's Mission." As you discuss the Percept reports ask, "What would it look like if Jesus moved into our neighborhood?" "What would Jesus be saying and doing?" "Who would Jesus be associating with?" When priesthood and leaders address these essential questions they are preparing themselves to be Christ's living expression of "evangelism, compassionate service, and justice and peacemaking" (see Community of Christ mission initiatives at *www.CofChrist.org/mission*).
3. Share observations or insights from an important companion practice "Walking the Neighborhood" (for Priesthood) listed with this article.

Notes, Journal

Practice

Priesthood Ministry Conversations*

Objective

For priesthood members to begin conversations with their pastor to assess the needs of the faith community and discover the ministry each person can offer to help address those needs. Pastors have an important role to engage in these discussions with priesthood members. A website to support the needs of priesthood is available at *www.CofChrist.org/priesthood*.

Process

Choose one or more formats to suit your needs:

- Meet with all members of the priesthood.
- Divide into groups by office or based on gifts or interests.
- Meet one-on-one with each priesthood member.
- Gather in a series of meetings or for one extended session.

Choose one or more of the following:

1. Reflect together on the following priesthood scriptural principles:
   - Priesthood is a sacred covenant one enters with God and the faith community involving the total commitment of one's life.
   - The foundation for priesthood ministry is the wholistic ministry of Jesus Christ—God's shalom. Jesus modeled the essential balance between spiritual formation, renewal, and ministry to others.
   - God calls disciples to share the peace of Jesus Christ. God entrusts some to responsibilities of priesthood and leadership.
   - Priesthood ministry is a response to the grace and generosity of God.
   - As priesthood share ministry in their office and calling, the faith community experiences the wholistic ministry of Jesus.
   - Priesthood members prepare and extend themselves in the service of God's vision for the blessing and salvation of creation.
   - Priesthood members embody generosity, humility, and integrity.
   - Priesthood members continually seek to magnify their calling.
   - Office-specific ministry may expand as new insights emerge through our encounter with God's revelation.
   - The ultimate responsibility for priesthood faithfulness rests on the individual in response to the needs and expectations of the faith community. The church is accountable to God for supporting, equipping, and empowering priesthood members to fulfill their calling to bring blessings to the community.
2. Study the commentaries on Doctrine and Covenants 163:6 found on the church's website, *www.CofChrist.org/D&C163*, and in the June, July, and August 2008 issues of the *Herald*.
3. Explore these passages from *The Priesthood Manual*, 2004 edition:

   > Ministry also has a universal dimension to it in that all of us who would be disciples of Jesus are called into service...the Christian faith as understood by the Community of Christ invites all members to be ministers. In the Doctrine and Covenants we are told, "All are called according to the gifts of God unto them" (119:8b)…
   >
   > Priesthood is a particular expression of that more universal ministry to which we are all called. (p. 9)
   >
   > More important than the question of what one can or can't do is the question of what one *feels called* to do and is willing to accept responsibility for in the life of the church. (p. 11)

4. Individual reflection: Ministry happens in and through all dimensions of life: our vocations, community service, friendships, and the church. These added questions may be helpful for you and priesthood members to consider:
   - How would you describe this period, time, or phase of your life?
   - What significant personal goal are you working on right now?
   - What feeds your soul? How will you integrate and celebrate that into your ministry?
   - When you consider the particular role of your priesthood office, for which types of ministry do you feel you have particular skill or aptitude?
   - What responsibilities of your priesthood office do you most enjoy?
   - In what responsibilities of your office do you feel least prepared to function, or enjoy the least? Where are you stuck, bored, or untested?

- Describe a meaningful experience in your ministry during this past year.
- Both "being" and "doing" are important parts of ministry. As you pray about your ministry, reflect as much on "How will I be?" as on "What should I do?"

5. Hymns for inspiration, meditation, and reflection: Discuss these statements about the ordination hymns found in *Hymns of the Saints*. The statements are from Richard Clothier's book *A Heritage of Hymns* (Herald Publishing House, 1996).

- Peter Judd wrote the following account of the creation of the hymn "According to the Gifts That God" (*HS* 363):

> Toward the end of the process of selecting hymns for *Hymns of the Saints*, it became apparent to the committee (of which I was a member) that we needed more hymns that could be used at services in which the sacraments of the church are celebrated. I started thinking of the relationship between the call to priesthood, as represented in the sacrament of ordination, and the call to ministry shared by each member.
>
> I had long found the scripture, "All are called according to the gifts of God unto them" (Doctrine and Covenants 119:8b), to be particularly meaningful. So I tried to use the words of that scripture to create a hymn text. …The last phrase of the first stanza contains some of the words I added that are not in the scripture. They contain what I believe to be the essence of the calling of all who would be disciples: to re-present the Son. The hyphen is important. We are called not just to represent Christ, but to re-present him (p. 136).

- "A Diligent and Grateful Heart" (*HS* 362) was written during the summer of 1965 by Raymond Gunn while he was on the staff of the church youth music camp.

> I became quite ill…[and] began to feel sorry for myself… Then a wonderful feeling came over me and I began to realize that instead of feeling despondent, I should be looking at all of the many blessings the Lord had given me.
>
> As I contemplated the wonderful things happening in my life I felt the urge to write my thoughts down in a poetic form. The words flowed very easily because they were an expression of my innermost feelings.
>
> [The hymnal committee accepted the text] as an ordination hymn, although it was originally written as an expression of thanksgiving for the joy of service (pp. 134–135).

- Hymn writer Kenneth McLaughlin says this about creating the hymn "Lord God, We Meet in Jesus' Name" (*HS* 365):

> I have taken very seriously the premise that hymn texts are one of the most important sources of theological instruction in our faith community….this hymn speaks of the gifts given to us through the grace of God, which find their ultimate expression through servant ministry (pp. 136–137).

*Based on "Pastor Helps for Priesthood Ministry Conversations" available at *www.CofChrist.org/priesthood*.

Practice

Priesthood Covenant Renewal Service

Objective

For the congregation and the priesthood members to re-covenant together in their mutual ministries by planning an annual worship service of renewal and commitment to Christ's mission.

Process

With members of the priesthood decide if a Priesthood Covenant Renewal Service is to be planned. Two dates to consider are May 27, 2012 and September 8, 2013. Refer to *Worship Resources* (available in print at *www.HeraldHouse.org*) or online at *www.CofChrist.org/worship*.

Notes, Journal

Practice

Identifying Gifts for Mission

Objective

To discover one's gifts and to summarize the gifts of priesthood members for planning ministries.

Process

1. Ask each priesthood member to complete the Gifts Discovery Questionnaire available at *www.CofChrist.org/priesthood/resources.asp*.
2. Enter the gifts identified for each person and tally the totals on the chart Summary of Gifts (Excel file). An illustration of the chart is below. (See also *www.CofChrist.org/leaders/PriesthoodExpectationsGiftsSummaryExample.xls.*)
3. Discuss how the gifts of the priesthood can be developed and applied to the congregation's ministries and mission. What opportunities or needs do you see in the congregation or community for these gifts? Do these gifts help define a new ministry? Does the review of gifts lead to new insights about training or education needed to meet the opportunities?
4. Consider this practice as an opportunity for each priesthood member to develop a plan for ministry. Note: More important than having a written plan for ministry is that each one understands and offers a meaningful contribution to the congregation's ministry. If helpful, ask each priesthood member to write down what they feel called to do to support the congregation in mission. Ask them to include needs for training or support. Ministry plans are available for congregation-focused priesthood offices at *www.CofChrist.org/priesthood/resources.asp*. For other offices go to *www.CofChrist.org* and click on ministry tools for an alphabetic listing.

Summary of Gifts for _____ Congregation

Gifts Discovery Questionnaire available on line at www.CofChrist.org/priesthood/resources.asp.

	Member Name									
Gift Identified	Molly	Jimmy	Kate	Colleen	Mike	Jill	Melvin	John	Julie	**Total**
Administrative Leadership					x					1
Apostolic Witness		x								1
Sensitivity to the Spirit			x		x		x			3
Craftsmanship	x									1
Discernment			x	x			x			3
Dreams and Visions	x				x					2
Evangelism										0
Exhortation										0
Faith	x			x	x		x			4
Sharing					x			x	x	3
Healing										0
Helps	x									1
Hospitality						x	x			2
Intercessory Prayer										0
Interpretation										0
Knowledge			x							1
Leadership		x				x			x	3
Mentor	x									1
Mercy			x			x				2
Miracles										0
Missionary		x		x				x		3
Pastor/Shepherd		x					x			2
Preaching								x	x	2
Presence			x	x						2
Prophecy						x		x		2
Teaching		x							x	2
The Arts						x				1
Tongues										0
Wisdom				x					x	2

This chart shows the highest scored gifts held by each one and tallies the totals for persons having the same stronger gifts.

Practice

Exploring Scripture on Ministry*

Objective

To equip priesthood members to magnify their gifts and abilities to build up God's people and strengthen the witness of the church by practicing "Dwelling in the Word" and using the following scriptures:

- Doctrine and Covenants 119:8b
- Doctrine and Covenants 156:8
- Doctrine and Covenants 163:6
- Matthew 25 NRSV (Consider three parts one at a time: 1–13, 14–30, and 31–46)
- Luke 10:25–37 NRSV
- John 13 NRSV (Consider three parts one at a time: 1–20, 21–30, and 31–38)
- John 21 NRSV (Consider two parts one at a time: 1–14 and 15–25)
- Romans 12:1–8 NRSV
- 1 Corinthians 12:4–11, 28–30 NRSV
- Ephesians 3:7 NRSV
- Ephesians 4:1–6, 11–16 NRSV
- 1 Peter 4:10 NRSV
- Mosiah 1:49

Process

Use the practice "Dwelling in the Word." (See the practice index for "Dwelling in the Word.")

*Suggested in "Pastor Helps for Priesthood Ministry Conversations" available at *www.CofChrist.org/priesthood*.

Notes, Journal

Practice

Finding My Voice, Finding Our Voice

Objective

To clearly articulate "what *I* will do" and "what *we* will do" in faithful ministry to God. Just as important as hearing God's call is verbalizing an active commitment to respond by continuing discussion and learning or by a specific action of ministry. "Discernment is discovering and learning to 'live into' new practices of encounter with God, others, and the world…" (from the article "Discerning God's Call for Mission" in this field guide.)

Process

At the end of a conversation allow time for each person to make "I agree to…" and "we agree to…" statements. It is recommended that notes or a journal be kept, not for the purpose of enforcing any mutual expectations, but to remember the statements for ongoing consideration or application. Be patient with one another and allow time for building trust and reaching agreement.

Notes, Journal

Sacraments in a Mission-focused Congregation

by John VanDerWalker

Generously share the invitation, ministries, and sacraments through which people can encounter the Living Christ who heals and reconciles through redemptive relationships in sacred community. The restoring of persons to healthy or righteous relationships with God, others, themselves, and the earth is at the heart of the purpose of your journey as a people of faith.

—Doctrine and Covenants 163:2b

Doctrine and Covenants 163 encourages the church to "*generously* share invitation, ministry, and *sacraments*." Questions for pastors and congregations as they engage in Christ's mission are, "What are ways to share more generously the sacraments of the church?" "When each sacrament is celebrated, what are ways to encourage and prepare ourselves as disciples to extend invitations and ministries to friends, family and others to participate in the sacraments?" All persons, especially those without the blessing of a sacred community, need the healing and restoring love of Christ. Pastors and leaders should take note, especially since Section 163 also says that wholeness, at least in part, comes through the sacramental ministries of the church.

Sacraments are opportunities for nourishment and union with God in Christ's mission. Through the sacraments the church not only learns in deeper ways what Christ's mission is, but is drawn deeper into becoming an inseparable part of the body of Christ. Careful attention to the sacraments can form the church as an agent of God's grace to the world.

The sacraments shape the ongoing formation of the church through spiritual connection with God, the congregation, and the World Church. In addition, the mission-sensitive leader remembers that the sacraments are ministries of reconciliation and wholeness for *all* people who are seeking a relationship with God in community—not only members of the church.

Sacraments, when shared thoughtfully and prayerfully, bring both members and seekers into deeper relationship with the faith community and with God. The sacraments are not only a blessing to participants but also *bear witness* to what God is doing in the world through the church. For instance:

- **Baptism** is a witness of God's saving work in the world. By stepping into the waters of baptism, people show that they are willing to be part of Christ's mission as testified to in the scriptures (Luke 4:18–19). Baptism is performed only by Aaronic priests and members of the Melchisedec priesthood.
- **Confirmation of membership** is a witness of God's ongoing binding together of the community of faith through the power of the Holy Spirit. The sacrament of confirmation of membership recognizes the work of the Holy Spirit in the disciple's life. It witnesses of God's desire for us to be in communion with God and one another. Confirmation is performed only by members of the Melchisedec priesthood.

PRACTICES

1. Assessing Congregational Familiarity with Sacraments
2. Sharing Invitation
3. Congregational Preparation for the Sacraments

- **Communion (Lord's Supper)** is a witness of God's generosity in giving God's Son in order to bring people closer to God and one another. In Community of Christ, we welcome all who believe in Christ to share Communion with us, whether they are members of our denomination or not. In this sacrament, we remember Jesus. As we recall his suffering, death, and resurrection, we recommit ourselves to following him. Communion is served only by Aaronic priests or Melchisedec priesthood.
- **Laying on of hands for the sick** is a witness of God's caring concern and desire to hold people close at all times of life, especially in times of special need. Any who are sick or face spiritual challenges may ask for this special ministry of prayer. This sacrament opens the door to the gift of healing. Only Melchisedec priesthood may perform this sacrament.
- **Marriage** is a witness of God's desire to bless and be a part of our most intimate relationships. In Community of Christ, marriage is much more than a legal arrangement. In marriage, the couple pledges to live in mutual love that seeks to make real the love and compassion of Christ. Marriage is performed only by Aaronic priests or Melchisedec priesthood.
- **Blessing of children** is a witness of God's desire to bless all of creation and that every person is precious to God. As parents bring their children to be blessed, this sacrament witnesses of God's expectation that the community of faith must take responsibility for the growth and nurture of children and families. Blessing of children is performed only by members of the Melchisedec priesthood.
- **Ordination** is a witness of God's embrace of the diversity and giftedness of people. God calls everyone to serve according to their gifts. Some however, are called and ordained to particular priesthood responsibilities and ministries for the sake of the community, the congregation, and the world. Aaronic priests may ordain deacons, teachers and priests. Only Melchisedec priesthood may ordain elders.
- **Evangelist blessing** is a witness of God's concern for the whole of a person's life: their work, recreation, family, friends, and faith. The evangelist blessing is a sacrament that provides a person sacred time and space for an evangelist to offer a special prayer of blessing on a person's behalf. Only evangelists may perform evangelist blessings.

God formed the church for mission. God gathers the church in order to send us into the world. Viewed collectively the sacraments witness God's intent for the world. Healing, blessing, covenant, valuing the worth of each person, and other elements within the sacraments testify of God's desire for all people. The church itself becomes sacramental when we allow ourselves to be transformed by God's Spirit through the sacraments.

With so much meaning and potential power resident in the sacraments, pastors and leaders should be very intentional when planning worship that includes a sacrament. None of the sacraments should ever be "added on" or "squeezed" into a service of worship. To the contrary, all other elements of the worship service should be oriented around the sacrament. A service's music, prayers, scriptures, readings, and spoken word should all be woven together in a manner that enhances the sacrament which should be the central element of the entire service. All elements of course, should point participants to Christ.

When possible and appropriate, tell the congregation in advance when a sacrament is being planned as a part of an upcoming service, and invite the congregation to prayerfully prepare for it. Every sacrament is an opportunity to share the witness of God's love as expressed in Jesus' ministry and symbolized in the sacrament itself. Pastors and leaders should remind every person present that while they may not be the direct recipients of the sacrament being witnessed, the sacrament nevertheless witnesses of God's abiding love for them.

When preparing to perform any of the sacraments, there is an additional matter that every pastor must stress with the priesthood and worship planners. That is, while the elements surrounding a sacrament may vary from time to time, the manner in which the sacraments are performed must remain constant. For instance, only ordained Melchisedec priesthood may bless children. The words in the official Communion prayers and baptismal statement are not to be altered. (See *www.CofChrist.org/sacraments/communion/Communion-prayers.asp* for the accepted wording.) When the sick are anointed, the priesthood may only place a drop of oil on the person's head, and may not anoint other parts of the body. These are just a few examples, but the principle is applicable to all sacraments.

> You have already been told to look to the sacraments to enrich the spiritual life of the body. It is not the form of the sacrament that dispenses grace but it is the divine presence that gives life. Be respectful of tradition and sensitive to one another, but do not be unduly bound by interpretations and procedures that no longer fit the needs of a worldwide church. In such matters direction will come from those called to lead.
>
> —Doctrine and Covenants 162:2d

This wise counsel reminds us that when we experience sacraments, we should not simply "go through the motions" of participating in an outward form, as though the form itself can transform us. Rather, we should open ourselves to the deeper witness and meaning of the

sacraments. Doctrine and Covenants 162:2d does not imply that ministers may take liberties with how the sacraments are performed. There are many reasons for this. One has to do with consistency. In Community of Christ, we are a diverse people stretched around the globe. In congregational life, we have great freedoms to worship in diverse ways according to the gifts of our congregations and our cultural contexts. The sacraments however, are divinely given blessings that connect us to one another and to Christ's life and purpose across continents, generations, cultures, and time. Consistency in how sacraments are performed makes this connection possible. In addition, people are often drawn to the sacraments in times of special need or transition in their lives. In the midst of such times, the reliability of sacramental practice can be a comfort and a blessing.

Questions

With so much meaning and potential power resident in the sacraments, pastors and leaders do well to ask themselves some basic questions.

1. *How familiar is my congregation with the sacraments and what is the nature of their understanding of these sacred experiences?*

   Is the answer to this question different across the generations? Are there some sacraments that are better understood than others? Is there a need for additional education on the sacraments in the congregation in general, or among particular age groups?

2. *Are we generous in sharing the sacraments?*

   When our members have friends who are ill, do they invite them to consider laying on of hands for the sick—even when those friends do not belong to Community of Christ? Are we inviting people to be baptized and confirmed, or do we just assume that they'll ask for it when they're ready? Are we helping young adults in the community with their questions about relationships and marriage?

3. *Are we asking the congregation to spiritually prepare for the sacraments, or does the congregation simply "discover" that a sacrament is part of the worship service when they show up for church?*

   Note: These are important questions. The practices that follow this article can be helpful.

Notes, Journal

Practice

Assessing Congregational Familiarity with Sacraments

Objective

To help the pastor's leadership team better understand the degree of awareness and experience in the congregation relative to the sacraments.

Process

In a meeting with the pastor's leadership team, post the following chart on a flip chart or whiteboard.

Under each age group, mark the approximate number of times that people in that age group have received or witnessed specific sacraments in the past three years. This will be an unscientific, approximate gathering of data, and the names of persons receiving the sacraments should not be shared. In the case of the evangelist blessing, no one will have "witnessed" the sacrament unless they were the recipient. In this case, an appropriate question would be how many people in the various age groups are aware of and understand what the evangelist blessing is.

Given what the chart reveals, is there a need for further education about the sacraments among some age groups or in the congregation in general? The church's website (*www.CofChrist.org/sacraments*) is a good place to find helpful resources.

SACRAMENT	ADULTS	YOUNG ADULTS	YOUTH	CHILDREN
Baptism				
Confirmation of Membership				
Communion (Lord's Supper)				
Laying on of Hands for the Sick				
Marriage				
Blessing of Children				
Ordination				
Evangelist Blessing				

Practice

Sharing Invitation

Objective

To heighten congregational awareness that the sacraments are to be generously shared.

Process

During worship services that include a sacrament, remind the congregation that the sacraments witness to us of God's love for all people. Encourage the congregation to tell others about the sacrament just experienced and (when appropriate) how it can be a blessing to them. For example, a service for blessing of a child could include an invitation to the congregation to tell their friends about what they experienced in the service. Encourage people to tell their friends and relatives with children that this beautiful sacrament is available to all families with little ones.

A service of baptism or confirmation should include an invitation for people to talk with the pastor or a member of the priesthood if they are interested in baptism/confirmation or if they have questions about these sacraments or church membership.

A service of ordination can include brief comments about the responsibilities of that particular priesthood office. The congregation can be reminded to seek out the ministries of that office, or to offer the ministry of that office to their friends, family, and others.

Notes, Journal

Practice

Congregational Preparation for the Sacraments

Objective

To help the congregation enter more deeply into sacramental experience through personal preparation.

Process

Sometimes simple things make a big difference. When you know that a service of worship is going to include a sacrament, ask the congregation in advance to be prayerful about it. You can even share a scripture pertinent to that sacrament and ask the congregation to ponder that scripture in the days leading up to that worship service.

This is one of the behaviors of a sacred community and can better prepare individuals and the congregation for Christ's mission.

Notes, Journal

Scripture in a Mission-focused Congregation

by Larry McGuire

Faced with difficult questions, many properly turn to scripture to find insight and inspiration. Search the scriptures for the Living Word that brings life, healing, and hope to all. Embrace and proclaim these liberating truths.
—Doctrine and Covenants 164:6c

As church leaders, each of us has all sorts of biases. We inherited some from those who raised us and others we picked up along our journey of life. Leaders invest themselves in the big things, in things they feel are important. It's no surprise then that all leaders carry some internal biases when it comes to scripture. Lesslie Newbigin, in his text *Foolishness to the Greeks* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1986, 56) says, "Every Christian reader comes to the Bible with the spectacles provided by the tradition that is alive in the community to which he or she belongs, and that tradition is being constantly modified as each new generation of believers endeavors to be faithful in understanding and living out scripture." There is a similar affirmation in Doctrine and Covenants 161:5.

Be respectful of tradition. Do not fail to listen attentively to the telling of the sacred story, for the story of scripture and of faith empowers and illuminates. But neither be captive to time-bound formulas and procedures. Remember that instruction given in former years is applicable in principle and must be measured against the needs of a growing church, in accordance with the prayerful direction of the spiritual authorities and the consent of the people.
—Doctrine and Covenants 161:5

Scripture is the container of God's story and people view scripture through a variety of lenses. Scripture connects us to the larger story but we are not the story. Far too often, people try to make their situations the center of the story. Recent counsel to Community of Christ affirms the role of scripture for Christ's mission. Disciplined use of scripture allows God's Spirit to shape the congregation's participation in Christ's mission. Hear these words:

Scripture is an indispensable witness to the Eternal Source of light and truth, which cannot be fully contained in any finite vessel or language. Scripture has been written and shaped by human authors through experiences of revelation and ongoing inspiration of the Holy Spirit in the midst of time and culture.
—Doctrine and Covenants 163:7a

Walter Brueggemann, in the preface to his book, *The Book that Breathes New Life, Scriptural Authority and Biblical Theology* (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Fortress, 2005, xiii–xvii), says contemporary studies have reshaped approaches to scripture by focusing on "the text as a voice from and voice to the community of faith." The church's statement on scripture—"Scripture in Community of Christ" *(www.CofChrist.org/ourfaith/scripture.asp)*—provides guidance to congregational leaders on ways to interpret and apply scripture. "Scripture in Community of Christ" is a source of critical information for study and conversation by the congregation. It is important to apply the principles in "Scripture in Community of Christ" to worship planning and for preparation and delivery of sermons. Do not be afraid to allow the lens of the Community of Christ tradition of scripture to shape the testimony offered in worship and witness.

PRACTICES

1. Dwelling in the Word
2. Lectio Divina
3. Using Lectionary Scripture and Dwelling in the Word for Worship

The congregation's journey is constantly shaped and informed by its relationship with scripture. The congregation's encounter with God as revealed through the testimonies of people who lived in a different time continues to shape the congregation's understanding of God's faithfulness. The witness of scripture about the life, ministry, death, the resurrection of Jesus Christ, and empowerment through the Holy Spirit shapes the congregation's witness today. That witness includes assuring an always present God even in places and circumstances where people do not expect to find God.

The experience of being shaped by the witness of scripture is to live into an imagination of what God is doing in the world. Pastors and congregational leaders are called to inspire the congregation with God's vision for the world. Congregational leaders who learn to depend on the witness of scripture are shaped by it. They learn to enter and live in an imagination of what God is doing in their world. Inagrace Dietterich, PhD, director of theological research at the Center for Parish Development in Chicago, says,

> The cultivating of faithful imaginations is crucial for Christians who in this life 'walk by faith, not by sight'" (2 Corinthians 5:7), since "faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen" (Hebrew 11:1). If we cannot imagine a time of reconciliation and healing, when God will dwell with God's people and "wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more" (Rev. 21:3), then we are enslaved to our present experience of alienation and death. If we cannot imagine a time when the poor will hear good news, when the captives will be released, when the blind will recover their sight, and the oppressed will go free" (Luke 4:18), then we will be overwhelmed by the poverty, suffering, and injustice of our world. If we cannot imagine a time when God's will is done on earth as in heaven, then to pray the Lord's Prayer is an exercise in futility. Faithfulness is not only about submitting our wills in obedience, but, about opening and trusting our imaginations in delight and wonder.
>
> —Inagrace Dietterich, "In Good Company: Becoming Faithful Readers and Doers of Scripture— Cultivating Faithful Imaginations" *The Center Letter*, 39, no. 2 (Feb. 2009), 1

It is critical that leaders engage themselves and their congregations in practices that shape them to be able to discern God's voice for their time and place. By doing this, congregations live into the imagination of what it was like when scripture was given and live into the faithful imagination of what scripture is calling them to become.

Scripture is always larger than the church. Scripture is always trying to shape the church for something larger than the church can see. Scripture invites the congregation to go deeper with God. Scripture is not for dwelling on questions of curiosity that do not lead into a deeper life with God. When people whittle a text down to an easily embraced size to fit their comfortable way of thinking and behaving, critical insights are lost. It is critical to listen to a text in its context. It is also critical to listen with the imagination of what the Holy Spirit is doing to shape the leaders and the congregation. It is important to embrace the whole message, not just a few manageable parts. Listening to scripture is a spiritual practice. It is a practice that people can use in all areas of spiritual development, everyday life, and congregational life.

"Dwelling in the Word" is an adaptation of an ancient spiritual practice known as *lectio divina* (see both practices at the end of this article). Dwelling in the Word is a practice of listening to scripture and one another about what God is doing in the present time and context. It is a practice that frees people to experience the mystery of God in scripture and how God is moving today. The practice opens people up to the invitation from God to shape and be with them for mission. Dwelling in the Word is a spiritual practice that encourages participants to be open to what God is doing in the world. By listening to one another, individuals and the community are shaped by the scripture to respond to God's movement in their life and community.

Individuals or groups can practice Dwelling in the Word. It is a practice of praying about and listening to a portion of scripture. When reading a passage of scripture each participant listens for words, senses images, or identifies phrases that capture their imagination. Participants explore and share with one another what God intends for their ministry in the midst of the words, images, or phrases. End by asking, "How is the Holy Spirit shaping or influencing you and your congregation to respond in mission?" (See *www.CofChrist.org/onlineresources/biblestudy.asp* for Bible study resources and approaches to Bible study called "Some Reliable Tools for Serious Bible Study" and "Bible Study for Spiritual Formation" by Tony and Charmaine Chvala-Smith.)

"Dwelling in the Word" is a practice to use in priesthood meetings, in leadership team meetings, as part of the worship experience, and always, as a way to discern where God is calling the congregations' leaders and members to serve in mission. For centuries people have practiced listening to scripture to prepare them for witness in the time and place they lived. Now we look to the scriptures to equip the congregational leaders and the congregation to follow where God is already moving in neighborhoods and communities of the congregation. (See the practice "Using Lectionary Scripture and Dwelling in the Word in Worship.")

Listen to one another. Listen for the themes of what God is saying. Explore the themes and implement experiments that help test where God may be leading the congregation in mission. When in the midst of discovering ministry and mission in a neighborhood, town, or city, take time to reflect on a particular word, phrase, or image from the

scripture and ask God, "What are you up to here and how are you calling me or the congregation to respond?" God is up to something in the life of the congregation and its neighborhood, community, and world. A mission-focused congregation cultivates the practice of listening to God and one another and dares to imagine that God is present even when no one expects God to dwell in their life, neighborhood, or community.

Questions

Following are questions to explore as pastors and congregational leaders encounter God and engage themselves and the congregation in scripture:

- What comes to your mind when you hear the word *imagination*?
- What does faithful imagination mean to you? As you think about *faithful imagination* be open to the notion that experiences, words, and symbols have many meanings.
- As you explore a scriptural passage ask, "What *faithful imagination* is emerging and is shaping my ministry or the congregation's ministry?"
- What is my experience of the story of God?
- How are the people in this scripture experiencing the story of God? Where are they on their journey? How does their experience and journey relate to my journey?
- How is this story of scripture my story?
- What does this passage tell us about God?
- How does this passage speak to us as individuals and as a community of faith?
- How does this passage shape us to receive our neighbors and our world?

Notes, Journal

Practice

Dwelling in the Word

Objective

To read and hear scripture as a spiritual practice that leads to new understandings. Dwelling in the Word is a practice based on our understanding that God continues to speak to us in the context of our day and calling. Listen for God's voice in scripture to connect with God's mission in Christ. Listen to the voices of others about what God is doing in their lives. This practice is not about gaining information about scripture. Rather, it is about listening to how God is speaking, calling, and sending us to join in Christ's mission to our communities and the world.

Process

Provide a printed copy of a scriptural text. A printed copy allows participants to hear and see the words for reflection. Read the scriptural text out loud and pause for a few minutes to allow people time to reflect on what they've heard.

Read the passage a second time. Ask people to make note of a word, phrase, or image they are drawn to as they hear it read again. After a short pause, form into small groups of no more than four or five people to provide opportunities for each person to share their responses to questions like ones provided below. If someone wishes to remain silent, that is acceptable. It is important to make sure the reflections are personal and do not become an exercise in biblical interpretation.

Here are some questions:

- Is there a place I feel drawn to dwell or explore?
- What words, images, or phrases are speaking to me in this text?
- What is God's invitation to me in this scripture?
- What is God's invitation to our congregation in this scripture?

This is a practice of discovery, be expectant that God's mission in Christ is among you as you gain insights from listening to one another and to God.

Process Tip

Be patient with the practice. Encourage participants to remember it is a spiritual practice that invites scripture to transform our understanding and our way of being and doing. Do not let this become an intellectual exercise which will limit the transformative impact of this practice. Like any practice, this will take time to fully understand.

Notes, Journal

Practice

Lectio Divina

Objective

To let scripture soak deeply into us as we interact with a particular passage or story. To help persons listen prayerfully for what God wants to say to us through scripture. (*Lectio divina* is a Latin term for sacred reading.)

Process

1. Select a passage of scripture. Scripture stories may be especially helpful as people are learning this exercise.
2. Invite the group to sit quietly and enter a time of prayerful reflection. Breathe calmly, relax your body, and offer a prayer for guidance as you interact with the selected scriptural text.
3. If in a group, briefly describe the four ways in which the scripture will be read and reflected on. Don't worry about the Latin words—they are there simply to help us talk about the four ways of experiencing the scripture.
4. Read the scripture four different times, allowing time for meditation and prayer between each reading. Before each reading, remind the group of instructions for praying with the scripture through ***lectio, meditatio, oratio,*** or ***contemplatio,*** as you proceed.
   - *Lectio*—read the passage to get a **sense of the story**. Who are the characters, what is the setting? Imagine the scene, the sights, sounds, smells, emotions, and tensions involved in the story. Enter the scene and allow it to become real to you.
   - *Meditatio*—read the scripture again but this time for **meaning and understanding**. Ask questions. Why was this story recorded? What are the surface and underlying meanings? What does this story tell me about God? If I were in the story, who would I be? Whom do I most relate to in the story?
   - *Oratorio*—read the passage again, and this time pay attention to your emotional responses. What feelings surface as I read this scripture? Do I feel joy, sorrow, fear, anger, or guilt? Share your feelings with God in prayer. Ask for help in listening deeply to these emotions and meanings.
   - *Contemplatio*—enter a time of **receptive prayer.** Let go of the images from the scripture and all other thoughts, interpretations, and worries. Breathe deeply and calmly, entering a profound silent state of listening. Wait for whatever God may bring to you in the quietness. If any insights or impressions come, note them with gratitude and then return to receptive listening. If no particular awareness comes, let your mind return to the scripture passage. When you feel your prayer and meditation has ended, offer a word of thanks to God, open your eyes, and return to the room around you.

Notes, Journal

PRACTICE

USING LECTIONARY SCRIPTURE AND DWELLING IN THE WORD IN WORSHIP

OBJECTIVE

Utilize the "Dwelling in the Word" practice to bring scripture alive with personal reflection and sharing in congregational worship.

PROCESS

Ask an individual in the congregation to reflect daily on the main lectionary scripture for the upcoming week. The individual should reflect on the following questions:

- Is there a place in the text where I feel drawn to dwell or explore?
- What is God's invitation to me in this scripture?
- What is God's invitation to our congregation in this scripture?

As part of the worship experience, ask the individual to share reflections on one or all three of the questions. Depending on the length of the worship experience you may want to set a time limit for sharing. Integrating this practice into the service involves more people in the study of scripture and provides opportunities for personal sharing as an important dimension of worship.

Alternative Process: Provide the congregation the lectionary scripture to reflect on daily for the upcoming week. The congregation should reflect on the following questions:

- Is there a place in the text where I feel drawn to dwell or explore?
- What is God's invitation to me in this scripture?
- What is God's invitation to our congregation in this scripture?

The presider or someone else designated will lead the congregation through a sharing exercise as part of the service. Ask people to get into groups of three, have someone in each group read the scripture aloud, and invite the group to share their reflections on the lectionary scripture for about five to seven minutes based on one of the questions. In smaller congregations, the entire congregation may share in the experience together.

Notes, Journal

Foundational Concepts

All pastors want to lead congregations that embrace both young and older generations. Strong congregational ministry with young adults can be one of the most challenging, yet fulfilling ways to celebrate the blessings of community. Below are foundational concepts to help build a congregation where younger and older generations serve in side-by-side mission.

Who Are Young Adults?

"Young adults" are generally people ages 18 to 35 who are experiencing the transitions that come with settling into adulthood. These transitions can include entering and attending higher education or entry-level jobs. They are exploring careers and lifestyle choices. Their closest relationships often shift through dating, new marriages, and early parenthood. Young adults are often mobile as these life transitions take them to new areas.

Young adults' spiritual and disciple formation concerns are as diverse as their life stages and personalities. How to reach these generations with the gospel and how to serve in mission beside them often seems like a mystery. Yet congregations are uniquely situated to offer deeply relevant ministry to young adults in their important years of life-exploring. And young adult participation in congregational life and mission is crucial to help Community of Christ become who it is called to be.

This all begins with relationships.

Building Intergenerational Relationships

Helping the congregation become more relevant and attractive to young adults does not begin with adjusting congregational activities or changing worship styles (though these can be important). It starts by intentionally building friendships and trust between generations. Authentic Christian friendships are young adults' most important draw to the faith community. Amid life transitions and exploration, young adults long for faithful, spiritually grounded relationships with people of all generations. They seek honest, stable friendships that extend beyond weekly worship and into their lives. Young adults truly respect the spiritual maturity of more experienced leaders. That includes pastors and congregational leaders as they can be the first to model the power of this connection.

Strong intergenerational friendships can help congregational ministries and mission be more relevant. Strong intergenerational friendships help the people of the congregation become personally sensitive to young adults' missional and formational needs. In addition, the congregation becomes aware of the gifts young adults have to offer. Authentic friendships build trust within the congregation that can ease the tension of trying new ministries that might be more appealing to younger adults.

Ministry Together with Young Adults

by Erica Blevins Nye

PRACTICES

1. Building Intergenerational Relationships
2. Serving Side by Side
3. Building a "Young Adult Friendly" Congregation
4. Panes of Perspective

What can you as a congregation leader do to foster intergenerational relationships with young adults? The first step is to consider where your life intersects with young adults in and out of church. You may be surprised by how many young adults your life already connects with! Where are young adults often found in your community? Coffee shops, stores, exercise classes, schools, libraries? Think about ways people in your congregation could get to know them more personally. Asking young adults about their interests, skills, and spiritual perspectives is a great start. Or ask for their help with something you would like to learn. Listen generously without judging. And then be open to share about your own life in return. The bottom line is that ministry with young adults often begins by meeting them where they are. You cannot expect them to walk into the church building before you invest your love in them.

A second component of intergenerational relationships is faithfulness. Young adults have busy, unpredictable lives and they can be hard to catch. They are mobile, often relocating repeatedly for education, internships, employment, and other reasons. This often leaves the more stable partner in the friendship (usually the older one) to take the initiative to maintain the connection. This includes finding ways for the congregation to maintain contact and support for their young members who move away or are away from the congregation for extended periods of time. Knowing the congregation's concern for them is faithful and enduring is a great gift to a young adult. It demonstrates Christ's unconditional love reflected in the faith community.

Serving and Learning Together

Emerging intergenerational relationships with Jesus Christ challenge the congregation to respond in missional service and action together. Young adults are eager to make connections between their faith, spiritual relationships, and transformative mission. But many are unsure how to get involved or they feel they don't have the skills. Pastors and other congregational leaders are key partners in helping young adults discover ways to participate in the congregation. After establishing friendship and trust, invite young adults to serve in mission side by side with you. They are more likely to participate if invited by a person they care about. Like everyone else, they learn best by trying new things with the encouraging guidance of a trusted friend who cares about their success. And they learn by watching those they respect.

Once a congregational leader personally knows the young adults' interests and giftedness, work with them to discover what opportunities there are for them to serve and lead. It helps to make the entry points for serving in the congregation clear. Even if the young adults have grown up in the congregation, they may be looking at the church with fresh eyes as an adult. They may not automatically see where to jump in and help or how to propose a new idea. Clearly identifying opportunities to serve includes clarifying all the expectations of the roles. This can be a terrific opportunity for longtime leaders to consider their assumptions about how they typically go about ministries and what criteria are truly important to accomplish the mission. Make space for the young person to bring fresh vision to the ministry, while helping them understand how and why leaders handled the task in the past. Allow latitude for them to try and try again, until they learn.

Discipleship is a lifelong learning process. Pastors and congregational leaders are often responsible for ensuring that priesthood and members have ongoing opportunities to expand their capacity for service. Educational opportunities might include topics for revitalizing ministries the congregation already offers (for example, leading music in worship) and for learning new approaches to ministry (for example, models of small group interaction). Young adults are particularly receptive to quality education because many are learning for the first time. For them, nearly all learning experiences must *include a hands-on, practice component*. This includes education for new priesthood. For example, in a class about the sacraments, after exploring theology and policy, take time to walk through both performing and receiving the various sacraments. Intergenerational learning deepens trust.

"Young Adult Friendly" Congregations

Though authentic face-to-face friendships are many young adults' biggest draw to the faith community, it is important to be sensitive to young adults' special concerns about the mission and ministries of congregational life. First, young adults recognize that healthy congregations are *active outside the church walls*. They want to be part of mission-centered congregations that clearly impact their larger communities. And they expect that members will participate in one another's lives. Pastors must constantly be reorienting the church toward active mission.

Second, young adults seek *authentic, quality worship*. It may be surprising to discover that not all young adults prefer "contemporary" style worship. In fact, young adults have less interest in the *style* of worship than they have in the *quality.* Quality worship is thoughtfully and creatively prepared. It is also an honest reflection of the congregation's giftedness and passion for mission. Young adults are more comfortable in worship experiences that draw on the group's strengths, rather than strain to conform to traditional expectations of a formal service. For example, interactive worship elements and sharing testimonies is

appealing to many young adults because they reflect the blessings of intimate community shared in Community of Christ congregations.

Finally, young adult friendly congregations are *sensitive to all relationship and family stages*. Young parents feel welcome in churches where it is apparent that their children are welcome and cared for. Consider how childcare will be handled at *all* events, including worship and meetings. Openly discuss with parents how to approach childcare together in a way that is considerate of everyone. Clearly communicate childcare arrangements in advance so parents know what to expect. Church should be safe space for all generations to be present and participate.

Sensitivity to various relationship stages includes caring for both single young adults and couples. Postmodern young adult generations live in a world with different expectations of the nature and pace of intimate relationships than traditional expectations. They are sensitive to the judgment of older churchgoers who may disapprove of their perceived relationship situations. This does not mean that all relationship choices are "OK" and should be condoned by the congregation. It simply means that the congregation's "default" position should be one of love and welcome, rather than one of judgment and criticism. Like all people, young adults long to be loved and accepted for who they are, wherever they are in life.

Questions

1. *How can I nurture sincere relationships with young adults and encourage my congregation to do the same?"*

   Opportunities to meet and interact with young adults are frequent. The quality of an intergenerational friendship is not measured by whether someone regularly attends church, but by the authentic spirit of compassion and faithfulness that flows between people.

2. *How could I invite young adults to serve beside me in my ministries?*

   There are plenty of creative ways to involve another person in your responsibilities—from hospital visits, to spiritual formation, to preparing for business meetings. Young adults often already have a wealth of education and professional experience that could enhance your ministry. They bring fresh perspectives to the work. And they learn best by observing you and serving as a ministry partner. So, find out what their interests are and invite them to join you.

3. *What systems are in place to ensure that all of our ministries are helpful for families?*

   It can be helpful to consider every ministry the congregation offers and whether it includes a plan for welcoming children. If some do not, consider why. This can offer surprising insights about the congregation's true intentions and priorities.

Note: This article is based on a report compiled from information collected at "Vision Project" gatherings. In President Veazey's address to the church on April 5, 2009, "A Defining Moment," the First Presidency committed to visit with young adults to capture their visions for Community of Christ's mission and ministry. Over 30 "Vision Project" gatherings were held around the church from August 2009 through May 2011. Church leaders listened and took note as nearly 1,000 young adults shared their testimonies and perspectives. The insights gleaned and relationships built will continue to contribute to shaping the direction of Community of Christ.

Notes, Journal

BUILDING INTERGENERATIONAL RELATIONSHIPS

OBJECTIVE

To deepen friendships between older and younger people and to build understanding, companionship, and trust among generations.

PROCESS

- With your leadership team, make a list of young adults associated (active or not) with the congregation and consider how and who will reach out to each of them. Pray for each one regularly.
- How can you extend friendship to young adults you encounter outside the congregation? Practice those interactions and regularly share your testimonies about them with the congregation.
- Host intergenerational activities, both at regularly scheduled church events and in members' homes. Personally invite younger and older adults to join in. Plan activities that involve teamwork and partnership. Include opportunities to exchange personal experiences and perspectives.
- Keep records of young adult members and friends who have moved away from the congregation to continue their education, pursue new jobs or volunteer opportunities, or are separated from the congregation by distance or time. Keep them included in congregational newsletters, prayer request updates, or through social media. Organize an event for people in the congregation to write personal letters to them. Pack and send care packages for holidays, birthdays, and other special occasions. Pray together for these young adults.
- Some older people are gifted at connecting with young adults, but may not be aware of it. Also, each priesthood office calls priesthood to connect to younger generations in special ways. As a pastor or congregational leader, be sensitive to people who you see have special potential for developing intergenerational relationships. Share with them your insight about that gift and encourage those members to intentionally make it part of their discipleship. Encourage them to share their testimonies about it with the congregation.

Notes, Journal

Practice

Serving Side by Side

Objective

To build community and prepare young adult leaders for success by inviting young adult participation and leadership into the congregation.

Process

- Invite young adults to serve on each congregational leadership team. Be clear about what they can bring to the ministry and your expectations for them.
- Make a list of congregational ministries. Talk with leaders and young adults about where they would feel comfortable partnering together on those ministries. Focus especially on priesthood members who could be motivated and encouraged by a teammate.
- When inviting a young adult to take on a new task, be sure that you or another leader spends time with them to hear their ideas and concerns about the role or task. If the role or task has a prior history in the congregation, give the young adult some background on how it evolved, how it has been done in the past, and what worked and what didn't. If it is brand new, talk about how it fits with the mission initiatives and together set expectations for what results you hope to see. Be open to the young adult's creative new perspectives.
- As pastors and leadership team members, you are the greatest advocates for new leaders. Check in with young adults regularly to be sure they are receiving the support they need.
- Consider ongoing education for ministry and mission in the congregation. Does it include hands-on components? Are the times and locations accessible for young adults? And, most importantly, consider how you and others can *personally invite* young adults to join with you in the learning opportunities.

Notes, Journal

Practice

Building a "Young Adult Friendly" Congregation

Objective

To help the congregation become responsive to the young adult generation's special needs and life concerns.

Process

- Consider how childcare will be handled at all events, including worship services. Team with young parents to find solutions that work for both young families and others in the congregation. Make sure to follow the Child Protection Policy and have plenty of trained volunteers when offering childcare. Before each event clearly communicate what childcare options will be available. It really does take a village to raise a child!
- With your worship leaders ask, "Does the worship format honestly reflect the congregation's personality and gifts?" How can worship planners best use the congregation's personality and gifts? The congregation may already be using elements in worship that it is not well-equipped to handle. What elements could the congregation let go? Young adults appreciate worship that feels "authentic" to who they are.
- Continue to reorient your congregation toward missional action. Be open to creative ways that young adults can take the lead in the congregation's missional efforts. Be their advocate.
- Are there people who are passionate about a call to offer ministry to special demographics of young adults (such as young couples, singles, parents, students) through your congregation? Find, develop, and enable them.

Notes, Journal

Practice

Panes of Perspective

Objective

To design and plan activities, ministry, and mission by use of current trends that impact ministry and mission.

Process

Use the following "Panes of Perspective" chart to imagine each trend as a glass pane in a window that helps us see more clearly how to connect with younger generations. Use the following questions as you plan ministry and events:

a. Is this ministry or event something we could empower someone or a group to design and implement?
b. Does this ministry or event foster a process of shared discovery and collaborative planning rather than being tightly defined?
c. What relevance does this ministry or event have to the real problems people face in their neighborhoods and world?
d. How do we connect with those who find it physically difficult to get to church? Are there ways, other than being physically present, for them to connect to the congregation's ministry? (Are virtual communities, such as Facebook, possibilities?)
e. How does this event or ministry cultivate genuine opportunity for meaningful relationships to develop?
f. How does this event or ministry reach a diversity of backgrounds (e.g., ethnic, social, economic, age, single, family)?
g. How does this event or ministry help create an alternative future of hope and healing?
h. How does this event or ministry connect individuals for opportunities to make a positive difference locally or globally?

Process Tips

Remember to frame the ministry and events under one of the five mission initiatives (Invite People to Christ; Abolish Poverty, End Suffering; Pursue Peace on Earth; Develop Disciples to Serve; Experience Congregations in Mission).

Discussing this practice with the pastor's leadership team, priesthood, or congregation, can yield insights into how the congregation might engage more effectively with young adults.

Notes, Journal

Panes of Perspective Chart

Trend (Context)	Comments	Implications for the Congregation
Generational Changes in Leadership	Younger generations have leadership in other organizations. They have a different approach to and expectations of leadership. They are collaborative, fast paced, and insist on sharing in solutions.	In general, congregational processes are often slow, can be hierarchical, and not as participative in decision making. Younger adults find this frustrating when compared with their professional careers and organizations.
Clashing of World Views—Modern and Postmodern Perspectives	Although difficult to define precisely, "postmoderns" see the interconnectedness of all of life (people, environment, religions). They don't draw lines between sacred and secular, Earth and heaven, etc. Spirituality is a journey—not indoctrination or holding a set of beliefs. Questions are as critical as answers because they lead toward beauty and truth.	Congregational life tends to be an indoctrination model to promote beliefs. Churches and denominations in the U.S. have become more about having right beliefs than a way of life that impacts the world. Sunday mornings in many congregations don't foster exploration and only allow dialogue within tightly settled doctrinal boundaries. The congregation's tightly defined worldview does not match reality for many younger adults.
Dismissing the Irrelevant	Younger generations have little patience for institutions more concerned about tradition, rituals, and self-preservation than responding to real human need and suffering in the world.	The average congregation for many younger adults seems out of touch with what is going on in the world. Real neighborhood, national, and world issues are rarely discussed in light of the good news. There is often a serious disconnect between Jesus' radical message of the kingdom and the activities and ministries of the congregation.
Impact of Technology	Younger generations are connected to what is going on and are used to quick access to information.	Congregational delivery systems are slow and often in only one mode. For example, education is often only delivered in workshops or classes.
Genuine Relationships	Deep, authentic, and meaningful relationships are critical.	Most congregations don't programmatically foster meaningful relationships. Congregational space is often not relational space (e.g., pews, hard chairs, sterile buildings). Older generations are often hesitant to disclose personal concerns and are uncomfortable with the knowledge younger adults share about one another.
Increasing Diversity	Many if not most neighborhoods are changing with a significant increase in ethnic, cultural, and economic diversity.	Congregations are not prepared to relate to changing neighborhoods. There are significant needs and opportunities that require more language skills and new levels of cultural awareness to relate effectively to a changing population.
Participation in Creating Reality	Being a part of the solution is important! Younger generations do not want to accept the status quo. They want to participate in meaningful change.	Congregations are often set in their ways. Many are happy with things as they are and don't understand why things need to change. Some would say, "it was good enough for me, why is it not good enough for them?"
Meaning and Connection	Overall, younger generations are seeking to be part of something where they find meaningful connection with others who share common interests and values.	Many congregations don't have a clear focus or mission. Most efforts seem to be directed toward making Sunday morning happen. Many members have drifted apart over time and there is not a sense of common purpose and community that once was present.

Foundational Concepts

Worship is an encounter with the mystery of God that leads us to reverence and awe. It is far more than a program or "order of service." Worship transforms and invites people to respond to Christ's mission—the same mission that first invited them into new life in Christ. Without that invitation and response, the church has no reason to exist.

Worship is to praise God, to form disciples, and to shape and renew congregations for mission. Worship awakens our senses to the mystery and transforming presence of God. In worship, God's love for us is affirmed and we are compelled to share invitation and compassionate ministry with others, and to extend God's purposes of peace and justice.

In worship, as we experience the presence of God in community, we are drawn closer to God and to one another as brothers and sisters in Christ. Worship plays a powerful role in developing disciples and forming community. Services of worship should create space where seekers feel welcomed, inspired, and invited to deepen their relationship with the congregation and with God.

The Pastor's Role in Worship Planning

Planning worship is a shared ministry. The pastor—as the one responsible for leading the congregation in its mission—plays a key role in influencing and shaping worship in tangible ways. Pastors should make sure that worship planners:

- Understand the identity, mission, message, and beliefs of Community of Christ.
- Understand the vision, purpose, and missional focus of the congregation.
- Be aware of and use the gifts of the people.
- Understand how to make worship meaningful for multiple generations.
- Understand that people are ministered to in a variety of ways.

The pastor serves as a spiritual guide who reminds leaders of the need for both flexibility in planning and careful preparation. Pastors should ask worship planners to keep a focus on Christ and Christ's mission. The pastor and worship planners should ask questions such as:

- What is God doing in our communities and how do we join God in this action?
- What breaks God's heart and how do we respond?

The first question leads to expressions of gratitude and awe; the second to commitment and compassionate action. Worship then moves members from the sanctuary into areas of mission within their communities.

Pastors should commission worship planners to consider the congregation's communal journey with God as part of the worship experience. To do this, worship planners can ask themselves:

Worship Planning

by Kris Judd

PRACTICES

1. Spiritual Types and Worship
2. Identifying and Using Peoples' Gifts
3. Worship Planning Questions

- What challenges has the congregation faced and overcome with God's help?
- How has the congregation grown into the calling they now sense?
- What is God's invitation to the congregation as a body, planted in a specific place at a specific time?
- How well is the congregation responding to God's invitation to participate in the mission of Christ?

Worship has been called "the work of the people." People are created to worship. God calls the people to worship, receives the people's worship, and enables the people's worship. Worship awakens our senses to the mystery and transforming presence of God. In worship, God's love refreshes and sends the church to invite others to share in sacred community, provide compassionate ministry to abolish poverty and end suffering, and extend Christ's mission for justice and peace.

The pastor should encourage members and friends to engage in daily spiritual practices such as prayer, scripture study, and meditation. People who have prepared to encounter God in their personal disciplines will be more prepared for congregational worship.

Openness to the Holy Spirit is necessary for worship planning. Some planners think that strict adherence to a written order of service can restrict the awareness of the Spirit among the people. For others, sole reliance on the mysterious and sudden appearance of the Spirit can limit the Spirit's movement experienced through preparation. Faithful worship planning honors both approaches. Pastors share this expectation with planners to create a well-planned but flexible worship experience that connects disciples to mission.

The church has been well-served when worship planners utilize the "Isaiah model" (see Isaiah 6:3–5 NRSV). In this model, a service of worship helps the congregation move through a four-step progression of: praise, confession, proclamation of the word, and commitment. Without "labeling" these four steps, there are multiple examples of the Isaiah model in *Worship Resources,* produced by Community of Christ each year.

Worship and Gifts

It is important for pastors to support worship planning that considers the various ways people experience God's presence. Some people experience God's presence most readily through intellectual and logical means in which the mind is stimulated. Others are touched primarily through their hearts as they are moved by feelings experienced in word, drama, and music. Still, other people worship most readily by encountering the mystery of God in silence, smell, image, or meditation. There are people who worship best by doing, hearing, and seeing the work of God unfold in acts of service. Knowledge and awareness of these spiritual types within the congregation is very important. Awareness of how worshipers experience the holy through their minds, hearts, hands, or in mystery can impact planning worship so all, not just some, find meaning in the congregation's worship. (See "Spiritual Types and Worship" in the practices following this article.) In working with worship planners, pastors should encourage the use of word and song, silence, smells, sounds, drama, visuals, and movement (according to the gifts in the congregation and community).

God has blessed all congregations with members who have a variety of gifts. Some gifts are easily identifiable and visible, while others are not. There is no limit to what gifts and abilities can be used in the worship experience. Pastors focused on Christ's mission actively encourage the gift-development of all members, and provide training and mentoring as needed. (Pastors don't have to "do" the training themselves, but can arrange for it. If you need help with this, consult with your mission center leaders.)

Congregational worship should vary in its style and elements from place to place, based on each congregation's gifts. No congregation should feel pressure to conform its worship to include elements or styles that they simply do not have the gifts to do well.

Worship and Mission

> …the gospel does not wish to meet our needs so much as to redefine them. The gospel does not intend to "connect" to our world, but to change our world.
> —Anthony B. Robinson, *Transforming Congregational Culture* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2003, 45)

Pastors should regularly encourage people to invite others to join in the congregation's services of worship. This means that worship must be characterized by genuine hospitality. Tammy Lindle's book *Hospitality: Sharing God's Welcome* (Herald Publishing House, 2006) provides excellent ideas to help congregations assess their friendliness, improve their welcoming spirit, and learn ways to make worship an inclusive experience for all. Creating a congregational culture of hospitality needs the pastor's consistent and recurring encouragement.

All disciples are called to invite others to a relationship with Christ and community. Pastors encourage planners to include the element of authentic invitation in each worship experience. Worship invites people into a new or deeper relationship with Christ, extended participation in congregational life, and membership in Community of Christ.

Worship without response to the needs of others may be self-serving, an end in and of itself. With worship planners, pastors create opportunities for service once the service of worship has ended. For example, as a response to the invitation to share in compassionate ministries, pastors and the congregation might continue in worship following the service by making light meals and feeding the hungry after church. Or, the pastor and members of the congregation could spend time in fellowship with people who are homebound or live in a nursing home. Pastors and others can walk the neighborhood surrounding the church in prayer and conversation with neighbors. The movement is from worship to service and from service to worship.

Help Is Close at Hand

All pastors should make sure that worship planners are aware of *Worship Resources* available each year from Herald House (*www.HeraldHouse.org*). *Worship Resources* contains helps for preachers, suggested music, and World Church themes. It also contains scripture foci that, if followed, will introduce the congregation to a wide selection of scripture, increasing the congregation's scriptural literacy.

> Worship motivates and permeates public action, for it is an encounter with the God who both calls his people out of the world and sends them into it.
> —Lois Barrett, *Treasure in Clay Jars: Patterns in Missional Faithfulness* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2004, 113)

God's people participating in Christ's mission in the world hear and respond to God's call experienced in worship. Under the leadership of the mission-focused pastor, the congregation finds itself embraced, encouraged, gifted, nurtured, and sent in mission on behalf of Jesus Christ. Worshipers who adore and experience God can enter further into Christ's mission of evangelism, compassionate ministries, and peace and justice for all of God's creation.

Questions

This article has asked several questions. Here they are again:

- What is God doing in our communities and how do we join God in this action?
- What breaks God's heart and how do we respond?
- How can the pastor nurture and sustain transforming worship?
- How does congregational worship intersect with Christ's mission?
- What challenges has the congregation faced and overcome with God's help?
- How has the congregation grown into the calling they now sense?
- What is God's invitation to the congregation as a body, planted in a specific place at a specific time?
- How well is the congregation responding to God's invitation to participate in the mission of Christ?

Notes, Journal

Practice

Spiritual Types and Worship

Objective

To help people plan worship that blesses everyone by honoring various spiritual types.

Each person connects with and understands God in up to four modalities: head, heart, mystic, or kingdom builder. No one type is better or more spiritual than another, and each of the four modalities or types brings with it gifts that can bless the individual and congregation. Unfortunately, the gifts are not given equal opportunity to be shared in most worship experiences. Worship planning done with an awareness of spiritual types, can enrich the experience of all worshipers because elements are included that help all four "types" of people be aware of the Spirit that seeks to bless, enlist, and empower all for mission.

Process

Using *Discover Your Spiritual Type* by Corinne Ware (Herndon, VA: Alban Institute, 1995), have members assess their spiritual type. Have the congregation discuss this together. Talk about how people can share the gifts and blessings that are associated with each type.

Identify the dominant type(s) within the congregation as well as the ways in which each type typically experiences God's presence. For example, individuals with strong "head" spirituality will find meaning and connection through intellectually challenging sermons or scripture study, while those who are kingdom builders may appreciate elements that focus on action in the community. Mystics may long for more periods of quiet reflection during worship, while those connected to "heart" spirituality may want rousing songs and passionate testimonies. Have individuals share from their typology what elements or forms of worship speak to them.

Share this information with all worship planners, encouraging them to reflect in their planning the types that are present in the congregation. Invite those with less commonly expressed types to assist in planning worship experiences, including those that take place outside of the regular location or time of Sunday morning.

Notes, Journal

Practice

Identifying and Using People's Gifts

Objective

To help pastors and worship planners identify gifts for worship within the congregation.

Process

The pastor and worship leaders meet for a prayerful conversation about gifts in the congregation that might be utilized in worship. Using the congregation directory or membership list, prayerfully consider each person and the gifts they may have to share in worship.

Step One:

Reflect together on the following scripture:

> I give thanks to my God always for you [friends and members of the congregation] because of the grace of God that has been given you in Christ Jesus, for in every way you have been enriched in him, in speech and knowledge of every kind—just as the testimony of Christ has been strengthened among you—so that you are not lacking in any spiritual gift…
>
> —1 Corinthians 1:4–7 NRSV

Step Two:

Offer a prayer of thanksgiving.

Step Three:

Prayerfully review each name, ask these questions and make notes:

1. What gifts could this person offer in worship?
2. What gifts could this person develop to enrich the congregation's worship?
3. Are pastoral care ministries needed for healing or reconciling past concerns or for providing encouragement or appreciation that could result in this person offering her or his gifts?

Step Four:

1. Make a list of people and their gifts.
2. Refer to the "gifts" list to assign persons to invite those identified to share their gifts in worship.
3. Assign persons to provide the ministry needed for pastoral care or for expressing appreciation and encouragement of people's gifts.

Notes, Journal

Practice

Worship Planning Questions

Objective

To assist worship leaders, planners and presiders in preparing and planning worship which addresses the needs of worshipers to praise God, be formed in discipleship and experience congregations in mission.

Process

In planning worship, consider the following questions and elements as you plan and prepare for your congregational or small group gathering. This can be used in conjunction with the service outlines offered in the annual *Worship Resources.* Remember to keep the theme and scripture in focus as you use the following worship planning questions:

Worship Planning Questions for Mission-focused Worship

Calling: How will people be invited to worship? How will hospitality be extended before and during the worship experience? Will symbols or signals be used to call people together? (Bells, music, etc.)

Gathering: What scriptures, songs, poems, or readings will be used to invite people into the presence of God? What songs or scriptures will be used to express praise and awe?

Centering: How will confession of our inadequacies and our dependence on God be expressed? How will the message be shared (sermon, dialogue, interaction with the congregation)? Will there be sacraments experienced? How will the congregation be informed of their meaning? How can the Disciple's Generous Response moment address God's generosity and offer opportunity to respond? Will video, songs, readings, or dramas be used to help bring the theme and message to life?

Sending: Will a benediction or sending forth be used? How will the people know they are sent forth in mission?

General Considerations: Have the gifts of all been considered while planning? Are there special needs (those with hearing or visual impairments) that should be considered? Have the diverse spiritual types (the kingdom builders and the mystics are often overlooked) been considered in this worship experience? Will God be glorified and praised? Will the church be reminded of its identity, message, mission, and beliefs? Will we encounter God? Will we be transformed once again? Will we be reengaged for the mission of Jesus Christ?

Notes, Journal

Foundational Concepts

Jesus was a great communicator! He engaged people through stories, preaching, and informal sharing. At its heart, the gospel is best understood and shared through effective communication.

> When leaders communicate orally, nonverbally, or in written form, they have an opportunity to engage the congregation in Christ's mission. Beyond sharing information, such as routine announcements or invitations to upcoming events and worship experiences, communication is an opportunity to convey the worth seen in each person. It is an opportunity to provide a compelling case for building community and to say what matters most to the congregation as part of the worldwide Community of Christ.

Effective communication creates:

- a desire to participate,
- a sense of real connection with the leadership team, and
- a clear understanding of the church's mission priorities.

Make sure you have a clear sense of what you want your message to convey. Is its purpose to inform, invite, inspire, recognize, celebrate, or to request input from others?

Basics of Effective Communication

- **Know Your Intended Audience**
  The most effective messages target specific audiences. A congregation's audiences might include members, friends, seekers, guests, young adults, ecumenical leaders in your community, members of the media, and others. Knowing who a message is being created for is imperative to making sure the message will be clear and understood.

- **The Seven-times Rule**
  In media-saturated cultures, a general rule of communication states that a person has to receive a message at least seven times before it is absorbed into their consciousness. This means sharing about something once isn't going to get the job done. Restate and share the message in as many ways as possible. Announce it from the pulpit; put it on a website or in an e-mail; hand out a flyer at a congregational conference; print it in your bulletin or newsletter. Use all communication tools available!

- **Prioritized, Pertinent, and Accurate**
  What makes communication effective is to take all the information and decide what is most pertinent and what has the highest priority. Also make sure the information shared includes accurate answers to who, what, where, when, why, and how.

- **Delivery Method**
  Communication is only as effective as the delivery method. If most of the congregation does not have Internet access, a website becomes a less effective tool than a print newsletter that everyone

Communication Is Essential to Effective Ministry

by Jenn Killpack

PRACTICES

1. First Impressions
2. TOOL: Photo Release

reads. Congregations include electronically-connected people and those who are not. Using a variety of delivery methods may be the best answer to ensure people are receiving the messages you want to share.

Connecting to Mission

The most effective communication messages are those that connect the receiver to the congregation's local and worldwide community and inspire them to be part of Christ's mission. By connecting individual discipleship, congregational life, and the mission of Jesus Christ, bonds are strengthened for mission.

We are all called to share the peace of Jesus Christ. Consider every communication in light of that call and give people practical ways to be part of Christ's mission, such as helping with a community service project, mentoring a new member, translating a service for someone who speaks another language, or inviting friends to church events.

Remember: *All communication conveys (intentionally and unintentionally) what matters most to the congregation and its community.*

Getting Started

- Consider recruiting a communication coordinator to include on the pastor's leadership team.
- Discover how your congregation prefers to receive messages.
- Establish a communication schedule to ensure timely and consistent messaging.
- Keep messages clear, concise, and consistent. Stay focused on what matters most—the mission of Jesus Christ and how your congregation lives that out.
- Be authentic.

Questions

1. *What characteristics are important when selecting a communication officer?*

   Most important—someone who enjoys communicating with others. Other helpful skills:
   - Strong writer, good grammar and spelling
   - Willing to stay connected to news and information of the congregation, mission center, and worldwide church
   - Trustworthy, able to deal with confidential information when needed
   - Skilled in the communication tools your congregation uses (or prefers) most (if most of the congregation prefers e-mail communication, don't choose someone who does not have an e-mail account)

2. *How do I evaluate which communication tools work best in our congregation?*

   The simplest way to find out how people prefer to receive messages is to ask them. Contact your congregation members and friends to conduct a simple survey that asks:
   - "How do you like to receive messages?" Possible choices: telephone, e-mail, text messages/short message service (SMS), verbal announcements, website, social media, newsletter, bulletin announcements, bulletin boards, telecommunications device for the deaf (TTY/TDD), other

   It is also important to evaluate existing tools and to know if new tools would fulfill an unmet need.

3. *How can I keep our communication tools effective?*

   Follow the five getting started basics mentioned earlier. Refer to *www.CofChrist.org/pr* for communication tips and samples. Keeping the tools effective requires a combination of good, strong messaging and frequency. Some of the most popular media with suggested frequencies are:

   E-mail
   Many congregations share information through e-mail for quick, simple messages and for worship details, important mission center and world church dates, and good news stories about mission. *Recommended frequency: weekly; as needed for immediate concerns*

   Newsletter
   This is a good way to share information for congregations that have some people who prefer print and others who prefer electronic media. People who prefer e-mail get an electronic copy and those who like print get a paper copy. *Recommended frequency: monthly or bimonthly*

   Press Release
   Make contact with local print, radio, or television media and send them press releases about upcoming congregational events, important announcements, or good news stories from your congregation. News media typically need at least one week of lead time, so send your press releases early and be sure to include a contact name and number where they can reach you with questions.

Recommended frequency: weekly or as information is available

Voice Mail
Sometimes voicemail is the first contact between the congregation and a potential new member. Make sure the message is friendly, includes worship and Sunday school times, and gives the caller a time frame for when they can expect a return phone call. *Recommended frequency: review message monthly to maintain accuracy*

Website
This useful tool can be great for outreach opportunities if the congregation has the skills to create and maintain a website. Keeping the website current is critical because an out-of-date website speaks poorly about the congregation's relevance. *Recommended frequency: any time new information is available; minimum is weekly*

4. *What are some common pitfalls to avoid?*

   Creating and maintaining too many communication tools. Discover and focus on ones most effective for your congregation. Be open to new opportunities that fit the congregation's needs.

   Failure to guard the congregation's privacy. Many congregations share prayer concerns that include detailed health issues not meant for public forums like congregational websites. Get permission before sharing this type of information.

5. *Do I need to use social media?*

   No one needs to use social media (such as Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn) but if it's something leaders are comfortable with and use regularly, there are all kinds of ways to incorporate it into a communication strategy.

   Social media is an intense communication channel that requires regular interaction to make it useful. Consider the level of commitment of time and energy required before choosing this tool. If the congregation chooses to use social media, the possibilities are endless. Here are a few suggestions:
   - Create a congregational Facebook group and invite members and friends to join. This will allow the congregation to post announcements, important notes, photos, videos, and devotional items. Remember to get permission for the photos! (See form on page 5.)
   - Share photos of congregational events using Flickr or Facebook.

6. *What resources are available from International Headquarters?*

   There are great tools available to keep the congregation on message and engaged in mission!

www.CofChrist.org
The church website is an amazing storehouse of resources, stories, worship ideas, books, articles, study materials, information, news, and more. Use the drop-down tabs or the search box to find what you need.

***Herald* magazine** (print and e-subscription)
This is a collection of great articles, stories, and photos that share how the church is living out Christ's mission all around the world.

***Herald* Blog**—*www.HeraldMagazine.wordpress.com*
Selections from the magazine in a free blog format that anyone can subscribe to and share comments

E-subscriptions
These free e-mail subscriptions include a number of options that connect people to mission. Everyone can choose the e-newsletters they want to receive and manage their own accounts for updates and changes. Options include:
- *10-Minute News Report*
- *Community of Christ News*
- *Commentary Series*
- *Weekly Devotions*
- *Music Matters*
- *High Priest Newsletter*

Social Media
Join the church's official social media groups on Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn from *www.CofChrist.org/connect*. It's a great way for social media users to stay connected.

Power of 10 *(www.GiveYour10.org)*
Read stories of how mission is being lived out in places near and far, see photos of our worldwide church family, and post your own story and photo sharing your congregation's efforts toward mission!

Crisis Communication

In a crisis situation, such as a natural disaster, property destruction, or ministerial misconduct, communication is critical. You may need to communicate with various audiences including the news media. ***Before doing anything, contact your mission center president.*** When communicating with the news media on any crisis or legal matter, pastors or the proper congregational officer must always consult with the mission center president or Legal Services before doing so. The Integrated Communications team will then be able to work with you, the mission center, and Community of Christ Legal Services to determine how to best support you through the crisis situation. (See the section on crisis communication in the "Legal Services, Crisis Communication, and Risk Management" article in this field guide.)

Practice
First Impressions

Objective

To help congregational leaders understand how the congregation is intentionally or unintentionally communicating to visitors, friends, and members.

Process

The best way to manage perceptions and impressions is to do a thoughtful audit of your congregation. Imagine being a first-time visitor to the congregation…

- Is the church sign easily seen?
- Is the walkway and entrance obvious and neatly maintained?
- Is there someone welcoming people?
- Are the bulletin boards up-to-date and inviting?
- Are the restrooms easy to find or are there signs pointing the way?
- Are people willing to introduce themselves and others to someone new?
- Is there current information about the church's ministries available for a visitor to take home?
- During worship, were explanations given for things that are unique to Community of Christ or unfamiliar to a person with no prior church experience? Did everyone know which hymnal to use, whether they were to stay seated or walk forward for Communion, what any sacrament taking place during a service is about?

To explore this even further, ask a trusted friend (one who will be honest with you) who might not attend any church or is not a member of Community of Christ to visit the congregation some Sunday and pay attention to the above questions. It is best if it is someone who has never been there before.

Following the service, take your friend to lunch (or arrange a time to meet) and have them describe their experience in light of the above questions.

Notes, Journal

Tool

Photo Release

For and in consideration of the undersigned's participation in a recreational activity sponsored by Community of Christ, I, _____, hereby give my consent and authorize Community of Christ, its successors, heirs, legal representatives, assigns and agents to use and reproduce my name, voice and/or likeness (photographic, illustrative, audio or video tape, film, electronic and/or digital image), and circulate and use the same for any and all official resource, use, or purpose including but not limited to print, film, or electronic media and reproduction or digital representation of every description on the Internet/World Wide Web. Consideration is hereby waived in perpetuity, and no further claim of any nature whatsoever shall be made by me, my heirs or assigns. Community of Christ has made no representations concerning the use hereof to me.

Participant	Parent or Guardian *(If participant is under 18 years of age)*
(signature)	(signature)
(print name)	(print name)
(age) (date)	(date)
(address)	(address)
(state/province) (postal code)	(state/province) (postal code)
(phone)	(phone)

Foundational Concepts

When people think of an audit they may have an image of gray-suited government employees equipped with calculators ready to dive into mountains of paperwork in search of the minutest financial discrepancy. Congregational audits are different than those kinds of audits. While they still deal with financial transactions, they are usually experiences filled with grace, helpful and quantifiable information, and a reflection on the congregation's use of its funds.

Why do we do an audit?
Congregations have an annual audit for several reasons. First, it protects the administrative officers of the congregation and the integrity of the church's financial management. Second, it provides assurance to the congregation that congregational funds are being properly handled. Third, it provides an opportunity for helpful feedback for the congregational financial officer related to the finances of the congregation. Finally, an audit helps the congregation leaders and members to reflect on the use of their monetary assets for mission.

Can a visitor to the congregation tell what the congregation's mission is by looking at its budget? Who does the audit?
The pastor ensures that an annual audit is performed. Auditors can be elected or appointed and can be a member of the congregations, another congregation, or friend of the church. Ideally, the auditor should have the following qualifications:

- Basic understanding of financial accounting
- Understanding of Community of Christ enduring principles and basic beliefs
- Grasp the relationship between mission and finances
- Willingness to give helpful feedback

An auditor selected from within the congregation will have the advantage of knowing the nuances of the congregation. An auditor from outside the congregation can bring a fresh perspective and could be aware of different approaches used elsewhere. The person selected to do the audit will likely depend on a congregation's location and the pool of available people.

How does an audit work?
The audit will include, but is not limited to, these basic steps:

- Verifying final reconciliation of checkbook and bank statements
- Matching random receipts and disbursements
- Verifying profits or losses of other financial accounts such as Affiliate Investment Pool (AIP) accounts, savings, Certificates of Deposit, etc.
- Verifying a selection of offering envelopes contributions
- Reviewing World Church contributions and debits by the World Church
- Reviewing the budgeted expenses to the actual expenses

Congregational Audits

by John Chatburn

PRACTICES

1. Initiating and Audit
2. TOOL: Sample Auditor's Letter

- Reviewing congregational business meeting minutes to ensure the will of the congregation is being honored

Below are links to lists of data the auditor will collect and the specific financial transactions the auditor will review (*www.CofChrist.org/CFO/fiscal.asp*):

- Single Page Audit Form
  www.CofChrist.org/CFO/fiscal/SinglePageAuditForm.asp
- Two-Page Audit Form
  www.CofChrist.org/CFO/fiscal/TwoPageAuditForm.asp
- Congregational Audit Form
  www.CofChrist.org/CFO/fiscal/CongregationAuditFormv2.pdf

It is important for the auditor to approach the audit with a sense of grace and thankfulness. The church is thankful for each congregational financial officer that serves in this role with integrity and dedication. Auditors need to be generous with grace when it comes to auditing a congregation's records. This does not mean letting errors or discrepancies go unaddressed, but it does mean showing respect for the work the congregational financial officer has done. A good audit and auditor can empower congregations and congregational financial officers.

Audit Report

After the audit is complete the auditor should provide a letter to the congregation describing what she or he has done and include any recommendations the congregation may need to take action on. When the auditors recommend accounting techniques or adjustments, the recommendations should be provided by letter to the congregational financial officer with a copy to the congregational leadership. The audit report can be an appropriate place to make recommendations for how a budget may better empower mission. Finally, it is proper to offer public gratitude (when appropriate) for the congregational financial officer in the audit letter to the congregation.

Mission and Audits

How will you use the data from an audit to identify new missional opportunities?
Audits provide opportunity for the congregation to review its alignment with mission. Here are some suggestions for making the audit more mission-based.

- Explore and analyze how the congregation's financial assets are being used in its mission. This includes not only evaluating the audit year, but looking at all the assets of a congregation and asking "What do we need to do to align more with mission?" For some congregations this may mean recommitting or selling some assets to fund mission. For other congregations it may mean reallocating assets to address a specific need in their community such as homeless youth, inaccessibility of affordable healthcare, or human trafficking.
- Review what bank the congregation currently holds accounts with. How the congregation spends its resources is important, but where it keeps them is also important. Does the bank the congregation uses match with the values and enduring principles of Community of Christ?
- Review the vendors the church has used over the past year. Savings is important, but do the church's vendors contribute to a better world? Do the vendors offer their employees fair wages? What is the environmental impact of this product? *The Better World Shopping Guide* (*www.betterworldshopper.com*) evaluates products, vendors, and banks.[1] This resource does not represent official positions of Community of Christ, but it is a useful resource for helping people think about the impact of their spending and investments.
- Some congregations may want to contribute financially to organizations whose mission is consistent with the church's mission. While the church is supportive of financial contributions to worthy organizations, financial contributions alone can signal a distant engagement in mission. Generous disciples pay tithing to the church and give to other organizations, but they never expect anyone to take their place as disciples who are personally engaged in mission.

What to Do if There Is a Problem

How will I react if there is a problem revealed by the audit?
Most of the problems or issues that audits reveal pertain to bookkeeping, records, or internal financial procedures. Auditors can take care of these in a straightforward manner. Minor issues can be addressed between the auditor, the congregation financial officer, and, if necessary, the congregational leadership team.

Auditors may occasionally face difficult problems. Typically, congregational financial officers are well-intentioned people who have good hearts and work hard. On a rare occasion auditors may identify a problem in the audit that needs immediate attention. These problems can be mixing of church and personal funds, opening a new bank account without proper notice or authorization, or making unapproved payments of congregational funds.

If such a problem does occur the auditor should notify the pastor, mission center financial officer, and mission center

president. It is not the auditor's responsibility or role to intervene where administrative attention may be needed.

Audits support mission by providing data relevant to where the congregation has been and where it can go in the future. Audits provide protection for leaders and integrity of the church's financial operations. Congregational audits can be sterile, but with thought and focus they can be one of the tools that help congregations become healthier.

[1]Ellis Jones, *The Better World Shopping Guide,* 3rd Edition (Gabriola Island, BC, Canada: New Society Publishers, 2010)

Questions

It's always good to ask oneself questions that are pertinent to ministry and church leadership. Take a moment and reflect on the questions asked in this article:

- Can a visitor to the congregation tell what the congregation's mission is by looking at its budget?
- How will you use the data from an audit to identify new missional opportunities?
- How will I react if there is a problem revealed by the audit?

Notes, Journal

Practice

Initiating an Audit

Objective

To help the pastor properly initiate an audit.

Process

This may be the easiest practice in the field guide. If you are uncertain about how audits are properly conducted in your mission center, simply call or write to your mission center financial officer. Tell them that you'd like to talk about setting up a congregational audit.

Notes, Journal

Tool

Sample Auditor's Letter

The following is an example of what a sample Auditor's Letter might look like.

Congregational Name
Street
City, State, Zip

Dear Friends:

The audit for the <Name> congregation is complete and in excellent order. I have applied certain procedures to your financial documentation, described below, in order to evaluate the internal control procedures, comply with the Presiding Bishopric's requirement for an annual audit, and provide support to the congregational financial officer. This report is intended only for the use of the <Name> congregation, the leadership of the <Name> mission center, and the Presiding Bishopric. It is not intended for circulation beyond these bodies.

I have applied the following procedures as follows:

1. Verified signatures and endorsements on checks
2. Reconciled the final bank statement (12/31/11)
3. Matched all receipts to disbursements
4. Verified the amounts of congregational savings account
5. Verified balances of the congregational AIP account
6. Verified all offering envelopes to bank deposits
7. Verified World Church contributions and debits to bank statements
8. Verified budget items to actual expenses
9. Reviewed congregational minutes to ensure the wishes of the congregation are honored in budget

In the process of the audit I noticed that the congregational utility bills have increased significantly over the last couple of years primarily from increased consumption of electricity and natural gas. I recommend that the congregation do an energy audit to determine how you may decrease the consumption of these resources to reduce the congregation's environmental impact.

John Doe's skill in serving as a congregational financial officer is abundantly apparent in the faithfulness and attention to detail with which he approaches this role. The church as a whole, and <Name> in particular, is blessed to have a minister like John to take on this sometimes tedious, but always important task in the life of the church.

Should there be any questions regarding this audit please feel free to contact me.

Peace and blessings,

Jane Doe
Auditor

Leading Congregational Conferences (Business Meetings)

by Leonard Young
and Andrew Shields

PRACTICES

1. TOOL: Leading Congregational Conferences (Business Meetings) Script

FOUNDATIONAL CONCEPTS

All things should be done decently and in order.

—1 Corinthians 14:40

All things shall be done by common consent in the church, by much prayer and faith...

—Doctrine and Covenants 25:1b

The purpose of congregational conferences (business meetings) is to equip the congregation for mission. This happens as leaders are elected, budgets are approved, and initiatives are supported.

Pastors are responsible for leading congregational conferences. Congregations must have conferences once a year to elect the pastor, sustain the financial officer, and approve a budget. Congregations also approve ordaining priesthood, buying or selling congregational property, and other important matters. (See pages 8–14 of the *Church Administrator's Handbook*, 2005 edition.) Congregational conferences should help unify the congregation as members make decisions together.

Remember to consult with the mission center president about scheduling and agenda items for the congregational conference.

Theological Underpinnings of Common Consent

The church has enduring principles that call us to community and emphasize the worth of persons. Congregational conferences are a way for a faith community to make decisions in the spirit of common consent in which the voice of each member is valued. Members should feel free to share their opinions whether they agree or not, without fear of personal abuse.

Only Community of Christ members of the congregation have "voice and vote" in the congregational conference.

Common Consent Is a Process

Congregational leaders and members should have plenty of opportunities to discuss significant issues and decisions. This means that on significant matters, there should be ample time for discussion prior to any voting. In many cases, these discussions will take place in more informal sessions in the hours, days, or weeks prior to the conference itself.

Principles to Follow

As pastors plan and lead congregational conferences, they should follow these principles:

- At least two people need to speak to any concern or proposal (one to make a motion and one to second).
- Encourage full and free discussion of the issue (debate).
- Recognize and uphold the right of the conference to act, not act, modify, wait to act, or refer to another body (motions to approve, amend, postpone, refer can be helpful).

- Try to achieve the broadest consensus possible when making decisions.

The Practical Side of Business Meetings

When the pastor leads a conference, the pastor is the "chair" of the meeting, facilitating the discussion. The following will be helpful in your preparation.

ORDER OF BUSINESS

Preparing an agenda ahead of time helps the meeting run smoothly. Contact those who may be presenting at the meeting to make sure they are ready. Look for what could go wrong, and prepare solutions ahead of time. A script for leading a business meeting can be found following this article.

Sample Agenda

Call to Order: Say, "The meeting will come to order."

Spiritual Practice: (opening hymn, scripture reading, invocation)

Introduction of Guests: (Mission Center or World Church ministers)

Presentation and Approval of the Minutes: Read by the secretary if a printed copy was not given to participants. It is always better to provide a copy to everyone. The chair asks for corrections and approves the minutes by unanimous consent (no need for a motion).

Reports of Officers: No action needed to "receive," "accept," or "approve" reports.

Reports of Committees: (if timely and appropriate)

Reports of Special Committees: Any committee with specific tasks.

Special Orders: Such items might include approving the budget or approving officers.

Unfinished Business: Any items not completed at the end of the previous meeting.

General Orders: Any item postponed to this meeting by the vote of a previous conference.

New Business: The chair should always ask, "Is there any other new business to be brought before the conference?"

Presentations: (including recognitions and special awards)

Announcements

Adjournment: The chair asks: "Is there any further business to come before the conference?" If there is, handle it. If not, the chair says: "There being no further business to come before the conference, the conference is adjourned." There is no need for a motion. The chair simply declares the meeting adjourned.

Closing: (closing hymn, benediction, sending forth)

HANDLING A MOTION

Usually, the following six steps are essential:

1. A member makes the motion.
2. Another member seconds the motion. The name of the member who seconds a motion is not recorded in the minutes.
3. The chair commonly states: "It has been moved and seconded that (repeat the motion).... Is there any discussion?"
4. The members debate the motion. The chair recognizes (calls on to speak) a member before the member can speak to the group. The congregation can only talk about the motion that is "before them," (the current topic). Everyone who speaks talks to the chair, not to other members in the meeting. Debate may be closed when no one else wishes to speak, or by adopting the "previous question" by a two-thirds vote. (After it has been moved and seconded.)
5. The chair takes the vote. Note:
   - Take the "yes" vote first, then the "no" vote
   - A majority vote means a majority of those *voting* for or against a motion—one-half of those voting, plus one vote. (Example: 30 people are present, but only 24 people vote. 13 people voting "yes" would be considered a majority and the motion would carry.)
   - The chair votes only when the chair's vote affects the results—to make or break a tie vote (in a ballot vote the chair votes when other members do).
6. The chair announces the results of the vote.

AMENDMENTS

Amendments require a second, are amendable, are debatable, and require a majority vote. An amendment should state exactly what is being done to the main motion. It is always handled before voting on the motion. The following provides examples on how a main motion can be amended:

Main Motion:
"That we reimburse expenses for our pastor to attend the Peace Colloquy and World Conference."

Amendment by Striking Out:
"I move to amend the main motion by striking out the words 'and World Conference.'"

Amendment by Addition (or Insertion):
"I move to amend the main motion by adding at the end the words 'providing however that this congregation shall not be responsible for expenses over $150.00.'"

Amendment by Striking Out and Inserting:
"I move to amend the main motion by striking out the words 'our pastor' and inserting the words 'two congregation leaders.'"

All the above are examples of primary amendments, because they apply directly to the main motion. A secondary amendment is one that applies to another amendment. A secondary amendment could be applied to the amendment by addition, as follows:

Secondary Amendment:
"I move to amend the amendment by striking out '$150.00' and inserting '$100.00.'"

Amendments of the Third Degree are not permitted. No more than one primary and one secondary amendment can be proposed at a time.

Substitute Motion:
Whenever it is desired to change the wording of a motion so substantially that several amendments would be required, a substitute motion may be used. A substitute motion has the same status as a primary amendment and must pertain to the same subject as the original motion.

For example: "That we encourage all of our members to attend the Peace Colloquy." (This is a logical substitute for the main motion. It deals with the same topic: attendance at the Peace Colloquy.)

PRESIDING

Congregational conferences require a presiding officer and a secretary. The presiding officer should be familiar with the fundamental rules of parliamentary law, the Bylaws of Community of Christ, and any special rules adopted by the congregation.

The presiding officer (the "chair") should be impartial and fair, not offering opinions or taking sides in the debate while presiding. Here is a list of other responsibilities:

- Maintain order.
- Announce each item of business, take the vote, announce the result, and then announce the next item of business on the agenda.
- Take an affirmative and a negative vote on all motions (except those of a complementary nature such as thanking a retiring officer for service).
- Do not recognize absurd motions.

CONTENTS OF THE MINUTES

The minutes of a meeting are the legal and historical record. The minutes reflect what was done rather than being a transcript of the debate and discussion.

The first paragraph of the minutes should contain the following:

- Name of congregation.
- Date of the meeting and the place.
- State the names of who presided and the secretary taking minutes.
- Note that the minutes of the previous meeting were approved; were they amended?

Added paragraphs should address each of the following items of business:

- Each main motion and the final wording in which each motion was adopted or disposed of. Include the name of the mover.
- If a financial report is given, attach it to the minutes.
- If an election takes place, state names nominated, for which office, and those elected.
- When a count has been ordered or the vote is by ballot, the voting results should be entered.
- All rulings and their explanations given by the chair.

In the last paragraph of the minutes include:

- The time of the meeting ended.
- The name and signature of the secretary.

Special Parliamentary Situations

ELECTION OF OFFICERS

- The pastor may nominate one person for each elected position or request a nominating committee to do this.
- Nominations should be received from the floor for each elected office.

VOTING PROCESS

- Nominees are voted on in the order in which they were nominated.
- A candidate must receive a majority of the votes cast (half plus one). The presider may not drop someone from the list because they received fewer votes. By the process of reballoting one candidate will eventually receive a majority.
- The chair declares the person with the majority vote elected.

Sustaining of Appointed Officers

Some positions can be appointed by the pastor and sustained by the congregation. The positions of congregational financial officer, recorder, and historian are World Church positions and need sustaining. The following is a suggested procedure for sustaining appointments by the pastor:

- Motion made to sustain the appointments.
- The chair asks for the vote to sustain and the vote opposed.
- The chair declares whether the motion is passed or lost.
- If no one objects, the chair can request one motion to sustain all appointed officers and that one vote be taken to sustain them all.

APPROVAL OF CONGREGATIONAL BUDGET

Budgets should be developed in consultation with the congregational financial officer, the mission center financial officer, and other congregational leaders. It is approved by a majority vote. The following steps should be observed:

- Provide a printed copy at least one week before the business meeting (unless the congregation has passed previous legislation calling for an earlier time).
- Take a motion to approve the budget. Get a second.
- Present information about the budget and answer questions.
- Allow time for debate and amendments.
- Take a final vote on the approval of the budget as presented or as amended.

APPROVAL OF PRIESTHOOD CALLS

After the pastor has received administrative approval and the person to be ordained has accepted the call to serve, the pastor should follow these guidelines:

- Provide the congregation two weeks before the business meeting the names and the offices to which they are to be ordained.
- At the business meeting, the chair asks for a motion to approve the ordination of the candidate(s). This motion is seconded.
- The pastor shares a testimony of the call.
- The candidate(s) makes a statement of acceptance.
- Others may be given opportunity to share supportive statements
- The pastor asks for votes of support and for votes not in support for each candidate by show of hands.
- The pastor announces that the ordination(s) has been approved (or not approved).

QUESTION

1. How will the congregation's mission inform the agenda of your next congregational conference?

Tool

Leading Congregational Conferences (Business Meetings) Script*

Congregation:

Date:

Place:

Presider:

Secretary:

Establish quorum:

The bylaws call for at least six members of the congregation to be present to have a quorum at a business meeting. It is not necessary to point this out, but you should be sure at least that many eligible participants are present before continuing.(Bylaws of Community of Christ, Article V Section 5, *www.CofChrist.org/onlineresources/bylaws.asp*)

Call to Order: Say, "The meeting will come to order."

Spiritual Practice: (opening hymn, scripture reading, invocation)

Introduction of Guests: (Mission Center or World Church ministers)
Any mission center or World Church guests should be introduced from the person with the most responsibility to the person with the least. Allot time for these guests to briefly address the conference. Mission center presidents should be involved in scheduling congregational business meetings, or at least informed two weeks or more in advance.

Presentation and Approval of the Minutes
Read by the secretary if a printed copy was not given to participants. It is always better to provide a copy to everyone. The chair asks for corrections and approves the minutes by unanimous consent (no need for a motion).

If distributed at least two weeks beforehand: Say, "If there is no objection, we will not read the minutes of the [date] meeting, as they were distributed beforehand. Are there any corrections to the minutes? (pause) If there are no corrections, the minutes are approved as printed."

If *not* previously distributed: Say, "The secretary will read the minutes of the [date] meeting. (secretary reads minutes) Are there any corrections to the minutes? (pause) If there are no corrections, the minutes are approved as read."

If there are corrections: Say, "If there is no objection, the minutes will be corrected by [repeat correction]. (pause) Since there is no objection, the correction is made. If there are no further corrections (pause) the minutes are approved as corrected.

If anyone objects: Say, "The question is on the adoption of the motion to amend the minutes by [repeat the correction or amendment]. Are you ready for the question?" (handle debate) Vote required: majority by voice.

"Those in favor of the motion, say 'aye.'" (pause)

"Those opposed, say 'no.'" (pause)

Announce results of the vote: "The ayes have it and the motion is adopted. The minutes are amended by [repeat amendment]."

OR

"The noes have it and the motion is lost."

"If there are no further corrections (pause) the minutes are approved as corrected."

Reports of Officers

The next item of business is hearing the reports of the officers.
Officers are called on. The chair should check ahead of time and only call on those who have reports to make. Reports for information only are "placed on file." If an officer's report contains a recommendation, another member may make a motion to implement the recommendation. If you have a short business meeting, perhaps to approve the budget only, then officers may not have anything to report, and this section can be skipped. It is probably still best to hear from the financial officer.

After each report has been presented: Ask, "Are there any questions?" (pause) If there are no questions or if all the questions have been answered, the report will be filed.

Regarding the annual financial report: (It should be detailed and already audited before presentation to the conference.)

Entertain questions: (following the report)

Receive a motion: "If there are no further questions, the chair recognizes [someone identified beforehand] for a motion." (Member moves to accept the auditor's report. A second is not required.)

Handle debate: "The question is on the adoption of the motion to accept the auditor's report. Are you ready for the question?" (handle debate) Vote required: majority by voice.

Call for vote: "Those in favor of the motion, say 'aye.'" (pause) "Those opposed, say 'no.'" (pause)

Announce the results of the vote: "The ayes have it and the motion is adopted. The auditor's report is accepted and will be included in the minutes."

Reports of Committees
"The chair recognizes [name] for a report from the committees [building, leadership, worship, Christian education, pastoral care, stewardship, community outreach, missionary, communications, etc.]."

No action is required, the reports are informational. The reporting member may make a motion at the conclusion of the report. These motions are handled as main motions. Ideally, those reporting for committees have been contacted, and committees without reports are not called upon.

Reports of Special Committees
Any committees appointed to do specific tasks should report in the order they were created. Check with the committee in advance, and do not call on them if they do not have anything to report. Reports for information are "placed on file."

Special Orders: (Such items might include approving the budget or approving officers.)

1. If there are no special orders, go on to unfinished business. Examples for handling follow: "At the last meeting, the motion relating to [state topic of motion] was postponed to this meeting and made a special order. The question is on the motion that [repeat the motion]. Is there any discussion?" (handle debate and voting normally)
2. **The annual budget.** Refer to page 12 of the *Church Administrator's Handbook* (2005 ed.) for information on how budgets are prepared and presented. If helpful read aloud: "The proposed budget that is developed is presented to the congregation for approval. This process should invite and encourage the general membership to review, understand, comment upon, and ultimately endorse both the program of ministry and the supporting budget for the congregation. The congregational budget is not valid unless it is approved by formal action of the congregational conference." The budget can be presented as a special order, followed by a motion to approve the budget (it helps to identify who will do this beforehand, allowing for the normal process of debate and amendment).
3. **Election of officers. Article V Section 2 of the bylaws.** *Church Administrator's Handbook*, Section 2, headings 8, 11, 12, 14, 15, 16, 17, and 18 are helpful to consider. The pastor and secretary are elected. The pastor may appoint program leaders to be sustained by the congregation with the exception of the congregational financial officer (CFO) who is appointed by the mission center financial officer; the recorder, appointed by the mission center recorder; and historian, appointed by the World Church historian upon recommendation by the pastor. Persons should be selected three months beforehand so they can become familiar with the task (and so people can discreetly object if necessary).

   "The following persons have been nominated for the office of [office]. We will vote in the order in which they were nominated. All those in favor of [first name] raise your hands. Thank you. Now, all those in favor of [next name] raise your hands."

   Announce result of the vote: "[name with the most votes] has received a majority of votes and is elected to [office]."

   For elections, put up the nominations of those who have agreed to let their names stand beforehand, then open it up for nominations from the congregation. Write the names (one office at a time) on a flip chart or dry erase board everyone can see. When there are no further nominations, give people a moment, then go on to the vote. The usual practice is to vote with a show of hands, in the order of nomination. Retake the vote until you get a majority; do not remove the nominee with the lowest vote.

   When only one nominee is put up, the chair can take a voice vote, or declare that the nominee is elected, effecting the election by unanimous consent or "acclamation."

   To sustain officers, distribute a list (or put it up on the board), arrange for someone to move "to sustain the appointment of [name] to the office of [office]," or "this list of appointments" and vote to sustain (without objection, the entire list). If there is an objection, vote to sustain each one from the top down. Majority is needed.

"It has been moved and seconded that we sustain [name] to the office of [office]." OR "It has been moved and seconded that we sustain this list of appointments."

"All those in favor, raise your hands. Those opposed, raise your hands."

Announce the result of the vote: "The motion is passed (or lost)."

4. **Election of delegates to higher jurisdictional conferences.** Most mission centers do not have delegate conferences. Congregations in those jurisdictions that do will receive from the mission center the number of delegates they can elect. For most congregations, the chair can ask for nominations and then write the names on a dry erase board or flip chart, then give everyone a number of votes equal to the spaces to fill. Have someone record a vote by raised hands, and the ones with the most votes are elected. Larger congregations may want to use ballots; have tellers ready to count the ballots and report back during the meeting if possible.

Priesthood Calls
Names must be presented to the congregation one at a time and voted on; a majority is needed. This is an opportunity for the congregation to demonstrate that it will support the new priesthood member.

- Receive a motion: "To approve the ordination of [name] to the office of [office] after all appropriate required preordination training is completed."
- Get a second.
- Pastor shares testimony of the call.
- The candidate makes a statement of acceptance.
- Receive statements of support from others.
- Ask for votes of support and for votes not in support for each candidate by show of hands.
- Announce that the ordination(s) has been approved (or not approved).

Unfinished Business and General Orders
The chair does not ask if there is any unfinished business; it is announced only if there is unfinished business or general orders. Unfinished business refers to questions that have come over from the previous meeting (other than special orders) as a result of that meeting having adjourned without completing its order of business. General orders are matters that were postponed to, or made general orders for, the present meeting—taken in the order in which they were made. If none, go to new business.

"Under unfinished business, the first item is the motion relating to [state the topic of the motion] that was pending when the previous meeting adjourned."

"The question is on the adoption of the motion [repeat motion]. Are you ready for the question?" (Handle as a main motion. This is repeated for each item of unfinished business.)

"Under general orders, the first item is [state the topic of the motion]. The question is on the adoption of the motion [repeat motion]. Are you ready for the question?" (Handle as a main motion. This is repeated for each general order.)

New Business

Any proposals which have been turned in ahead of the meeting should be taken up first. The chair should always ask if there is other new business to be brought before the conference. This is any member's opportunity to introduce items of business.

Ask, "Is there any new business?"

Presentations
Any recognitions, program, or special awards should take place at this point in the agenda.

Announcements
The chair makes announcements first, then asks if others have announcements. Introduce anyone coming forward to make announcements. Do not "turn over the chair" to the speaker, as that complicates the minutes, and the announcer is not running the meeting at that point. Thank those who offer announcements.

Adjournment
Ask, "Is there any further business?" (pause) "Since there is no further business, the meeting is adjourned."

Closing Ceremonies (closing hymn, benediction, sending forth)

*Notes

The main outline (adapted) was provided by Leonard M. Young, a former apostle, past president of the National Association of Parliamentarians, and a Professional Registered Parliamentarian; and by Andrew Shields, World Church secretary.

Script text and format provided by the *Parliamentary Playbook: A Guide to Script Writing*, from the "Pathways to Proficiency" series offered by the National Association of Parliamentarians and *Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised: 10th Edition*

Community of Christ bylaws are an important resource in preparing for business meetings, especially Article V—Congregations.

Church Administrator's Handbook (2005 ed.) has several helpful sections:

Part 2.8, "Congregational Conferences" Part 9, "Planning and Conducting Conferences"

This script should allow pastors to edit a tailored script for each business meeting, making preparation easier and cutting down on stress and surprises.

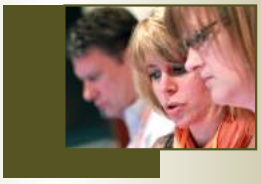
It is advisable to take to the meeting copies of bylaw text or motions that are expected.

If there is someone in the congregation who is familiar with parliamentary procedure, it may be helpful to ask if they would serve as the business meeting parliamentarian, so you have a resource at hand in case a complex procedural situation arises. Look over the script together and try to anticipate problems.

Advance planning and a well-prepared script will make running business meetings easier!

Legal Services, Crisis Communication, and Risk Management

by Tom Mountenay



PRACTICES

1. Review and Readiness

Foundational Concepts

It is important for pastors to contact (and know who to contact) when they have questions or needs related to legal issues, crisis communication, and risk management. Pastors should always consult their mission center president and mission center financial officer for guidance on these matters. Handling legal issues, crisis communication, and risk management in effective ways will prevent routine and difficult matters from becoming worse. It is never too late to seek help. It is always preferable though, to seek help when issues first arise.

Below is important information for the pastor or the appropriate congregational officer.

Legal Services

Legal Services provides assistance, resources, and legal advice to pastors and leaders in the field and at International Headquarters. Legal Services' primary goal is to offer support and resources to further enable the mission of the church in a spirit of cooperation and compassion.

The pastor and congregational financial officer have a specific responsibility to ensure basic procedures are followed:

- to create a safe environment in the congregation;
- to obey local, state, provincial, and national laws and regulations; and
- to be good stewards of church resources.

The information contained in this document is not intended to be specific legal advice, but is to provide general direction for use with advice from Legal Services and other appropriate officers of the church. This information does not take the place of a consultation with a member of Legal Services.

Contact information for Legal Services:

- Telephone: (816) 833-1000 or 1-800-825-2806, ext. 2217 (during regular office hours Monday through Friday, 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. CST)
- Emergency telephone: (816) 509-2946 (after regular office hours and on weekends)
- E-mail: *legalservices@CofChrist.org*
- Fax: (816) 521-3099
- Website: *www.CofChrist.org/legal*

It is important to contact Legal Services regarding:

- **Child protection:** For questions about the Child Protection Policy, please see the article "Protecting Our Children" in this field guide.
- **Contracts:** It is important to review and follow the contract guidelines on the church's website at *www.CofChrist.org/legal/contract.asp*. If you have questions, please call (or ask your mission center officer to call) Legal Services. Remember, no contract should

be signed without prior review by Legal Services and the approval of the congregation and mission center officers. Signed contracts must then be sent to Legal Services.

- **Copyright questions (copying/using songs, videos, etc.):** Please review the guidelines at *www.CofChrist.org/legal/copyright.asp* and contact Legal Services if you have questions.
- **Disputes (contractor, neighbor, tenant, etc.):** Notify your mission center financial officer or mission center president of the dispute and call Legal Services to discuss how best to proceed.
- **Easements:** Contact your mission center financial officers and call Legal Services with questions. All easements must be either drafted or reviewed by Legal Services and signed by the Presiding Bishop.
- **Lawsuits:** If the congregation is served with legal papers from a court or person or entity threatens to file a lawsuit against the congregation, *immediately* contact your mission center president and call Legal Services. Failure to timely notify Legal Services may have negative consequences for the church due to filing deadlines.
- **Leases and Use Agreements:** Prior to allowing an outside group to use church property, it is important to review lease guidelines on the church's website at *www.CofChrist.org/legal/leases.asp* and then complete a Lease Request Form. A written lease or use agreement should be executed for one-time usage of all or a portion of the church's facilities as well as ongoing monthly, weekly, or daily usage of the church building. No lease should be signed without review by Legal Services and formal approval from both the congregation and mission center. If you have questions about or need to make changes to an existing lease, call Legal Services.
- **Property purchase, sale, or loan:**
  Review guidelines at *www.CofChrist.org/legal/building/saleproperty.asp*. Your first contact is your mission center financial officer. Secondarily, call Legal Services and Risk Management.
- **Tax exempt issues, notices from government bodies:** Issues involving the assessment of property taxes, sales taxes, or unrelated business income tax against a congregation are complicated and require review by Legal Services. Contact Legal Services and notify your mission center financial officer as these issues arise.

Crisis Communication

In a crisis situation, such as a natural disaster, property destruction, or ministerial misconduct, communication is critical. Congregations may need to communicate with various audiences including the news media. When communicating with the news media on any crisis or legal matter, pastors or the proper congregational officer must always consult with the mission center president or Legal Services before doing so. If a congregation officer is contacted by the news media for a comment, it is always best to say, "No comment" unless you have already received consultation from Legal Services.

Contact your mission center president *first*. Then call (or the mission center president may choose to call) Integrated Communications at 1-800-825-2806, ext. 3045 or ext. 3042 (24-hours) who can help prepare a communication plan regarding the crisis. Integrated Communications will do so with direction and guidance from Risk Management and Legal Services.

Risk Management

Risk Management assists congregations, campgrounds and mission centers to evaluate the potential risks inherent in their programs and activities. Risk Management assists congregations to provide safety and minimize risks and the effects of accidental losses so the church can pursue its mission. The Risk Management team will work with congregations to explain the church's insurance program and requirements for vendors or contractors who perform work and those who use congregational facilities.

Contact Risk Management when:

- Church or congregational property is damaged by fire, wind, hail, etc. See *www.CofChrist.org/risk/claims-building.asp* for more information.
- Anyone is injured on church property, or at a church-sponsored function off-site. Go to *www.CofChrist.org/risk/claims-injury.asp* and immediately report the incident, following the instructions on the form.
- Someone indicates or claims the church is responsible for their injury or property loss.
- You have questions about the church's Risk Management program or insurance requirements.
- You purchase or sell a property or vehicle.

Contact information for Risk Management:

- Telephone: (816) 521-3057 or 1-800-825-2806, ext. 3057 (during regular office hours Monday through Friday, 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. CST)
- Emergency telephone: (816) 853-0012
- Fax: (816) 521-3035
- Website: *www.CofChrist.org/risk*
- E-mail: *risk@CofChrist.org*

Questions

Leaders always encounter surprises when unexpected things arise. Sometimes, those things pertain to legal matters. The good news is that pastors and leaders can be prepared. The following questions can help.

1. Are we currently in any contractual relationships or involved in any leases or other legal matters that have not been reviewed by mission center officers and Legal Services?
2. In our congregation, do we copy songs or other worship/educational material? Do we show DVDs or video clips? If so, have we considered copyright matters?
3. Does the pastor's leadership team understand what notification/communication procedure should be followed (such as who to call) in the event of a crisis?

Notes, Journal

OBJECTIVE

To help the pastor and pastor's leadership team lead mission without unnecessary problems or delays due to neglecting legal matters.

PROCESS

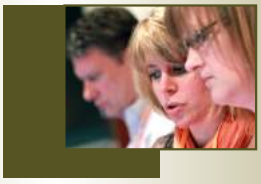
Keep it simple. Make copies of this article and share them with the pastor's leadership team or other appropriate group. Discuss the three questions at the end of the article. If you discover contracts or leases that are not approved, talk about it with your mission center officers. If there is any inappropriate use of songs, DVDs, or other proprietary material, contact Legal Services for advice on how to use resources while honoring copyright law. Make sure that everyone knows the procedure to follow in a crisis.

Notes, Journal

Foundational Concepts

Protecting Our Children

by Karen Waring



PRACTICES

God calls the church to be a people who promote communities of joy, hope, love, and peace. The church continues to explore how these facets of Christian life can translate into effective ministry. Child Protection is ministry with its foundation in the church's enduring principles. It expresses the mission initiatives of ending suffering in the world and pursuing peace on Earth.

Doctrine and Covenants Section 162 reminds us that "…we hold precious lives in our hands." No lives are more precious than the lives of vulnerable children in our societies.

Since the 1980s the Christian church at large has striven to protect children by responding to allegations of abuse. Statistically child abuse is a reality. Community of Christ approaches the protection of children professionally and with rigorous standards. Community of Christ provides policies and guidelines for protecting children. These policies are for the entire church and have three purposes:

- Protecting all children in the care and ministries of the church.
- Providing guidelines and procedures for administrative officers, the ministers who are in contact with children, and clear immediate reporting requirements.
- Reducing the liability and risk from legal action.

Protecting children is more than administrative procedures. These procedures become missional when motivated by the gospel message. At one level the church is registering and training youth workers. On a deeper level these procedures arise from the church's ministry of safeguarding those most vulnerable in society. The church approaches child protection with a compassion that reveals that God's love promotes healing and expresses justice.

Affirmations

The ministry of child protection has two emphases:

- Spiritual investment
- Practical systems

Spiritual Investment

Within the enduring principles of the church lies the foundation of the spiritual investment we make in our children:

- We recognize them to be of worth.
- We make responsible choices in our rearing and interaction skills.
- We value them as part of God's sacred creation.
- We receive precious blessings as they share in our community.

There are other principles that acknowledge children's important place in the faith community. The church invests in curricula to educate children in God's ways and nourish them with experiences that develop

their spiritual giftedness. As these ministries mingle with child protection policies the church grows disciples in safe and nurturing places.

In Luke 18:15–18 is the story of Jesus welcoming children for a blessing. This narrative lays the foundational model for the church's ministry to children. Welcoming children is what the church does. Ensuring that the church's welcome is safe in a contemporary society is also part of the church's stewardship.

Practical Systems

Community of Christ is not alone in its determination to protect the children in its care. Local and international organizations recognize the need and are responding. Often initiatives to protect children follow well-publicized incidents. The impetus gathers as organizations put new safeguarding procedures into place and new texts are written on the topic. Community of Christ tries to remain aware of present-day thinking, research, and methodology as it lays out its policies.

The Child Protection Policy

The Child Protection Policy is a series of documents that clarifies safeguarding children in Community of Christ, which includes:

- Community of Christ Mission Statement
- Introduction (the context of child protection in Community of Christ)
- Registered Children and Youth Worker Application
- Training materials
- Perpetrator procedures for congregations
- Guidance policies

Some of these documents are available at *www.CofChrist.org/legal/ChildProtection/*.

Additional materials are available from the Child Protection Office, Legal Services (816) 833-1000, ext. 2220.

The policy is a changing document and will undergo periodic updates.

The Child Protection Policy contains the guidance congregational leaders need to keep the children in their care safe.

No one can work with children and young people in Community of Christ unless registered as a youth worker.

Pastor Responsibilities

- The pastor (perhaps after consultation with the pastor's leadership team) chooses a person(s) to take responsibility for coordinating the Child Protection Policy within the congregation. This may be the pastor, another leader, or person with skills in this field. (The responsibilities for this position are found below.)
- The pastor oversees the procedures for policy implementation, even if delegated.
- The pastor is responsible for a Supervised Participation Plan for a sexual perpetrator's attendance in the congregation, should this need arise.
- When an applicant has a history of felonies or has been investigated by children protection services, the pastor refers the Children and Youth Worker Application to the Special Circumstances Committee for approval. The pastor's recommendation is required. When the applicant is related to the pastor, the pastor delegates responsibility to the financial officer or other congregational leader.
- The pastor consults with the mission center regarding any additional requirements from the state or other government jurisdiction.
- It is strongly recommended that pastors and anyone involved in managing the Child Protection Policy receive the Administrators' Training available through Legal Services.

Child Protection Coordinator Responsibilities

- Administer the youth worker applications: check applicant's details, interview references and fill in form with comments, interview the applicant, and send form to mission center president. (Please consult online guidance.)
- Ensure the delivery of the Child Protection Core Training
- Ensure that all persons in the congregation who work with children and all members of the priesthood are registered children and youth workers with Community of Christ.
- Inform the pastor of any deviations from the policy.

Training Materials

Child protection training resources, both generic and specific are available for use in the field. These are listed on the website and can be requested from Legal Services at *legalservices@CofChrist.org* or (816) 833-1000, ext. 2220. Registration as a children and youth worker is two-fold:

1. Successful completion of the application form
2. Participation in Child Protection Core Training

The Child Protection Core Training Pack is available from mission centers. Additional copies are available from Legal Services. Because of copyright restrictions anyone who requests an additional set of the core training materials must purchase a *Reducing the Risk* DVD. Confirmation of the purchase of the *Reducing the Risk* DVD must be sent to the child protection coordinator in Legal Services. Follow this link to order your set: *www.reducingtherisk.com*. On receipt of the order confirmation the Core Training Pack will be delivered. To buy the leader's set go to: *http://store.churchlawtodaystore.com/reducingrisk.html*.
The Core Training (PPT) is available to download from *www.CofChrist.org/legal/childprotection*.

Registration as a Youth Worker

The guidance for registering as a children and youth worker is described above and in the online policy. Please note:

> *No one can work with children and young people in Community of Christ unless registered as a youth worker.*
>
> *Applicants are not registered as youth workers until the status code is entered onto Shelby by Legal Services.*

Sex Offenders or Abuse Incidents

Guidance about these matters is provided online. If you do not have Internet access, please contact your mission center officers or Legal Services. It is important to inform Legal Services of the circumstances surrounding these events as soon as possible. Legal services are available 24 hours a day: Telephone: (816) 833-1000 or 1-800-825-2806, ext. 2217 (during regular office hours Monday through Friday, 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. CST). Emergency telephone: (816) 509-2946 (after regular office hours and on weekends). E-mail: *legalservices@CofChrist.org*; Fax: (816) 521-3099; and website: *www.CofChrist.org/legal.* Ask for General Counsel or the child protection coordinator. Either of these people is available to offer information, support, and guidance as you may need. Legal Services will provide supervised participation plans when accused or convicted sexual perpetrators wish to participate in congregational life.

Ministers, employees, and leaders in Community of Christ are mandatory reporters of child abuse. All ministers, employees, and leaders in the congregation must report suspicion or incidents of child abuse to the relevant authorities. More information is provided in the Administrators' Training. Please contact Legal Services for any questions or assistance.

If any doubt exists regarding any aspect of the child protection policies please contact Legal Services. We recognize the demanding and often sensitive nature of this ministry. Legal Services is available 24 hours a day to support you with the prevention of child abuse.

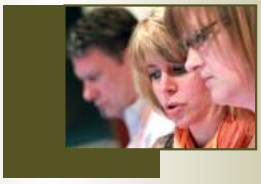
If any of the above seems daunting, don't worry. Your mission center officers and members of the Legal Services team are there to help.

Questions

1. Are the priesthood of the congregation registered youth workers?
2. Is everyone who works with children or youth a registered youth worker?
3. Becoming a registered children and youth worker is not just an administrative policy to follow—it requires active participation in a process that is designed to protect the most vulnerable. How will you talk with your priesthood and others about this? How can you use the information provided here to educate leaders in your congregation?

The Missional Budget

by Paul Davis



PRACTICES

1. Dwelling in the Word
2. Generosity

Foundational Concepts

Congregations have discussions about many important things. Perhaps none is more important than discussing the congregation's mission and how it funds mission through the annual budget.

When the congregation has clarity about its mission, the congregation can then begin to develop a budget that more closely reflects its priorities for mission.

A budget that clearly reflects Christ's mission will inspire generosity. Every Community of Christ congregation is expected to create a budget every year. Most church members consider approving the budget at a business meeting to be necessary but tedious and uninteresting. For many congregations, the budget is just a routine accounting of income and expenses. How can congregations make a shift from accounting for income and expenses to planning mission and promoting generosity?

The church is challenged in Doctrine and Covenants 163:11b "to discern and pursue what matters most for the journey ahead." Doctrine and Covenants 164:9f identifies "the mission of Jesus Christ" as what matters most. A missional budget engages the members by asking two kinds of questions: "What matters most?" and "How do we align our financial assets with what matters most?" The answers to these questions create a missional budget.

For many congregations the budget is the only written and formally approved plan the congregation has for carrying out its mission. Disinterest in the budget's development may perpetuate through the year as lack of commitment to the mission the budget supports. If not committed to the mission, people don't give to support it. On the other hand, people *do* give to support a mission to which they *are* committed.

If the budget is the congregation's only written plan approved by the congregation to pursue its mission, what can the congregation do to make the budget process count? If cajoling, haranguing, pleading, and begging members to attend the budget meeting and pay attention has worn thin, what can we do?

Engage the congregation in pre-budget meetings to discuss mission and its assets. Schedule these meetings when the most people are willing to participate, for instance, following a potluck meal. Use various means to extend invitations: bulletin announcements, e-mail, personal letters, and phone calls from the pastor or a member of the leadership team.

At the congregation's pre-budget meeting start with a blank piece of paper. Tell the congregation that it will develop budget priorities from scratch. Then ask the congregation this question: "What is the most important thing we will do as a congregation next year?" Ask participants to keep in mind that we are considering what matters most to Christ, not necessarily what we individually think is most important. Every next question will follow from the answers to this first one. Ask someone to keep notes of the meeting.

Perhaps one of the answers is "worship together." Then the next question might be, "What do we need to do to worship together to fulfill the mission of Christ?" An answer could be (from the mission initiatives) "Worship develops disciples to serve." If one of the answers is "have a church building to worship in" the recorder can write that down and leave all the details of having a church building for later. Most congregational budgets are heavy on the details of owning and maintaining a building. Right now the congregation is simply trying to surface the few things the congregation most wants to do in the coming year.

Next ask, "What else do we need to have to worship together well?" Answers could be, "a praise band," "new hymn books," "training in preaching," "including children and youth," and so on. Keep asking the question until you have a good list of what the congregation believes is necessary to worship together well.

When the congregation has fully explored "worship together" move to the next answer to that first question, "What is the most important thing we will do next year?" Repeat the process.

When the congregation has listed the three or four "most important things" and how to accomplish them enlist the congregation to estimate the costs to do them. It is important the congregational financial officer (CFO) has the current costs of operating the building, but resist the assumption that everything the congregation is doing now should continue in the same way from now on. This is one of the few moments when the congregation might be open to not doing everything the way it has always done it. It might be, for example, that "worship together" doesn't have the present building as its first requirement.

When estimating the cost of doing the most important things is complete, ask if there is anything else the congregation will need to spend money on in the coming year. If any of those expenses do not support the priorities identified by the congregation this is the moment to explore if those expenses are necessary.

The congregation now has a rough estimate of the total expected cost of the mission priorities of the congregation. This gives members an opportunity to reflect on their own participation and consider their response to give generously according to their true capacity (Doctrine and Covenants 163:9) in accomplishing those priorities, perhaps in different ways than before.

When the congregation has a rough estimate of total costs, it then considers the ability of its members to contribute or raise enough money for the congregation's priorities. If the congregation feels the estimates are sound enough, the CFO and leadership team can work together to prepare the budget to present at the budget meeting. If the congregation needs more information on cost estimates, adjourn the pre-budget meeting. Ask the CFO and leadership team to bring back to the next pre-budget meeting estimates and suggestions on how to support the priorities.

If the total estimated cost of the mission priorities is beyond what the congregation feels it can support, it may need to reduce the number of priorities or find other, less expensive, means of pursuing them.

Asking the congregations "What matters most?" and "How do we align our financial assets with what matters most?" provides the priorities for a missional budget. In addition, engaging the congregation in planning its missional budget promotes generosity to the congregation's true capacity.

Members who join in this way of creating the budget should emerge with a simple, clear idea of what the congregation is trying to do, how they plan to do it, and what it will cost. In reporting the budget results to the congregation throughout the year, the line-item headings reflect the congregation's mission—"what matters most." Paying the electricity bill does not feel like what matters most, but worshiping together does, and worshiping with the lights on is preferable.

Questions

Here is a list of questions asked in this article:

- How can congregations make a shift from accounting for income and expenses to planning mission and promoting generosity?
- A missional budget engages the members by asking two kinds of questions: "What matters most?" and "How do we align our financial assets with what matters most?"
- If the budget is the congregation's only written plan approved by the congregation to pursue its mission, what can the congregation do to make the budget process count? If cajoling, haranguing, pleading, and begging members to attend the budget meeting and pay attention has worn thin, what can we do?
- What is the most important thing we will do as a congregation next year?

Practice

Dwelling in the Word

Objective

To read and hear scripture as a spiritual practice that leads to new understandings. "Dwelling in the Word" is a practice based on our understanding that God continues to speak to us in the context of our day and calling. Listen for God's voice in scripture to connect with God's mission in Christ. Listen to the voices of others about what God is doing in their lives. This practice is not about gaining information about scripture. Rather, it is about listening to how God is speaking, calling, and sending us to join in Christ's mission to our communities and the world.

Process

Provide a printed copy of a scriptural text. A printed copy allows participants to hear and see the words for reflection. Read the scriptural text out loud and pause for a few minutes to allow people time to reflect on what they've heard.

Read the passage a second time. Ask people to make note of a word, phrase, or image they are drawn to as they hear it read again. After a short pause, form into small groups of no more than four or five people to provide opportunities for each person to share their responses to questions like ones provided below. If someone wishes to remain silent, that is acceptable. It is important to make sure the reflections are personal and do not become an exercise in biblical interpretation.

Here are some questions:

- Is there a place I feel drawn to dwell or explore?
- What words, images, or phrases are speaking to me in this text?
- What is God's invitation to me in this scripture?
- What is God's invitation to our congregation in this scripture?

This is a practice of discovery, be expectant that God's mission in Christ is among you as you gain insights from listening to one another and to God.

Process Tip

Be patient with the practice. Encourage participants to remember it is a spiritual practice that invites scripture to transform our understanding and our way of being and doing. Do not let this become an intellectual exercise which will limit the transformative impact of this practice. Like any practice, this will take time to fully understand.

*Open the pre-budget meetings with the spiritual practice "Dwelling in the Word." Use a passage that explores generosity or the mission of Christ. Scripture texts to consider are: Luke 4:14–21, Matthew 25:31–40, and Matthew 6:24–34.

Notes, Journal

Practice

Generosity

Objective

To provide a setting where people can reflect on generosity and their personal discipleship. People guard about sharing how they use their personal resources, yet Jesus refers to stewardship and the use of money throughout his ministry.

Process

In a Sunday school class or another gathering, read together Doctrine and Covenants 163:9. Provide pens and paper. Inform participants that what they write is private and will only be shared by them if willing.

1. Ask participants to write their responses to two questions:
   - How do you now share your financial or other valuable assets with others (World Mission Tithes as well as other contributions)?
   - How do you use your disposable income (such as, eating out, vacations, home improvements)?
2. After participants have had time to write their responses lead a discussion by giving opportunity for people to share (not specifically about their own giving and financial situations unless they want to) their thoughts on these two questions:
   - Are we really giving to our true capacity?
   - What keeps us from giving to our true capacity?
3. End the discussion with this question:
   - What is one new way you could share your generosity of giving in the week or month ahead?
4. Assign two or more people to plan a worship service that focuses on generosity. Encourage the worship planners to invite participants to share their testimonies of giving in new ways.

Notes, Journal

Planning and Calendar

by Jan Marshall

PRACTICES

1. Make it Colorful

Foundational Concepts

Does Your Cup (or Your Calendar) Runneth Over?

Knowing the "what" and the "why" of congregational life allows for healthy review of activities that fill calendars. Pausing and assessing what congregations do and why they do it helps pastors and congregational leaders make better decisions.

We call it "congregational *life*" for a reason. Congregations have personalities, and ways of functioning unique to them. The congregation's ministries reflect its values. Pastors and leaders get a glimpse of congregational values by looking at their calendars. Where has the congregation put its time and effort? Pastors and leaders help the congregation live out its deepest missional values by planning with a focus on mission.

Let's face it, no matter what stage of life people are in, there is no shortage of activities to fill their time and attention! Coordination and planning help prevent scheduling conflicts for individuals and families. Planning with a priority on mission helps people focus on what matters most, while not wearing them out with too many activities.

That kind of planning can be hard though. Sometimes our desire to support one another results in us taking on too much. For instance, if someone thinks of a good idea for an event or program, some congregations will add it to their schedule, even if some feel "it is just one more thing to do." People then try to be supportive, yet instead of bringing joy to the activity, it is experienced as a burden. It's no wonder then that congregations may later ask why it is so hard to find people to help.

Given the above, it is important to approach the planning calendar with care. Some initial assessments may be in order. Is your calendar too full or do you think it's not full enough? Are you competing with another congregation or other community organizations? Does it appear the church is just another place to have activities, or is it changing lives and growing disciples?

Another level of questions takes us even deeper. How can we link worship and mission? How can we make congregational activities more invitational? Are we listening to new members and friends who may bring diverse and different perspectives as to where the congregation might put its energy and time? With so many choices, pausing to consider what matters most blesses rather than inhibits.

To address these and other issues, a planning calendar is an effective tool. In order to get a big picture, such a calendar should include community events, mission center and World Church events, along with congregational activities. Community events are important for another reason. It gives leaders an opportunity to ask "Is there a way to link what we are doing with the community?"

Is It Still Vital?

Many congregations do things out of habit, without evaluating their value. Whether your congregation is large or small, well-established

or emerging, the leaders are experienced or new to their roles, there are good reasons to ask "why" questions. Activities, programs, and ministries benefit from review and evaluation:

- Why are we doing this activity?
- What is the mission or purpose of this event?
- What was the original vision behind this activity or event?
- Is it still relevant?
- Is it actually getting the results we want it to?

Time to Discard?

"If it ain't broke, don't fix it." "Everything has a shelf life." These two old sayings provide the bookends for evaluation. Just because we've always done it, or just because it was, and perhaps still is, a good idea, doesn't mean it's not worth evaluating.

- Does this activity still support the congregation's sense of purpose and mission?
- Has the people's passion or energy around this activity increased, decreased, or stayed the same?
- Does the original passion need reigniting?
- Do we just need to take a break because of fatigue or burnout?

These are freeing questions. For example, for several years a congregation held a New Year's Eve party, inviting friends and neighbors to join in fun festivities and removing the Advent and Christmas decorations. Different people took responsibility for planning so it wasn't a burden on any one individual. Everyone had a good time. Yet after a few years, attendance dwindled. The pastor asked some of those who regularly attended but had stopped coming the "why" questions.

The answers? The older people no longer wanted to be out so late at night, dealing with usually bad weather, and other drivers. The young adults now had families and didn't want to take their young children out, for many of the same reasons. It wasn't that they didn't have a good time. It was that now *what mattered more to them* was to be at home on New Year's Eve! So the pastor canceled the New Year's Eve party and rescheduled the "un-decorating" for a Saturday morning. And guess what? Everyone was relieved, even those who still would have attended. Even better, out of the conversation grew the comment that the sanctuary was so beautiful, they wished the decorations didn't have to be taken down so soon. In response, the worship team decided that some decorations (the stars and lights) would remain in place until after Epiphany (January 6). The beauty of the worship setting enhanced the scripture readings for that Sunday.

This simple example led the congregation to a renewed awareness of the value of "at home" time. A bonus was the recognition that the holiday trimmings were not just decorations. There was a renewed appreciation of how visual elements can enrich worship.

Add the Innovative!

Is there energy and a need to revitalize an activity? Perhaps adding a new dimension or fresh approach would add value.

- Are there ways to make activities and events more invitational?
- Can you pool resources with another church in the neighborhood or community?
- Can you adapt an idea to match the gifts and interests of your congregation?
- What matters most to you as a congregation?
- Is it time to embrace change and creativity that once seemed too daunting?
- Has someone come up with an idea that should be considered, even though "we've never done it before?" or "we tried it once and it didn't work." Perhaps now is the time.

Questions

We live in a busy world in which people's calendars are full. Congregational events and activities should be a blessing to people—not a burden. They should help the congregation focus on mission, rather than simply perpetuate an activity for the activity's sake. Pastors and leaders will benefit by re-reading this article and considering the questions it asks.

In addition, think about the five mission initiatives of the church.

Invite People to Christ
Christ's mission of evangelism

Abolish Poverty, End Suffering
Christ's mission of compassion

Pursue Peace on Earth
Christ's mission of justice and peace

Develop Disciples to Serve
Equip individuals for Christ's mission

Experience Congregations in Mission
Equip congregations for Christ's mission

Now, look at your congregational calendar and ask how scheduled activities relate to these initiatives. What needs to come off the calendar to make room for activity that is more missional? What is on the calendar that could be adjusted to more fully align with mission?

Notes, Journal

Practice

Make it Colorful

Objective

To help leaders use a calendar to plan for mission and assess how congregational energy is being invested. The following is one example of how to do it. This example uses a particular planning calendar. You may choose another type where each month is on an individual page or an electronic calendar. The main purpose is for participants to be able to see the whole year.

Process

1. Purchase a dry erase, one-year planning calendar, large enough to place on a wall and for leaders (members?) to see. Purchase a package of dry erase markers with multiple colors.
2. Color code events and activities you put on the calendar. For example:
   - Green—World Church events that members of the congregation might attend or watch online
   - Red—Mission center events
   - Blue—Holidays
   - Purple—Neighborhood or community events (including sporting events if appropriate)

   Write congregational activities in black and underline congregational activities in colors that indicate what type of activity each one is. For example:

   - Black—Worship
   - Orange—Pastoral care
   - Pink—Disciple formation (Christian education)
   - Brown—Witness and invitation
   - Lime green—Community outreach
   - Yellow—Fellowship
3. Fill in every date that is a "given."
4. This is when the important work begins. Decide as a leadership team if there are any events or activities that need to be **modified, dropped, or added, based on their degree of alignment with the mission initiatives.** This process could take several sessions.
5. Adjust the calendar based on changes made. Continue to modify as the year progresses.

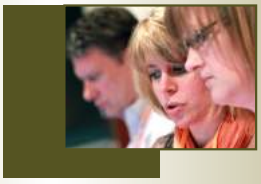
Display the wall calendar in a prominent place. Publish the calendar regularly (perhaps monthly), communicating often about each event or activity.

Keep track of event attendance, who helped plan and execute the activity, costs (or funds raised), how well it supported mission, and make note of additional comments or feedback. These details will aid in future planning. If possible, have a follow-up meeting shortly after the event to evaluate it using the questions in this article.

Notes, Journal

Priesthood Calls: Discerning and Processing

by Craig Perryman



PRACTICES

1. Consider Calls by Reflecting on Doctrine and Covenants 163:6
2. Consider Calls by Reflecting on Scriptural Principles about Priesthood

Foundational Concepts

…The priesthood shall be composed of people of humility and integrity who are willing to extend themselves in service for others and for the well-being of the faith community.

—Doctrine and Covenants 163:6a

One of the most challenging responsibilities of a pastor is to discern calls to the priesthood. This responsibility includes:

- Recognizing the gifts of the person and how those gifts relate to the office of priesthood under consideration,
- Knowing the needs and opportunities for ministry in the congregation and the larger community, and
- Having a testimony of the Holy Spirit confirming the call.

The pastor's responsibility to discern priesthood calls is a daunting yet rewarding responsibility. No pastor should take this responsibility lightly. Nor is it to be intimidating. Though a challenging responsibility, discerning priesthood calls can lead to further appreciation of God's grace experienced in faithful response to Christ's mission.

Where or how does a pastor begin? While there is no "one way" to discern priesthood calls, the following questions can be helpful. Pastors should prayerfully consider these questions over an extended period of time, rather than over just a few days or weeks.

As the pastor, do I have a testimony of the Holy Spirit confirming this call?

Many pastors ask: "How do I discern the Holy Spirit's confirmation of a priesthood call?" There is no one way the Holy Spirit works. Sometimes confirmation comes as *a still, small voice*, when there are subtle and recurring insights into a person's life and gifts. At other times it is by the affirming testimonies of trusted colleagues in ministry, such as evangelists and other experienced ministers. This is not to say that pastors should initiate calls to priesthood based on someone else's testimony alone. It is simply to say that the testimonies of others can be a confirming witness of a call that a pastor has been praying and thinking about. Some pastors experience a steady, heightened awareness or appreciation of a person's gifts and ministerial presence. Other pastors will sense a "rightness" or peace over time as they pray, while others will experience a "nagging" persistent awareness of a person's ministerial capacity. For many pastors, insight comes as a combination of two or more of the above testimonies.

What are the person's gifts and how do these gifts relate to the office of priesthood under consideration?

The statement in Doctrine and Covenants 119:8b that all are called according to their gifts is wise counsel. It is especially important to think about this when considering a potential call to priesthood. One should never think of priesthood as a pool of generic ministers. Instead, each priesthood minister's call is to be a specialist, focusing

on particular areas of life and ministry according to the duties of their office. Consequently, reflecting on a person's gifts and how those gifts relate to specific priesthood offices becomes crucial when considering a potential call to priesthood.

What are the needs resident in the congregation and community?

No one is called to minister in isolation. Being aware of congregational and community needs often heightens one's awareness of the gifts growing and blooming within the congregation that can help address those needs. The wise pastor will explore how the needs of the congregation and its vision for the future relate to the need for particular priesthood offices.

What is the person's ministerial "readiness" for priesthood ministry?

When pastors experience insight into a person's call to priesthood, there is an appropriate companion question to ask. "Should this person be called now? Or..."Am I (the pastor) being called to help this person mature to a point of greater readiness before initiating the recommendation for ordination?" Some clarifying questions include:

- Is the person's awareness of scripture and church identity, mission, message, and beliefs adequate for them to represent the church as an ordained minister or is further development in these areas necessary?
- Is the person relationally and spiritually mature enough now in their life to be respected in their ministry by multiple age groups?
- Does the person currently contribute financially to both local and World Church ministries?
- Is the person a registered children and youth worker? (Or can they become one?)

Sometimes the circumstances are right for a person to be called and ordained in the relatively near future. Sometimes additional preparation is needed. Discerning between the two is important and meaningful work.

Who can I consult with about a potential call to priesthood?

Considering calls to priesthood is a confidential matter. Pastors should not discuss it with the person for whom a call is being considered. Still, it is helpful for a pastor to discuss a potential call with ministerial colleagues who can support the pastor confidentially. It is important to keep this circle of confidence small. Appropriate ministers to consult include counselors (but not the whole leadership team), the mission center president, or a trusted evangelist.

The pastor is well-advised to consider other "general qualities" when considering calls to priesthood. For instance, it is helpful to ask:

- Does the person have a testimony of God working in her or his life?
- Does the person demonstrate a commitment to the mission of Jesus Christ?
- Does the person model service and humility?
- Is it the person's nature to make others feel welcome and wanted in their presence?
- Are they adept at seeing both sides of an issue?
- What responsibilities already lay claim to the individual's time, energy, and resources?
- How is the person's health?
- Will their immediate family be supportive of their ministry? Does the person bring out the best in others?
- Is the person effective in helping others in their spiritual journey? Does the person avoid using alcohol, tobacco, and other addicting substances?

Processing the Call

Once the pastor has spiritual confirmation of a call (and hopefully the support of counselors), the pastor may begin the formal process of initiating the call. Strict attention must be paid to the required procedure.

Begin by filling out the Recommendation for Ordination Form which is available from the mission center president or found in the *Church Administrator's Handbook* (2005 edition). Submit the completed form to the mission center president for consideration and approval. Do not approach the candidate about the call until administrative approvals have been obtained.

After the mission center president has informed the pastor that the call is approved, the pastor informs the candidate and shares a testimony of the call. At this point it is appropriate to review with the candidate the responsibilities and expectations of priesthood and the specific office in consideration. Helpful information about priesthood and each office is in *The Priesthood Manual* as well as in "Priesthood Standards and Qualifications" (*Church Administrator's Handbook*, 2005 edition). The candidate is *not* expected to give the pastor an answer during this first visit. However, the candidate should be informed that if they accept the call, the congregation will need to approve ordination.

The pastor then invites the candidate to enter into a period of exploration and discernment and to spend time prayerfully considering the call. A period of exploration and discernment provides the candidate time to understand,

prepare and commit to the ministerial needs of the congregation and its surrounding community.

It is not necessary for the candidate to accept the call before beginning preordination classes. Completing the preordination classes combined with personal spiritual preparation is a recommended practice in the period of exploration and discernment.

The candidate has one year to accept the call. If the candidate does not accept the call at the end of one year, consideration of the call ends. If a pastor continues to have a testimony of the call, a new call may be initiated later.

If a person accepts the call, the pastor requests approval for ordination by the congregation. (For calls to the Aaronic priesthood and the office of elder, approval for ordination is at a congregational conference.)

Members of the congregation may not be fully aware of the responsibilities of the various offices of priesthood. Reviewing the responsibilities of the candidate's office and other priesthood offices might be very helpful. Descriptions and responsibilities of the various offices are available in *The Priesthood Manual* (*www.CofChrist.org /priesthood/congregation-focused.asp*).

After a period of exploration and discernment and after accepting the call, the candidate enters a period of preparation. This preparation may last up to a year for the candidate to complete the preordination classes and write a plan for ministry.

Ordination of the candidate occurs after the congregation approves ordination and the candidate completes the preordination classes.

Remember, it is *never* proper to use ordination as a tool to entice someone into greater commitment or as a means to "keep someone active" in the church. Doing so almost always leads to having a minister who is "less engaged" than one would like, and to discontent in the congregation. Likewise, initiating a priesthood call for someone in order to solidify relationships, pacify influential families, or even to reward a faithful disciple is improper and will be harmful to congregational life.

Discerning and processing priesthood calls is a sacred stewardship. It is not to be taken lightly, nor is it meant to be intimidating. Engaging the process prayerfully and according to the foregoing principles can help the pastor in this important stewardship. You can expect God's grace to bless you in the process.

Questions

This article has two sets of "bulleted" questions (on page 38). It is good to spend time with these questions when considering a priesthood call. It can be especially helpful to prayerfully consider these questions with your counselors.

Notes, Journal

Practice

Consider Calls by Reflecting on Doctrine and Covenants 163:6

Objective

For the pastor to seek insight into potential priesthood calls by prayerful reflection on statements about priesthood found in Doctrine and Covenants 163:6.

Process

Pray seeking God's presence and guidance to bless you as you consider calls for priesthood. Pray, keeping in mind each person under consideration by reading and reflecting on the following statements. You may wish to have your counselors join you in this process.

- Priesthood is a sacred covenant involving the highest form of stewardship of body, mind, spirit, and relationships.
- The priesthood shall be composed of people of humility and integrity who are willing to extend themselves in service for others and for the well-being of the faith community.
- Truly authoritative priesthood ministry emerges from a growing capacity to bring blessing to others.
- Priesthood is a calling with high…regard to appropriate levels of preparation and response.
- The expectation for priesthood to continually magnify their callings through spiritual growth, study, exemplary generosity, ethical choices, and fully accountable ministry is always present.
- How can the Spirit fill vessels that are unwilling to expand their capacity to receive and give according to a full measure of God's grace and truth?
- Fundamentally, however, the ultimate responsibility for priesthood faithfulness rests on the individual in response to the needs and expectations of the faith community.

Notes, Journal

Practice

Consider Calls by Reflecting on Scriptural Principles about Priesthood

Objective

For the pastor to seek insight regarding potential priesthood calls by prayerful reflection on the *Priesthood Scriptural Principles*. (The priesthood scriptural principles are part of the Priesthood Faithfulness Team Report to the 2010 World Conference. These scriptural principles, including a video presentation, are available at *www.CofChrist.org/wc2010/reports/priesthoodfaithfulness.asp*.)

Process

Pray, seeking God's presence and guidance to bless you as you consider calls for priesthood. Pray, keeping in mind each person under consideration by reading and reflecting on the *Priesthood Scriptural Principles*. You may want to ask your counselors to join you in this process over a period of time.

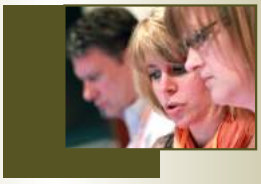
- Priesthood is a sacred covenant one enters with God and the faith community involving the total commitment of one's life.
- The foundation for priesthood ministry is the wholistic ministry of Jesus Christ—God's shalom. Jesus modeled the essential balance between spiritual formation, renewal, and ministry to others.
- God calls disciples to share the peace of Jesus Christ. God entrusts some to responsibilities of priesthood and leadership.
- Priesthood ministry is a response to the grace and generosity of God.
- As priesthood members share ministry in their office and calling, the faith community experiences the wholistic ministry of Jesus.
- Priesthood members prepare and extend themselves in the service of God's vision for the blessing and salvation of creation.
- Priesthood members embody generosity, humility, and integrity.
- Priesthood members continually seek to magnify their calling.
- Office-specific ministry may expand as new insights emerge through our encounter with God's revelation.
- The ultimate responsibility for priesthood faithfulness rests on the individual in response to the needs and expectations of the faith community. The church is accountable to God for supporting, equipping, and empowering priesthood members to fulfill their calling to bring blessing to the community.

Notes, Journal

Foundational Concepts

Resources: Descriptions and Locations

by Jan Marshall



PRACTICES

Effective leaders do not need to "know it all." Competent leaders *do* need to know where to find information or answers when needed! In addition, staying connected with what's happening in Community of Christ throughout the world helps congregations know they are part of a worldwide faith community engaged in Christ's mission. That sense of connection is uplifting and encouraging, giving us a sense that our small part is linked with other efforts.

Effective leaders also stay current through resources available for the congregation, and for enriching their own ministry and spiritual growth. Congregations expect their leaders to be informed and equipped to lead. Leaders should give their best efforts in their roles. The church offers three types of resources to help pastors and leaders stay connected and informed:

1. People resources
2. Community of Christ website
3. Printed or DVD resources

People Resources

Your mission center president and financial officer are your primary "go to" people resources. Their role is to support you and your congregation. Don't hesitate to seek them out. They want to help!

Take advantage of opportunities to attend events like mission center conferences, retreats, reunions, and priesthood training events. These are great places to connect with knowledgeable people who can help in a variety of ways. If possible, plan to attend World Church events such as World Conference or the annual Peace Colloquy. Introduce yourself to your apostle, apostolic assistant, and field missionary coordinator. Their ministry will enrich yours.

People resources are priceless, but printed, DVD, and online resources are also immensely valuable.

Community of Christ Website

You will find the most up-to-date information on the church's website, *www.CofChrist.org*. Click "Tools for Ministry" and then "Online Resources" to find an alphabetical list. If you do not have a computer, use your local library or ask someone in your congregation to help you access the information. See the list of electronic forms available on the website at the end of this article.

Print and DVD Resources

Subscribing to the *Herald* (printed or electronic format) keeps you up-to-date with official information, thoughtful articles, and testimonial stories from around the world.

Pastors are automatically included in the distribution of the *10-Minute News*, a short newsletter with brief updates on what's happening in the church. Periodically International Headquarters mails a DVD to

pastors for sharing with the congregation. An example is the highlights from World Conference DVD.

Printed books and other materials are available for purchase from Herald House, w*ww.HeraldHouse.org*. Some items are in more than one format (bound and printed, CD, DVD, or downloaded file).

Must-Haves for Every Pastor

The following Community of Christ resources are available in printed copy or as download files from the website. They are essential for every pastor.

- *Church Administrator's Handbook,* 2005 edition—(order from *www.HeraldHouse.org* or download from *www.CofChrist.org/policy*). This resource contains answers to many of the administrative questions that arise in the life of the church.
- *Sharing in Community of Christ: Exploring Identity, Mission, Message, and Beliefs,* 2nd edition. This is a foundational "identity document" for the church. Contains the enduring principles; statements on Christology, scripture, history principles, and basic beliefs. Individual documents and related videos or DVDs on these sections can also be found at *www.CofChrist.org/discernment/weshare/default.asp.*
- *The Priesthood Manual*, 2004 edition:
  (order from *www.HeraldHouse.org*)
- *Worship Resources* (produced each year and available from Herald House at *www.HeraldHouse.org*)
- *Daily Bread* or other spiritual renewal resource—keeps you grounded in Christ, as a reminder of the importance of balancing time with God. Order from *www.HeraldHouse.org.*

Must-Haves for Disciple Formation

- *Becoming a Generous Disciple* booklet:
  (order from *www.HeraldHouse.org*)
- The online Disciple Formation Guide (*www.CofChrist.org/dfg*) provides practices, lessons, links to resources and other tools specific to Community of Christ's identity, mission, message, and beliefs.
- Priesthood resources:
  www.CofChrist.org/priesthood/resources.asp
- *Seasons of the Spirit* (SeasonsENCORE)—a lectionary-based ecumenical Biblical literacy curriculum resource. Go to *www.CofChrist.org/dfg/seasons.asp* to learn more about this.
- Spiritual formation resources:
  www.CofChrist.org/spiritualformation/default.asp

Must-Haves for Congregational Mission

The May and June 2011 *Herald* issues contain President Veazey's addresses to the church (information central to understanding the church's mission, also available in video format *www.CofChrist.org/presidency/sermons/default.asp #2011*).

Witnessing Resources Subject Guide (Where can I find it?)—(*www.CofChrist.org/seventy/resources.asp*) includes *Hospitality: Sharing God's Welcome, Understanding the Way, A Witnessing Community*. These are hands-on practical helps for the congregation in its witness.

Other articles in this field guide are designed to help, especially "Invitation, Witness, and Hospitality" and the following in the section on "Exploring Mission":

- Sharing Leadership and Ministry
- Discovering Our Context for Mission
- Becoming Sacred Community: A Foundation for Mission
- Discerning God's Call for Mission
- Orienting Mission around the Gifts of All Ages

Electronic Forms (available on the website)

- Aaronic Ministry Plan: *www.CofChrist.org/aaronic*
- Children and Youth Worker Registration:
  www.CofChrist.org/legal/ChildProtection/default.asp
- Deacon Ministry Plan: *www.CofChrist.org/aaronic*
- Elder Ministry Plan:
  www.CofChrist.org/priesthood/resources.asp
- Evangelist Ministry Plan:
  www.CofChrist.org/priesthood/resources.asp
- Event Release Form (permissions, liability, track emergency notifications, and more):
  www.CofChrist.org/child_youth/event-release.asp
- Legal Services (see their web page for many more helps plus these three frequently requested forms):
  www.CofChrist.org/legal/default.asp
- Contract Information Form:
  www.CofChrist.org/legal/contract-info.asp
- Lease Request Form:
  www.CofChrist.org/legal/Lease_Request_info.pdf
- Houses of Worship Revolving Fund Loan Application (sample):
  www.CofChrist.org/legal/building/sampleApplication.pdf

- Priest Ministry Plan—*www.CofChrist.org/aaronic*
- Risk Management: *www.CofChrist.org/risk/forms.asp*
- General Consent and Waiver Form:
  www.CofChrist.org/risk/forms/ConsentRelease.pdf
- Waiver of Liability:
  www.CofChrist.org/risk/forms/riskwaiver.pdf
- Shelby Access Request (for pastors, financial officers, and recorders or their designees to gain access to congregational membership data):
  http://formrouter.net/forms@COFC/ShelbyOnlineAccessRequest.html
- Tangible Love (grants available to encourage outreach ministries): *www.CofChrist.org/tlove/apply.asp*
- Teacher Ministry Plan: *www.CofChrist.org/aaronic*

Notes, Journal

Alphabetical Index of Practices and Tools

Action Steps for Sustaining Balance and Renewal—To help congregational leaders take steps toward living a life of greater balance and renewal.
Orienting Congregational Life Toward Mission—48

Aligning Budgets with Mission—To align the congregational budget to the mission initiatives.
Orienting Congregational Life Toward Mission—67

Aligning What We're Already Doing—To help the pastor's leadership team align congregation ministries with the mission initiatives.
Responding to the Call—23

Assessing Congregational Familiarity with Sacraments—To help the pastor's leadership team understand the awareness of the congregation relative to the sacraments.
Orienting Congregational Life Toward Mission—92

Assessing Our Pastoral Care Needs—To help the pastor's leadership team assess pastoral care needs and resources.
Orienting Congregational Life Toward Mission—74

Assessing Your Team Climate: Components for Establishing the Right Climate TOOL—To indicate agreement on attitudes, trust, safety, working together, and emotional intelligence.
Orienting Congregational Life Toward Mission—12

Assessing Your Team's Communication: An Examination of Behaviors and Skills TOOL—To assess effectiveness on reflective thinking and delay responding, perspective taking and empathy, expressing emotions, and listening for understanding.
Orienting Congregational Life Toward Mission—15

Body of Christ—To affirm the gifts that each person brings to the team or group.
Orienting Congregational Life Toward Mission—10

Building Intergenerational Relationships—To deepen friendships, understanding and trust between older and younger people.
Orienting Congregational Life Toward Mission—104

Building a "Young Adult Friendly" Congregation—To help the congregation become responsive to the young adult generation's special needs and life concerns.
Orienting Congregational Life Toward Mission—106

Caring for One's Spirit—To deepen one's relationship with God through prayer, study, and reflection on a regular basis.
Orienting Congregational Life Toward Mission—51

Celebrating Life—To celebrate the gift of our own life and the life of others who are part of our community.
Orienting Congregational Life Toward Mission—5

Centering Prayer—To create a space of quiet openness to become aware of God's presence.
Exploring Mission—28
Orienting Congregational Life Toward Mission—34

Centering Prayer (for Priesthood)—To be aware of God's presence and guidance as the pastor and priesthood share prayer and conversation.
Orienting Congregational Life Toward Mission—79

Congregational Preparation for the Sacraments—To help the congregation enter more deeply into sacramental experience through personal preparation.
Orienting Congregational Life Toward Mission—94

Consider Calls by Reflecting on Doctrine and Covenants 163:6—To seek insight regarding potential priesthood calls by prayerful reflection.
Establishing Organizational Effectiveness—40

Consider Calls by Reflecting on Scriptural Principles about Priesthood—To seek insight regarding potential priesthood calls by prayerful reflection.
Establishing Organizational Effectiveness—41

Conversation about U.S. Percept Reports and Mission—To have conversations about demographic data for your congregation's neighborhood to discern mission.
Orienting Congregational Life Toward Mission—81

Disciple Formation Guide—To help leaders become familiar with the online Disciple Formation Guide as a tool for growing disciples.
Orienting Congregational Life Toward Mission—40

Dwelling in the Word—To read and hear scripture as a spiritual practice that leads to new understandings.
Responding to the Call—14
Exploring Mission—4, 23, 30
Orienting Congregational Life Toward Mission—4, 98
Establishing Organizational Effectiveness—31

Encounter Scripture as Continuing Revelation—To help people open themselves to God's presence and guidance through prayerful attention to scripture.
Orienting Congregational Life Toward Mission—31

Exploring Call and Giftedness—To help leaders explore and discuss their personal sense of calling and giftedness.
Exploring Mission—35

Exploring Congregational Gifts—To help congregations explore their gifts for mission.
Exploring Mission—34

Exploring Scripture on Ministry—To equip priesthood members to magnify their gifts and abilities to build up God's people and strengthen the witness of the church.
Orienting Congregational Life Toward Mission—86

Exploring Your Culture—To help congregations be acquainted with and understand community needs that the congregation may be called to address.
Orienting Congregational Life Toward Mission—38

Finding My Voice, Finding Our Voice—To clearly articulate "what I will do" and "what we will do" in faithful ministry to God.
Orienting Congregational Life Toward Mission—87

First Impressions—To help congregational leaders understand how the congregation is intentionally or unintentionally communicating to visitors, friends, and members.
Establishing Organizational Effectiveness—4

Generosity—To provide a setting where people can reflect on generosity and their personal discipleship.
Establishing Organizational Effectiveness—32

Grief Ministry—To help congregational ministers care for people who are grieving the loss of a loved one.
Orienting Congregational Life Toward Mission—73

Hearing with New Eyes and New Ears—To be receptive to the Holy Spirit in hearing and seeing the needs of people in the community where we live, work, and play.
Orienting Congregational Life Toward Mission—44

Holding in the Light—To pray for others by use of the scriptural image of light.
Orienting Congregational Life Toward Mission—21, 33

Honoring and Discovering Your Gifts—To review ministries of the congregation, identify gifts, and share stories of how these gifts are expressed.
Exploring Mission—6

Hospitality—To practice the hospitality of sharing one's home.
Responding to the Call—15
Exploring Mission—5

I Have a Dream—To stay focused on the possibilities that await us in the future and to unite our decision making processes by the guidance of our collective dreams.
Orienting Congregational Life Toward Mission—7

Identifying and Using Peoples' Gifts—To help pastors and worship planners identify gifts for worship within the congregation.
Orienting Congregational Life Toward Mission—113

Identifying Gifts for Mission—To discover one's gifts and to summarize the gifts of priesthood members for planning ministries.
Orienting Congregational Life Toward Mission—85

If I Could Change One Thing—To listen to one other about the one item that each one would change so the group can decide what might be the best activity to focus on next.
Orienting Congregational Life Toward Mission—8

Initiating an Audit—To help the pastor initiate an audit.
Establishing Organizational Effectiveness—10

Justice in the Bible—To raise awareness of justice and peace in the scriptural tradition of Community of Christ.
Orienting Congregational Life Toward Mission—22

Leading Congregational Conferences (Business Meetings) Script TOOL
Establishing Organizational Effectiveness—17

Lectio Divina—To listen prayerfully for what God wants to say to us through scripture.
Orienting Congregational Life Toward Mission—28, 99

Listening in the Spaces—To re-center during pauses throughout the day so we become more aware of God's presence in the world around us.
Exploring Mission—16

Make It Colorful—To help leaders use a calendar to plan for mission and assess how congregational energy is being invested.
Establishing Organizational Effectiveness—36

Ministry of Generosity—To increase generosity by the congregation being more aware of the life-changing ministries that their contributions make possible.
Orienting Congregational Life Toward Mission—64

Mission and Congregational Gifts—To align the congregation's gifts with mission to increase effectiveness and energy.
Responding to the Call—24

Mission Initiatives Overview and Questions for Leaders—To reflect on the five mission initiatives.
Responding to the Call—16

My Favorite Scripture—To deepen our relationship with one another and with God by sharing important scripture passages.
Orienting Congregational Life Toward Mission—11

Our Own Vulnerability—To help pastors and leaders explore their own vulnerability and generosity through relationships with people who are fragile or suffering.
Orienting Congregational Life Toward Mission—65

Panes of Perspective—To design and plan activities, ministry, and mission by use of current trends that impact ministry and mission.

Exploring Mission—17
Orienting Congregational Life Toward Mission—107

Pastoral Care and Worship Ministry to Homebound Persons—To blend pastoral care and worship ministry gifts to people who are homebound.

Orienting Congregational Life Toward Mission—72

Pastor's Leadership Team and Focused Prayer—To seek the leadings of the Holy Spirit for ministries of invitation and witness.

Orienting Congregational Life Toward Mission—58

Permission to Yearn, Invitation to Dream—To help congregational leaders explore their yearnings and dreams to be open to the inspiration of God's Spirit.

Orienting Congregational Life Toward Mission—49

Permission to Yearn, Invitation to Dream (for Priesthood)—To help members of the priesthood explore their dreams and be open to the inspiration of God's Spirit.

Orienting Congregational Life Toward Mission—78

Photo Release TOOL—Photo release form for general use.

Establishing Organizational Effectiveness—5

Prayer of Examen—To help us review the day with God by examining our need for forgiveness, healing, reconciliation and recommitment.

Orienting Congregational Life Toward Mission—29

Praying for the Other—To enter prayer that is focused on behalf of another person.

Exploring Mission—8

Praying the News—To help make conditions and happenings in the community an integral part of congregational spiritual practice.

Orienting Congregational Life Toward Mission—23

Priesthood Covenant Renewal Service—To re-covenant together in mutual ministries by planning an annual worship service of renewal and commitment to Christ's mission.

Orienting Congregational Life Toward Mission—84

Priesthood Ministry Conversations—To begin conversations with their pastor to assess the needs of the faith community and discover the ministry each person can offer.

Orienting Congregational Life Toward Mission—82

Reading and Writing Psalms—To help people prayerfully express their deepest thoughts and feelings by modeling the Psalms.

Orienting Congregational Life Toward Mission—30

Reflecting on Our Own Disciple Formation for Mission—To help leaders think about their personal formation as disciples.

Orienting Congregational Life Toward Mission—39

Regular Evaluation of Activities—To determine to what extent congregational activities are promoting the mission initiative Invite People to Christ.

Orienting Congregational Life Toward Mission—57

Review and Readiness—To help the pastor and pastor's leadership team lead mission without unnecessary problems or delays due to neglecting legal matters.

Establishing Organizational Effectiveness—24

Role Play Different Perspectives (based on Six Thinking Hats®)—To look at challenges and opportunities from different perspectives.

Orienting Congregational Life Toward Mission—9

Sample Auditor's Letter TOOL
Establishing Organizational Effectiveness—11

Schedule Quarterly Baptismal Services—To uphold the importance of uniting with Jesus Christ and a faith community through baptism and confirmation.
Orienting Congregational Life Toward Mission—56

Serving Side by Side—To build community and prepare young adult leaders for successful participation and leadership in the congregation.
Orienting Congregational Life Toward Mission—105

Shared Leadership—To deepen relationships and a sense of community on the pastor's leadership team.
Responding to the Call—5

Sharing in the Round—To develop and deepen relationships by sharing in table fellowship.
Exploring Mission—7

Sharing Invitation—To heighten congregational awareness that the sacraments are to be generously shared.
Orienting Congregational Life Toward Mission—93

Sharing Our Stories—To help disciples develop their story of faith and prepare them to listen to the stories of others on their journey of faith.
Responding to the Call—13

Spiritual Types and Worship—To help people plan worship that blesses everyone by honoring various spiritual types.
Orienting Congregational Life Toward Mission—112

Sustaining a Focus on Mission—To help the pastor and the pastor's leadership team keep their focus on mission.
Responding to the Call—6

Taking Time Away—To plan and implement a personal retreat—a time to be away with God.
Orienting Congregational Life Toward Mission—50

Talking About Mission—To create a climate to explore the mission initiatives in relationship to the congregation's context.
Responding to the Call—22

Third Place Ministry—To learn to listen and pay attention in neighborhood or community settings to what is happening in the lives of people.
Exploring Mission—15

Time for Personal Spiritual Practices—To create an environment in the pastor's life for renewal, continued insight for leadership, and grounding in a relationship with God.
Responding to the Call—4

'Tis a Gift to be Simple: A Lifestyle Audit—To help people consider the difference between "wants" and "needs" to free resources for Christ's mission.
Orienting Congregational Life Toward Mission—66

Using Lectionary Scripture and Dwelling in the Word in Worship—To bring scripture alive with personal reflection and sharing in congregational worship.
Orienting Congregational Life Toward Mission—100

Valuing the Other—To deepen conversation and understanding by developing active listening skills.
Exploring Mission—9, 22
Orienting Congregational Life Toward Mission—6

Walking in Nature—To become aware of God's presence by being attentive to nature as a revelation of God.
Orienting Congregational Life Toward Mission—32

Walking the Neighborhood—To listen and pay attention to what is happening in the lives of people in the community.
Exploring Mission—14, 29
Orienting Congregational Life Toward Mission—20, 60

Walking the Neighborhood (for Priesthood)—To discern ways members of the priesthood and their congregation can respond to specific needs in their neighborhood.

Orienting Congregational Life Toward Mission—80

Who Do We Want to Be?—To describe how the enduring principles can be lived out in the congregation by asking, "Who do we want to be?"

Responding to the Call—10

Witness and Invitation Moment—To plan witness and invitation as a part of every worship service.

Orienting Congregational Life Toward Mission—59

Worship Planning Questions—To plan worship that helps worshipers to praise God, be formed in discipleship and experience congregations in mission.

Orienting Congregational Life Toward Mission—114

Topical Index of Practices and Tools

Administrative

First Impressions—To help congregational leaders understand how the congregation is intentionally or unintentionally communicating to visitors, friends, and members.
Establishing Organizational Effectiveness—4

Initiating an Audit—To help the pastor initiate an audit.
Establishing Organizational Effectiveness—10

Make It Colorful—To help leaders use a calendar to plan for mission and assess how congregational energy is being invested.
Establishing Organizational Effectiveness—36

Photo Release TOOL—Photo release form for general use.
Establishing Organizational Effectiveness—5

Review and Readiness—To help the pastor and pastor's leadership team lead mission without unnecessary problems or delays due to neglecting legal matters.
Establishing Organizational Effectiveness—24

Sample Auditor's Letter TOOL
Establishing Organizational Effectiveness—11

Discernment

Conversation about U.S. Percept Reports and Mission—To have conversations about demographic data for your congregation's neighborhood to discern mission.
Orienting Congregational Life Toward Mission—81

I Have a Dream—To stay focused on the possibilities that await us in the future and to unite our decision making processes by the guidance of our collective dreams.
Orienting Congregational Life Toward Mission—7

Permission to Yearn, Invitation to Dream—To help congregational leaders explore their yearnings and dreams to be open to the inspiration of God's Spirit.
Orienting Congregational Life Toward Mission—49

Praying the News—To help make conditions and happenings in the community an integral part of congregational spiritual practice.
Orienting Congregational Life Toward Mission—23

Who Do We Want to Be?—To describe how the enduring principles can be lived out in the congregation by asking, "Who do we want to be?"
Responding to the Call—10

Discipleship

Disciple Formation Guide—To help leaders become familiar with the online Disciple Formation Guide as a tool for growing disciples.
Orienting Congregational Life Toward Mission—40

Exploring Your Culture—To help congregations be acquainted with and understand community needs that the congregation may be called to address.
Orienting Congregational Life Toward Mission—38

Generosity—To provide a setting where people can reflect on generosity and their personal discipleship.
Establishing Organizational Effectiveness—32

Hospitality—To practice the hospitality of sharing one's home.
Responding to the Call—15
Exploring Mission—5

Our Own Vulnerability—To help pastors and leaders explore their own vulnerability and generosity through relationships with people who are fragile or suffering.
Orienting Congregational Life Toward Mission—65

Prayer of Examen—To help us review the day with God by examining our need for forgiveness, healing, reconciliation and recommitment.
Orienting Congregational Life Toward Mission—29

Reflecting on Our Own Disciple Formation for Mission—To help leaders think about their personal formation as disciples.
Orienting Congregational Life Toward Mission—39

Sharing in the Round—To develop and deepen relationships by sharing in table fellowship.
Exploring Mission—7

Sharing Our Stories—To help disciples develop their story of faith and prepare them to listen to the stories of others on their journey of faith.
Responding to the Call—13

'Tis a Gift to be Simple: A Lifestyle Audit—To help people consider the difference between "wants" and "needs" to free resources for Christ's mission.
Orienting Congregational Life Toward Mission—66

Generosity

Generosity—To provide a setting where people can reflect on generosity and their personal discipleship.
Establishing Organizational Effectiveness—32

Ministry of Generosity—To increase generosity by the congregation being more aware of the life-changing ministries that their contributions make possible.
Orienting Congregational Life Toward Mission—64

Our Own Vulnerability—To help pastors and leaders explore their own vulnerability and generosity through relationships with people who are fragile or suffering.
Orienting Congregational Life Toward Mission—65

'Tis a Gift to be Simple: A Lifestyle Audit—To help people consider the difference between "wants" and "needs" to free resources for Christ's mission.
Orienting Congregational Life Toward Mission—66

Gifts

Body of Christ—To affirm the gifts that each person brings to the team or group.
Orienting Congregational Life Toward Mission—10

Celebrating Life—To celebrate the gift of our own life and the life of others who are part of our community.
Orienting Congregational Life Toward Mission—5

Exploring Call and Giftedness—To help leaders explore and discuss their personal sense of calling and giftedness.
Exploring Mission—35

Exploring Congregational Gifts—To help congregations explore their gifts for mission.
Exploring Mission—34

Honoring and Discovering Your Gifts—To review ministries of the congregation, identify gifts, and share stories of how these gifts are expressed.
Exploring Mission—6

Identifying and Using Peoples' Gifts—To help pastors and worship planners identify gifts for worship within the congregation.

Orienting Congregational Life Toward Mission—113

Mission and Congregational Gifts—To align the congregation's gifts with mission to increase effectiveness and energy.

Responding to the Call—24

Invite and Witness

Pastor's Leadership Team and Focused Prayer—To seek the leadings of the Holy Spirit for ministries of invitation and witness.

Orienting Congregational Life Toward Mission—58

Regular Evaluation of Activities—To determine to what extent congregational activities are promoting the mission initiative Invite People to Christ.

Orienting Congregational Life Toward Mission—57

Schedule Quarterly Baptismal Services—To uphold the importance of uniting with Jesus Christ and a faith community through baptism and confirmation.

Orienting Congregational Life Toward Mission—56

Sharing Invitation—To heighten congregational awareness that the sacraments are to be generously shared.

Orienting Congregational Life Toward Mission—93

Witness and Invitation Moment—To plan witness and invitation as a part of every worship service.

Orienting Congregational Life Toward Mission—59

Leadership and Team Leadership

Assessing Your Team Climate: Components for Establishing the Right Climate TOOL—To indicate agreement on attitudes, trust, safety, working together, and emotional intelligence.

Orienting Congregational Life Toward Mission—12

Assessing Your Team's Communication: An Examination of Behaviors and Skills TOOL—To assess effectiveness on reflective thinking and delay responding, perspective taking and empathy, expressing emotions, and listening for understanding.

Orienting Congregational Life Toward Mission—15

Exploring Call and Giftedness—To help leaders explore and discuss their personal sense of calling and giftedness.

Exploring Mission—35

Finding My Voice, Finding Our Voice—To clearly articulate "what I will do" and "what we will do" in faithful ministry to God.

Orienting Congregational Life Toward Mission—87

Hearing with New Eyes and New Ears—To be receptive to the Holy Spirit in hearing and seeing the needs of people in the community where we live, work, and play.

Orienting Congregational Life Toward Mission—44

I Have a Dream—To stay focused on the possibilities that await us in the future and to unite our decision making processes by the guidance of our collective dreams.

Orienting Congregational Life Toward Mission—7

If I Could Change One Thing—To listen to one other about the one item that each one would change so the group can decide what might be the best activity to focus on next.

Orienting Congregational Life Toward Mission—8

Mission Initiatives Overview and Questions for Leaders—To reflect on the five mission initiatives.

Responding to the Call—16

My Favorite Scripture—To deepen our relationship with one another and with God by sharing important scripture passages.

Orienting Congregational Life Toward Mission—11

Our Own Vulnerability—To help pastors and leaders explore their own vulnerability and generosity through relationships with people who are fragile or suffering.

Orienting Congregational Life Toward Mission—65

Pastor's Leadership Team and Focused Prayer—To seek the leadings of the Holy Spirit for ministries of invitation and witness.

Orienting Congregational Life Toward Mission—58

Permission to Yearn, Invitation to Dream—To help congregational leaders explore their yearnings and dreams to be open to the inspiration of God's Spirit.

Orienting Congregational Life Toward Mission—49

Reflecting on Our Own Disciple Formation for Mission—To help leaders think about their personal formation as disciples.

Orienting Congregational Life Toward Mission—39

Role Play Different Perspectives (based on Six Thinking Hats®)—To look at challenges and opportunities from different perspectives.

Orienting Congregational Life Toward Mission—9

Serving Side by Side—To build community and prepare young adult leaders for successful participation and leadership in the congregation.

Orienting Congregational Life Toward Mission—105

Shared Leadership—To deepen relationships and a sense of community on the pastor's leadership team.

Responding to the Call—5

Time for Personal Spiritual Practices—To create an environment in the pastor's life for renewal, continued insight for leadership, and grounding in a relationship with God.

Responding to the Call—4

Mission

Aligning Budgets with Mission—To align the congregational budget to the mission initiatives.

Orienting Congregational Life Toward Mission—67

Aligning What We're Already Doing—To help the pastor's leadership team align congregation ministries with the mission initiatives.

Responding to the Call—23

Exploring Congregational Gifts—To help congregations explore their gifts for mission.

Exploring Mission—34

Exploring Your Culture—To help congregations be acquainted with and understand community needs that the congregation may be called to address.

Orienting Congregational Life Toward Mission—38

Identifying Gifts for Mission—To discover one's gifts and to summarize the gifts of priesthood members for planning ministries.

Orienting Congregational Life Toward Mission—85

Mission and Congregational Gifts—To align the congregation's gifts with mission to increase effectiveness and energy.

Responding to the Call—24

Mission Initiatives Overview and Questions for Leaders—To reflect on the five mission initiatives.

Responding to the Call—16

Panes of Perspective—To design and plan activities, ministry, and mission by use of current trends that impact ministry and mission.

Exploring Mission—17
Orienting Congregational Life Toward Mission—107

Sustaining a Focus on Mission—To help the pastor and the pastor's leadership team keep their focus on mission.

Responding to the Call—6

Talking About Mission—To create a climate to explore the mission initiatives in relationship to the congregation's context.

Responding to the Call—22

Third Place Ministry—To learn to listen and pay attention in neighborhood or community settings to what is happening in the lives of people.

Exploring Mission—15

Walking the Neighborhood—To listen and pay attention to what is happening in the lives of people in the community.

Exploring Mission—14, 29
Orienting Congregational Life Toward Mission—20, 60

Who Do We Want to Be?—To describe how the enduring principles can be lived out in the congregation by asking, "Who do we want to be?"

Responding to the Call—10

Pastoral Care

Assessing Our Pastoral Care Needs—To help the pastor's leadership team assess pastoral care needs and resources.

Orienting Congregational Life Toward Mission—74

Grief Ministry—To help congregational ministers care for people who are grieving the loss of a loved one.

Orienting Congregational Life Toward Mission—73

Holding in the Light—To pray for others by use of the scriptural image of light.

Orienting Congregational Life Toward Mission—21, 33

Pastoral Care and Worship Ministry to Homebound Persons—To blend pastoral care and worship ministry gifts to people who are homebound.

Orienting Congregational Life Toward Mission—72

Peace and Justice

Justice in the Bible—To raise awareness of justice and peace in the scriptural tradition of Community of Christ.

Orienting Congregational Life Toward Mission—22

Priesthood

Centering Prayer (for Priesthood)—To be aware of God's presence and guidance as the pastor and priesthood share prayer and conversation.

Orienting Congregational Life Toward Mission—79

Consider Calls by Reflecting on Doctrine and Covenants 163:6—To seek insight regarding potential priesthood calls by prayerful reflection.

Establishing Organizational Effectiveness—40

Consider Calls by Reflecting on Scriptural Principles about Priesthood—To seek insight regarding potential priesthood calls by prayerful reflection.

Establishing Organizational Effectiveness—41

Conversation about U.S. Percept Reports and Mission—To have conversations about demographic data for your congregation's neighborhood to discern mission.

Orienting Congregational Life Toward Mission—81

Exploring Scripture on Ministry—To equip priesthood members to magnify their gifts and abilities to build up God's people and strengthen the witness of the church.
Orienting Congregational Life Toward Mission—86

Finding My Voice, Finding Our Voice—To clearly articulate "what I will do" and "what we will do" in faithful ministry to God.
Orienting Congregational Life Toward Mission—87

Identifying Gifts for Mission—To discover one's gifts and to summarize the gifts of priesthood members for planning ministries.
Orienting Congregational Life Toward Mission—85

Permission to Yearn, Invitation to Dream (for Priesthood)—To help members of the priesthood explore their dreams and be open to the inspiration of God's Spirit.
Orienting Congregational Life Toward Mission—78

Priesthood Covenant Renewal Service—To re-covenant together in mutual ministries by planning an annual worship service of renewal and commitment to Christ's mission.
Orienting Congregational Life Toward Mission—84

Priesthood Ministry Conversations—To begin conversations with their pastor to assess the needs of the faith community and discover the ministry each person can offer.
Orienting Congregational Life Toward Mission—82

Sharing in the Round—To develop and deepen relationships by sharing in table fellowship.
Exploring Mission—7

Walking the Neighborhood (for Priesthood)—To discern ways members of the priesthood and their congregation can respond to specific needs in their neighborhood.
Orienting Congregational Life Toward Mission—80

Relationships

Building Intergenerational Relationships—To deepen friendships, understanding and trust between older and younger people.
Orienting Congregational Life Toward Mission—104

Hospitality—To practice the hospitality of sharing one's home.
Responding to the Call—15
Exploring Mission—5

Our Own Vulnerability—To help pastors and leaders explore their own vulnerability and generosity through relationships with people who are fragile or suffering.
Orienting Congregational Life Toward Mission—65

Sharing in the Round—To develop and deepen relationships by sharing in table fellowship.
Exploring Mission—7

Third Place Ministry—To learn to listen and pay attention in neighborhood or community settings to what is happening in the lives of people.
Exploring Mission—15

Valuing the Other—To deepen conversation and understanding by developing active listening skills.
Exploring Mission—9, 22
Orienting Congregational Life Toward Mission—6

Renewal

Action Steps for Sustaining Balance and Renewal—To help congregational leaders take steps toward living a life of greater balance and renewal.
Orienting Congregational Life Toward Mission—48

Caring for One's Spirit—To deepen one's relationship with God through prayer, study, and reflection on a regular basis.

Orienting Congregational Life Toward Mission—51

Taking Time Away—To plan and implement a personal retreat—a time to be away with God.

Orienting Congregational Life Toward Mission—50

Sacraments

Assessing Congregational Familiarity with Sacraments—To help the pastor's leadership team understand the awareness of the congregation relative to the sacraments.

Orienting Congregational Life Toward Mission—92

Congregational Preparation for the Sacraments—To help the congregation enter more deeply into sacramental experience through personal preparation.

Orienting Congregational Life Toward Mission—94

Sharing Invitation—To heighten congregational awareness that the sacraments are to be generously shared.

Orienting Congregational Life Toward Mission—93

Scripture

Dwelling in the Word—To read and hear scripture as a spiritual practice that leads to new understandings.

Responding to the Call—14
Exploring Mission—4, 23, 30
Orienting Congregational Life Toward Mission—4, 98
Establishing Organizational Effectiveness—31

Encounter Scripture as Continuing Revelation—To help people open themselves to God's presence and guidance through prayerful attention to scripture.

Orienting Congregational Life Toward Mission—31

Exploring Scripture on Ministry—To equip priesthood members to magnify their gifts and abilities to build up God's people and strengthen the witness of the church.

Orienting Congregational Life Toward Mission—86

Justice in the Bible—To raise awareness of justice and peace in the scriptural tradition of Community of Christ.

Orienting Congregational Life Toward Mission—22

Lectio Divina—To listen prayerfully for what God wants to say to us through scripture.

Orienting Congregational Life Toward Mission—28, 99

My Favorite Scripture—To deepen our relationship with one another and with God by sharing important scripture passages.

Orienting Congregational Life Toward Mission—11

Reading and Writing Psalms—To help people prayerfully express their deepest thoughts and feelings by modeling the Psalms.

Orienting Congregational Life Toward Mission—30

Using Lectionary Scripture and Dwelling in the Word in Worship—To bring scripture alive with personal reflection and sharing in congregational worship.

Orienting Congregational Life Toward Mission—100

Spiritual Practices (See Renewal and Discernment)

Caring for One's Spirit—To deepen one's relationship with God through prayer, study, and reflection on a regular basis.

Orienting Congregational Life Toward Mission—51

Centering Prayer—To create a space of quiet openness to become aware of God's presence.
Exploring Mission—28
Orienting Congregational Life Toward Mission—34

Centering Prayer (for Priesthood)—To be aware of God's presence and guidance as the pastor and priesthood share prayer and conversation.
Orienting Congregational Life Toward Mission—79

Dwelling in the Word—To read and hear scripture as a spiritual practice that leads to new understandings.
Responding to the Call—14
Exploring Mission—4, 23, 30
Orienting Congregational Life Toward Mission—4, 98
Establishing Organizational Effectiveness—31

Encounter Scripture as Continuing Revelation—To help people open themselves to God's presence and guidance through prayerful attention to scripture.
Orienting Congregational Life Toward Mission—31

Hearing with New Eyes and New Ears—To be receptive to the Holy Spirit in hearing and seeing the needs of people in the community where we live, work, and play.
Orienting Congregational Life Toward Mission—44

Holding in the Light—To pray for others by use of the scriptural image of light.
Orienting Congregational Life Toward Mission—21, 33

Lectio Divina—To listen prayerfully for what God wants to say to us through scripture.
Orienting Congregational Life Toward Mission—28, 99

Listening in the Spaces—To re-center during pauses throughout the day so we become more aware of God's presence in the world around us.
Exploring Mission—16

Prayer of Examen—To help us review the day with God by examining our need for forgiveness, healing, reconciliation and recommitment.
Orienting Congregational Life Toward Mission—29

Praying for the Other—To enter prayer that is focused on behalf of another person.
Exploring Mission—8

Praying the News—To help make conditions and happenings in the community an integral part of congregational spiritual practice.
Orienting Congregational Life Toward Mission—23

Reading and Writing Psalms—To help people prayerfully express their deepest thoughts and feelings by modeling the Psalms.
Orienting Congregational Life Toward Mission—30

Time for Personal Spiritual Practices—To create an environment in the pastor's life for renewal, continued insight for leadership, and grounding in a relationship with God.
Responding to the Call—4

Walking in Nature—To become aware of God's presence by being attentive to nature as a revelation of God.
Orienting Congregational Life Toward Mission—32

Young Adults

Building Intergenerational Relationships—To deepen friendships, understanding and trust between older and younger people.
Orienting Congregational Life Toward Mission—104

Building a "Young Adult Friendly" Congregation—To help the congregation become responsive to the young adult generation's special needs and life concerns.
Orienting Congregational Life Toward Mission—106

Panes of Perspective—To design and plan activities, ministry, and mission by use of current trends that impact ministry and mission.
Exploring Mission—17
Orienting Congregational Life Toward Mission—107

Serving Side by Side—To build community and prepare young adult leaders for successful participation and leadership in the congregation.
Orienting Congregational Life Toward Mission—105

Worship

Congregational Preparation for the Sacraments—To help the congregation enter more deeply into sacramental experience through personal preparation.
Orienting Congregational Life Toward Mission—94

Identifying and Using Peoples' Gifts—To help pastors and worship planners identify gifts for worship within the congregation.
Orienting Congregational Life Toward Mission—113

Pastoral Care and Worship Ministry to Homebound Persons—To blend pastoral care and worship ministry gifts to people who are homebound.
Orienting Congregational Life Toward Mission—72

Priesthood Covenant Renewal Service—To re-covenant together in mutual ministries by planning an annual worship service of renewal and commitment to Christ's mission.
Orienting Congregational Life Toward Mission—84

Spiritual Types and Worship—To help people plan worship that blesses everyone by honoring various spiritual types.
Orienting Congregational Life Toward Mission—112

Using Lectionary Scripture and Dwelling in the Word in Worship—To bring scripture alive with personal reflection and sharing in congregational worship.
Orienting Congregational Life Toward Mission—100

Witness and Invitation Moment—To plan witness and invitation as a part of every worship service.
Orienting Congregational Life Toward Mission—59

Worship Planning Questions—To plan worship that helps worshipers to praise God, be formed in discipleship and experience congregations in mission.
Orienting Congregational Life Toward Mission—114