

Study Guide

ON OUR WAY

Christian Practices for Living a Whole Life

prepared by

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At the time of publication all Web sites referenced in this study guide were valid. However, due to the fluid nature of the Internet some addresses may have changed or the content may no longer be relevant.

*Introduction

This companion guide provides chapter-by-chapter suggestions for helping readers explore more deeply the twelve practices described in *On Our Way*. Discussion questions and learning activities are generally addressed to group leaders, yet are adaptable for individual use as well.

*Preparing to Lead

This study guide provides many suggestions for exploring each practice. It is up to leaders to select those activities that will most interest and challenge their specific group. As you prepare to lead your group's conversation, try to include activities from several sections of any given chapter. It is fine to change the order in which you move through these sections. A session may begin with a sharing of personal experience (In the Real World), a Bible study (Together), or worship (In Response to God), or in some other way that makes sense for your group. Adapt the sequence to fit your group's situation and learning needs.

Participants will likely come with some prior experience of every practice described in *On Our Way*. A basic goal is to become aware of how we already engage in this practice. A Christian practice is a life-giving way of doing something that is already part of everybody's life in one way or another.

Practices are challenging and often difficult to sustain. Even though individuals sometimes practice "solo" (e.g., prayer), each practice must be learned from others and belongs to the community as a whole. Encourage learners to find trustworthy companions with whom to grow into this way of life—historical figures as well as contemporaries, globally as well as locally.

At every turn, acknowledge the presence of God in each practice and lift up how involvement in this practice draws us into God's intentions for us and for the world. "Living in the Presence of God" (*On Our Way*, 201-215) articulates how worship is the source and summit of our life together

in Christ Jesus. Read this chapter prior to leading your group in worship related to any of the other chapters.

In addition to worship suggestions, each study guide chapter includes Bible study activities, a Bible text for *lectio divina*, and a psalm to pray with a closing prayer based on that psalm. Guidelines for these activities are provided below.

*Bible Study

The Bible is a portable library, a collection of ancient books that becomes *scripture* as it makes an authority claim in our lives. “The Bible tells the Story of God’s love for us and for the whole creation. When we read and study, hear and tell this story, we meet Jesus. He invites us to join the story and to share God’s love. The more we ‘get into’ this story, the more it gets into us and shapes the way we live” (*Way to Live*, 13).

Read the “Study” chapter in *On Our Way* prior to leading your group in Bible study activities. This chapter explores study as a Christian practice and describes Jesus advising his followers to read the “Book of Nature” alongside the “Book of Scripture.” Faithful scripture interpretation requires patient attentiveness by a community of discernment, accountability, and care.

This study guide provides several different approaches to exploring the Bible and deepening our understanding of God’s word. In preparing to lead, consider how an assigned passage fits into the whole chapter, the whole book, even the entire biblical story. Search for parallels and cross-references to the passage; notice similarities and differences. Consult several translations (see <http://bible.oremus.org>), including an annotated New Revised Standard Version. Look up words or phrases you don’t understand in a Bible dictionary. Locate places on a map. Prepare handouts when an activity calls for learners to mark up a text.

**lectio divina*

The ancient contemplative practice of *lectio divina* developed to enrich the experience of God’s living Word. *Lectio divina*, or “holy reading,” offers a process for personal or group meditation. At the heart of this practice is the cultivation of silence, learning to quiet both the inner and outer voices of distraction so that we may hear God.

A lectio text is suggested in every study guide chapter at the beginning of the “In Response to God” section. A lectio meditation can be planned for any time: to open, to close, or to center a group midway through a session. Form groups of no more than eight. For each group, ask three persons to prepare to read the *lectio* text—one for each of the three times the text is read. Find a chime or bell to signal the end of silent meditation periods. Get a candle and matches. If you wish,

choose a song for the group to sing together before beginning, perhaps a song they enjoy every time they begin *lectio divina*.

OPENING

When the group has gathered, describe the process for this time of meditation on scripture. Explain that the same passage of scripture will be read three times.

A time of silence will follow each reading. The bell will end the silence and introduce a time to share. Explain that you will instruct them on what they are to listen for before each reading of the passage. Then explain that during the first reading they will hear the passage twice. They should listen for a word that stands out for them, that seems to “shine” or “shimmer.”

When everyone is seated comfortably, **say**, “We make our beginning in the name of Christ, in the light of the Living Word.” Light the candle. Invite group members to become quiet and relax into awareness of God’s presence.

FIRST READING

The first reader reads the passage aloud two times, pausing for a moment after the first reading. The hearers listen for the word or phrase God speaks to them from this passage while it is being read. When the text has been read twice, allow two to three minutes of silence, then ring the bell. Ask persons to share just the word or phrase God has given to them with no other explanation or comment. You may choose to go around the circle and have each person share, or ask persons to share when or if they feel comfortable.

After this sharing, instruct participants to listen to the next reading and to ponder how the passage seems to touch or intersect with their lives. **Ask** them to listen for the answer to this question: “How is my life touched by this passage?”

SECOND READING

The second reader reads the passage once. Following the reading, wait a few minutes, then ring the bell. Ask persons to share in one sentence how the passage touches their lives.

After this sharing, instruct group members to listen to the passage one more time, asking themselves, “Is there an invitation here? Do I sense that this passage is inviting me to do or be something?”

THIRD READING

The third reader reads the passage one last time. Following the reading, allow a few minutes for meditation as each person tries to hear what Christ wants him or her to be or to do today in response to the reading. The answer might be a contemplative one, a better way of being in God's presence; or it might be an action to be carried out. After you ring the bell, ask persons to share what they have heard from God.

CLOSING

Conclude with "Go Now in Peace" or a song or blessing that affirms the ever-present love of Christ.

For a detailed description of how to use *lectio divina* in groups, see *Gathered in the Word: Praying the Scripture in Small Groups* by Norvene Vest (Upper Room, 1996).

*Personal *lectio divina*

PREPARATION

Find a quiet place where you will not be interrupted. Have a journal and pen nearby. Perhaps light a candle. Begin with a few minutes of silence. Relax into the awareness of God's presence. Invite God to speak to you through this scripture passage.

THREE READINGS:

- * Read the passage aloud slowly.
- * Read it aloud a second time. Circle or underline the words or phrases that seem to "jump" out at you, or that "shine" or "shimmer." Repeat those words or phrases and linger over them until you feel ready to move on. Why do you feel drawn to these words or phrases? What do you think God is saying to you?
- * Meditatively "chew" on the words that stand out for you. Ponder what you underlined and listen for the message God is sending you through the words or phrases that catch your attention. Ask yourself, "How will God's message affect me today?"
- * Read the passage a third time. In prayerful response to your reading, try one of the following activities:
 - Sculpt a response with clay.
 - Draw with oil pastels, charcoal, or pens.
 - Write in a journal, using prose or poetry.
 - Sing a song or create a response through music using an instrument of your choice.

*Praying the Psalms

The “In Response to God” section of each study guide chapter suggests a psalm to pray and includes a closing prayer based on that psalm. Try this simple way to center yourselves in God’s presence each time you gather to talk about *On Our Way*.

- * Dim the lights.
- * Light one large candle in the midst of the gathering, and/or give each person a small taper or votive candle to hold.
- * Let silence settle on the group. Wait until restlessness ebbs or ends.
- * One person reads the psalm clearly and slowly (pausing after each stanza), or two people read the psalm responsively (sentence by sentence or stanza by stanza).
- * At the end of the reading everyone sits in silence, letting the images and poetry sink heart-deep.
- * One person prays the closing prayer provided in the guide or prays a brief prepared or spontaneous prayer that connects the words of the psalm with the real lives of the people in the group. (Or those who want to do so are invited to pray a one-sentence prayer that is inspired by the psalm or that connects the psalm to their lives.)
- * After a brief silence, extinguish the large candle, bringing closure to the time of prayer. (If space and time allow, some could quietly leave while others stay to pray.)

RESOURCES FOR ALL THE CHAPTERS

Profiled saints include but are not limited to those officially canonized by the Roman Catholic Church. To learn more about ancient and modern saints consult the Catholic Encyclopedia (www.newadvent.org/cathen) and a collection of brief biographies titled *All Saints: Daily Reflections on Saints, Prophets, and Witnesses for Our Time*, by Robert Ellsberg (Crossroad, 2007).

A list of **resources for further study and practice** concludes each study guide chapter.

1* An Invitation

This study guide is designed around the book's organizing framework described in the opening chapter of *On Our Way* ("An Invitation," 9-17): **Living a whole life attentively . . . together . . . in the real world . . . for the good of all . . . in response to God.** Please review that book chapter and ponder the meaning of each of these phrases.

Each study guide chapter opens with a **concise summary** of what the practice is and why it matters. Questions and activities are grouped according to the five characteristics that give shape and form to every practice:

- * **Attentive**: Focus attention on some aspect of the practice, especially as we currently experience it in our daily lives.
- * **Together**: Explore how we are called to community around the practice, especially as we *join the Story* by studying scripture and learn from the wisdom of the saints.
- * **In the Real World**: Examine how practices are embodied in concrete, historical situations, grounded in the blessed yet broken material world.
- * **For the Good of All**: Discover how practices are intended for the well-being of all—including the non-human creation—not just for those who call themselves Christian.
- * **In Response to God**: Worship God whose love gathers us and sends us into the world.

2*Study

The Practice: Paying attention to God who speaks to us as we study the Book of Scripture and the Book of Nature.

*Attentive

1. STUDY?

Ask participants to gather in clusters of three or four. Give each cluster several markers and a piece of newsprint with the word STUDY in the middle of the page. Invite participants to take turns jotting down words or sketching images prompted by this word. Have them do this silently for a few minutes. Post newsprint pages and discuss: What positive or negative feelings does the word “study” evoke for you? What experiences are behind those feelings? Do you consider yourself a “good student” (whether currently in school or not)?

2. JESUS THE STUDENT

Note Boulton’s claim that Jesus was not a scholar but a consummate student of life, and that early Christianity was an unfolding program of study.

Option: Read aloud the opening section of Study (19-20). Ask: How does this description match the image you have of Jesus? What new perspective on the Christian life does this image of Jesus as a student conjure up for you?

*Together

1. A COURSE OF STUDY

Explain that if we are to embark on the Christian life as *a course of study* we will need mentors, teachers and guides to help us navigate the course. Ask participants to name people who help them do the following:

- * Help you cultivate curiosity
- * Help you practice vigilance
- * Encourage you to stay open to learning AND unlearning
- * Feed your sense of adventure in life
- * Help you practice humility

2. "STUDY THE WORLD"

Jesus advises his followers (22). Working in teams of two or three, with one passage assigned to each team, identify what might be learned by paying attention to:

- * Ravens and lilies (Luke 12:22-31)
- * A poor widow (Mark 12:41-44)
- * A Samaritan (Luke 10:25-37)
- * A tax collector (Luke 18:9-14)
- * A child (Matthew 18:1-5)

Ask each team to name an object or person in their own world who might teach a similar life lesson if paid attention to. Have each team share these ancient and modern "object lessons" with the whole group.

3. WITH ALL THE SAINTS: AUGUSTINE OF HIPPO (354-430)

Augustine was a 4th century C.E. North African philosopher, theologian, and bishop. Augustine's *Confessions*, one of the first-ever autobiographies/memoirs, opens with these famous words: "O God, you have made us for yourself, and our hearts are restless until they find their rest in you." In his treatise on "The Teacher" (*De Magistro*), Augustine recounts a conversation with his eighteen-year-old son Adeodatus about teaching and learning. Augustine rejects a banking model of education (depositing ideas in a student's mind) and instead advocates the teacher's role as *guide*, relying

on the learner's personal experience to educate. Further, Augustine proposes Christ as the "inner teacher" for learning what is real and true.

*In the Real World

1. FOLLOW JESUS INTO A WIDER WORLD

Boulton invites us to "follow Jesus as far into the world as we can go." This is a beautiful and difficult challenge. Do some research on the following great teachers (or pick one of your own choosing) and learn about how far into the world they went, not merely physically but emotionally, mentally and spiritually:

- * Dorothy Day
- * Mahatma Gandhi
- * Oscar Romero
- * Nelson Mandela

What intrigues you or frightens you about the *places* these teachers went? If you studied with one of these teachers, where would your course of study take you? What would it take for you to go there? Where in the world do you imagine Jesus has been that you are being called to go at this particular time in your life?

2. KNOW THE NEIGHBORHOOD

Christian study is neighborly work. Give participants pen and paper and ask them to sketch a simple map of their *neighborhood*. Invite them to share their maps and share briefly about who lives near and around them. Discuss: What would it take for you to get better acquainted with these neighbors? To show them hospitality? To learn from them or receive their gifts?

*For the Good of All

1. TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching requires humility and the courage to seek students' forgiveness. Some teachers grade papers in pencil instead of ink to indicate that their evaluations are finite, fallible, and subject to correction. Share this example and ask participants to reflect on acts of humble teaching they have experienced.

2. LEARNING AND UNLEARNING

Post and read aloud this quotation (22): “Following Jesus, we learn—and unlearn. Following him, we grasp—and relinquish. Following him, we understand—and discover things we have misunderstood.” Ask participants to recall a lesson they had to *unlearn*, especially as followers of Jesus. What about the unlearning process was painful or difficult? Invite several willing participants to share their stories.

3. WHERE IN THE WORLD?

Where do people need access to education? How might we help? Read together or ask someone to report on *Three Cups of Tea*, Greg Mortensen’s story of his mission to build schools in remote and impoverished villages of Central Asia.

*In Response to God

LECTIO TEXT: Psalm 104:24-30 [31-35]

(See instructions for *lectio divina* in the introduction of this Guide.)

PRAY A PSALM

Psalm 19

CLOSING PRAYER

God of all wonder,
the universe declares your glory.
God of all wisdom,
your words are sweeter than honey.
Set our hearts and minds on you,
that we might be wholly alive,
through Jesus Christ,
your Word made flesh,
your Wisdom with us.
Amen.

1. READ “THE BOOK OF NATURE”

Invite participants to practice reading nature as an act of worshipping the God who created all things.

Personal meditation: Take a journal or sketchbook and find a park, a home garden, a farmers’ market, or a community garden. Sit somewhere you can be comfortable. Select one thing to focus on—a tree, a flower, a row of vegetables. Prayerfully ask God to help you read life in your object of study. Sit in silence and try to focus on as many of the details of your object as possible. What shape is it? How many shades of color does it have? How does it feel or smell? What does this thing produce and for what purpose? Who or what else in creation is blessed by the intricacy of this object? Do any of its characteristics remind you of your experience of God? Is God bringing to mind certain things that have nothing to do with the object itself but yet stem from your study of it? When you are ready, spend some time sketching what you see or writing a prayer of praise and thanksgiving to God. Be specific in using the characteristics of your nature object to write your prayer.

Home meditation: Listen to Vivaldi’s “Four Seasons” or to George Winston’s seasonal compositions (*Autumn, Winter into Spring, Summer*). In what ways do these instrumental pieces convey each season? To what season do you find your soul being drawn just now? Give thanks to God for the seasonal rhythms of life.

*Resources for Study

1. *Confessions by Saint Augustine of Hippo (Author)*, trans. by R. S. Pine-Coffin (Penguin Classics, 1961).
2. “Imperatives” (poem) in *Journey New and Selected Poems, 1969-1999*, by Kathleen Norris (University of Pittsburgh Press, 2001).
3. George Winston: a select Discography: 1980 Autumn, 1982 Winter into Spring, 1991 Summer.
4. *The Quotidian Mysteries: Laundry, Liturgy and “Women’s Work,”* by Kathleen Norris (Paulist Press, 1998). Reflections on how the mundane-ness of daily activities can be seen as a liturgical way of drawing closer to God.
5. *The Christian Imagination*, ed. by Lelan Ryken (Shaw, 2002). Essays on how a creative mind and spirit deeply alter the way we understand the Christian life and call.
6. *The Art of Theological Reflection*, by Patricia O’Connell and John de Beer (Crossroad, 2004). A resource that helps readers reflect on merging the Christian tradition with life’s experiences.

7. *The Shape of Living: Spiritual Directions for Everyday Life*, by David Ford (Baker Books, 1997). A wonderful book on engaging the ordinary realities of daily life with spiritually attentive eyes.
8. *Godly Play: An Imaginative Approach to Religious Education*, by Jerome W. Berryman (Augsburg, 1991). Reflections on how to deepen religious education and spiritual wisdom with a creative and playful spirit.
9. *Sacred Reading: The Ancient Art of Lectio Divina*, by Michael Casey (Liguori/Triumph, 1996).
10. *Small Wonder*, by Barbara Kingsolver (HarperCollins, 2002).
11. *Powers of Ten*, a 1977 short film by Charles and Ray Eames (available online).

3* Discernment

The Practice: Choosing wisely within a community of accountability and care that supports us as we live reflective and faithful lives in the presence of God.

* Attentive

1. PAY ATTENTION

Display on newsprint under the heading DISCERN:

- * To distinguish between; to sift
- * To detect with the eyes or with other senses
- * To recognize; to see or understand the difference
- * “Discernment invites us to notice where and how we are experiencing God in our daily lives.”

Ask: What does the culture want you to pay attention to? What does the culture want you *not* to pay attention to? How does discernment relate to the practice of study (see the previous chapter)? Reflect on an occasion when study led to discernment in your life. Did your study prompt a question? Confirm an insight? Or provide an answer to a question you had not yet asked?

2. DISCOVER YOURSELF

Give participants the short form of a personality inventory (MBTI, Enneagram, Kolb Learning Style Inventory) or provide a link and ask them to complete an online inventory beforehand. Review personality traits and gather in groups according to different types/profiles. Compare notes and share impressions. Ask: How might such inventories aid/limit discernment?

3. KEEP TIME

Becoming aware of how you spend your time and what invigorates you is a necessary part of discerning vocation at this phase of life. It's also essential to know how your ordinary routines and pleasures bring life to others (or not). Give each participant a handout with the following questions:

- * How did you spend your free time during the past week?
- * What are the last three things you read (not assigned texts)?
- * What was the last thing to break your heart?
- * When were you last amazed with joy, overwhelmed with gratitude?
- * What do you dream about doing? Where do you dream about going?

After personal reflection invite sharing in small groups. Then ask small groups to discuss these questions: What are you currently doing that you really *care* about? Who is involved with you in this activity (partners)? Contrast being *summoned* by or *drawn* to an activity with being *driven* by it.

*Together

1. GOD'S CALLING

Divide into small groups. Ask each group to explore one of the following call narratives guided by these questions: What is at stake for each of the characters called? What challenges come with each calling? How does God equip those whom God calls? What might be at stake for you as you listen for and heed God's call on your own life?

- * Genesis 12 (Abraham)
- * Exodus 3 (Moses)
- * Luke 1:26-38 (Mary)
- * Luke 5:1-11 (Simon Peter) and Luke 5:27-28 (Levi)
- * John 1:35-51 (five disciples)
- * John 4:1-30, 39-42 (The Samaritan woman)
- * Acts 9:1-9 (Saul) and Acts 9:10-19 (Ananias)

2. READ ALOUD MATTHEW 3:13—4:17. Discuss these questions:

- * Why is Jesus' baptism followed immediately by his temptation in the wilderness? Was this experience unique to Jesus, or does every disciple face temptation after being named and blessed by God in baptism?
- * In what ways can we view the temptation of Jesus as *discernment*? What role does scripture play in this process?
- * Why is the *wilderness* the setting for Jesus' temptation? What other biblical encounters occur in the wilderness? What has wilderness looked like for you during a time of discerning what God desires of you?

3. WISE GUIDES

Pass out paper and pencils. Ask participants to jot down the names of three persons they would consult when making a significant life decision. What do they find *trustworthy* about these persons? How might these persons help them make a decision they can own and feel confident about? Discuss answers as a group.

4. WITH ALL THE SAINTS: KÄTHE KOLLWITZ (1867-1945)

Kollwitz was an artist committed to depicting the sufferings and injustices of the poor. Born in East Prussia in 1867, Kollwitz married and moved to Berlin. She lost her son Peter to World War I. Her grief gave birth to fierce pacifism, and her artwork portrays the adoration and protectiveness of mothers for their children. Banned by the Nazis, Kollwitz continued to paint and draw as a protest against social, political, and economic injustice. View images of Kollwitz's art online. Consider how life experiences and circumstances summoned her to produce art.

*In the Real World

1. USING A CLEARNESS COMMITTEE

Convene a *clearness committee* for someone facing a weighty decision about school, a job, a relationship. Gather a group of four to ten trusted friends and sit in a circle. Explain that the goal is to help the individual clarify issues in a confidential setting by listening carefully and raising questions, not by giving advice or offering solutions. Begin and end the meeting with prayerful silence. See Quaker Clearness Committee Model www.iowaepiscopal.org/uploads/pdf/comdiscerng-quaker.pdf

Option: Introduce this model by reading aloud Parker Palmer's account of his process of discernment with a clearness committee in *Let Your Life Speak* (Jossey-Bass, 2000), 44-46.

2. FINDING GOOD WORK

Invite several persons who enjoy their work to share briefly how they got involved in this work and why they find it life-giving. Then invite questions from the group.

3. HEADING OUT

If your group is planning an upcoming mission trip, service project, or study trip, ponder the following questions as you prepare for this venture:

- * What do you expect to eat and how will food factor into your outreach?
- * Will any special clothing be required? Will any clothing choices be limited by cultural context? How much do you care about what you wear?
- * What will you carry in your "backpack"—not only your physical stuff but the values and assumptions that will accompany you as you travel?

Option: Adapt questions to reflect together on such an experience your group recently has undertaken.

*For the Good of All

1. THE LOCAL BREW

Discern the threats to clean water where you live. Ask participants to read "Toxic Water" articles and review charts and data on local contaminant levels and water polluters at <http://projects.nytimes.com/toxic-waters>. Ask the group what responses are prompted by their findings.

2. SEEING THE WORLD'S NEED

Display a map of the world. Read about Shalene's service experience in Kenya (45-46), marking this place on the map. Invite participants to select a country and track the news and the needs of that country for a week. After a week, share responses to the following:

- * What about this country and its people interest me?
- * What are three pressing needs of people in this country?
- * How are these needs currently being addressed?

- * What has this exercise stirred up in me?

Option: Lead group in intercessory prayer “For the Healing of the Nations” in *Holden Prayer Around the Cross*, Susan Briehl and Tom Witt (Augsburg, 2009), 115-122.

3. FINDING WAYS TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE

Host an NGO Fair. Provide a list of service agencies and organizations that make a constructive difference in other countries. Ask each participant to select an agency, research that agency during the coming week, and prepare a one-minute “elevator pitch” that covers:

- * Who is my agency?
- * Whom does my agency serve?
- * How does my agency provide service?
- * What makes my agency distinctive?
- * How can others support this vital work?

*In Response to God

LECTIO TEXT: Isaiah 43:1-3

(See instructions for *lectio divina* in the introduction of this Guide.)

PRAY A PSALM

Psalm 139

CLOSING PRAYER

God of all creation,
we will never know your thoughts,
but you know us completely.
Grant us wisdom as we make decisions and
give us wise guides and good friends
who will help us choose your Life-giving way,
made known to us in Christ Jesus.
Amen.

1. LEARNING TO LISTEN

An essential part of discernment is learning to listen to and for God. But listening takes discipline and practice. We are so often distracted by thoughts that run through our minds when we try to practice listening. Being comfortable with silence and solitude is the first step in cultivating a listening spirit.

- a. Set aside fifteen minutes. Find a quiet spot where you will not be disturbed. Situate yourself comfortably. Close your eyes. Turn your palms downward. Silently ask God to help you release the things, thoughts, and emotions that prevent you from hearing and trusting God. When you are ready, begin to name all the things, thoughts, and emotions that you desire to release. When you are finished sit quietly for a few more minutes.
- b. Then turn your palms upward, resting your hands on your lap. Silently ask God to help you cultivate the art of listening for God and receiving God's presence. Maintain this posture for five minutes, no matter how difficult or distracting it seems. Begin to name all you hope to receive from this time with God (Peace, trust, longing, patience, etc.). When you are done sit quietly until you are ready to come out of this time of centering prayer. Thank God for this time.
- c. What was this experience like for you?
- d. Share this practice with a friend and covenant together to each practice this intentional time of fifteen minutes of prayerful listening for God three times in the coming week. At the end of the week get together with your friend and talk about what the week was like for each of you.

2. PRACTICE RESPONDING TO THE **IGNATIAN EXAMEN** QUESTIONS:

- a. Find a quiet space and arrange your body in a comfortable but upright position. Sit in silence for a few minutes and invite the Holy Spirit to be present with you and to quiet your spirit.
- b. Ask yourself, "For what moment today am I most grateful?" and "When did I feel most alive today?" Thank God for these blessings.
- c. Ask yourself, "For what moment today am I least grateful?" and "When did I feel life draining out of me today?" Pray for forgiveness and healing.
- d. Thank God for being present throughout your day, in good times and bad.
- e. Reflect on your examen experience. What did you notice while praying? What feelings surfaced and to what parts of your day were these feelings connected? Note patterns that emerge as you practice this over time.

*Resources for Discernment

1. Spiritual Gifts: A Discernment Process: Everett United Methodist Church:
<http://www.gbgm-umc.org/everettumc/inventory.htm>
Spiritual Gifts Assessment: <http://web.umc.org/interior.asp?ptid=1&mid=2268>
2. *Life of the Beloved: Spiritual Living in a Secular World*, by Henri Nouwen (CrossRoad, 1993).
3. The Society of Jesus in the United States: <http://www.jesuit.org/>
4. *Inner Compass: An Invitation to Ignatian Spirituality*, by Margaret Silf (Loyola, 2007).
5. *Letting God Come Close: An Approach to the Ignatian Spiritual Exercises*, by William A. Barry (Loyola, 2001).
6. Spiritual Direction: Henri Nouwen Society: <http://www.henrinouwen.org/programs/spiritualdirection/main/Spiritual> Directors International: <http://www.sdiworld.org/>
7. *A Hidden Wholeness: The Journey Toward an Undivided Life*, by Parker Palmer (Jossey-Bass, 2004).
8. The Enneagram Institute: <http://www.enneagraminstitute.com/> (Enneagrams are personality tests based on a nine point system. *Ennea* is Greek for “nine,” and *grammos* means “to write or draw.”)
9. *The Wisdom of the Enneagram: The complete guide to psychological and spiritual growth for the nine personality types*, by Don Richard Riso and Russ Hudson (1999).
10. *The Mission*, directed by Roland Joffé. A 1986 movie about a Jesuit missionary’s commitment to the indigenous people of Brazil.
11. *Glittering Vices: A New Look at the Seven Deadly Sins and Their Remedies*, by Rebecca DeYoung (Brazos Press, 2009).
12. Learn more about Käthe Kollwitz: www.nmwa.org/collection/profile.asp?LinkID=511
www.humanitiesweb.org/human.php?s=g&p=c&a=b&ID=324

4* Living As Community

The Practice: Sharing our lives through mutual care and hospitality with all God's people so that we can become reconciled to the God who made us (54).

*Attentive

1. WELCOME MAT

Give participants newsprint and markers. Ask them to sketch two *welcome mats*: one that represents how hospitality was practiced in their households of origin, and another that expresses how they offer hospitality in their current household or dwelling. Share these drawings with the group.

2. BIRDS OF A FEATHER?

Write on the board/newsprint: "Birds of a feather flock together." Tell the group that a church leader justified the lack of racial and socio-economic diversity in his congregation by quoting this adage. Then ask them to read Wilson-Hartgrove's description of his "odd bunch" community (54). What vision of Christian community animates Rutba House? What adage or phrase conveys this vision?

3. WHAT'S YOUR COMMUNITY?

Write the word "Communities" on the board/newsprint. Read aloud the first paragraph on p.56 and ask the group to list the different communities mentioned. Add to this list other communities to which participants belong. Then discuss:

- * Which communities are central to your life these days?
- * In your experience, how do virtual communities differ from face-to-face communities? Why are social media networks so popular among youth and emerging adults?

- * What is one thing you seek to *gain* from a community and one thing you long to *share* within a community?

Option: In establishing Rutba House, Wilson-Hartgrove credits the influence of Dorothy Day (“the long loneliness” for authentic community) and Wendell Berry (fidelity to places that connect people and their stories to the land). Ask: How does *commitment to a particular place* enable community? In what ways does our contemporary culture and economy challenge/undermine loyalty to particular places? How might such forces be resisted?

*Together

1. CREATED FOR COMMUNITY

According to Wilson-Hartgrove, Scripture proclaims that from the beginning of creation people were created for life-giving community where the love of God is made manifest. Divide into small groups and give each group one of the following passages: Genesis 1:26-31; Acts 2:42-47 and 4:32-37; John 15:1-17; Ruth 1:1-22; I Corinthians 12:4-26.

- * What does *human flourishing* look like in this passage?
- * What does this passage challenge you to long for and expect from a life-giving community?

Option: View the film *Places in the Heart* in the light of I Cor.12.

2. BREAKING DOWN DIVIDING WALLS

Read together Ephesians 2:12-16. Note how the peace of Christ reconciles antagonistic groups (here represented by Gentiles and Jews). Ask: Where in the world is Christ’s peace needed to break down a dividing wall of hostility, a wall that presently polarizes groups according to religion, ethnicity, economic status, political affiliation, mental/physical ability, or sexual orientation? What cracks are in this wall? Where is it already crumbling? Sketch a wall and write names of opposing groups on either side. Draw “cracks” and label them with reconciliation initiatives.

3. WITH ALL THE SAINTS: BENEDICT OF NURSIA (480-543)

This founder of Western monasticism promoted daily communal rhythms of *ora et labora et lectio* (prayer, work, scripture study). Reflect on passages from the Rule of St. Benedict that has shaped monastic life for centuries: www.osb.org/rb/text/toc.html#toc

*In the Real World

1. EXAMINE THE 12 MARKS

Distribute a handout listing the “12 Marks of a New Monasticism” (61)—also listed at www.newmonasticism.org/12marks.php. Instruct participants to

- * check (✓) practices that seem most compelling
- * star (*) practices that sound most challenging
- * put question mark (?) beside practices that are unclear or confusing

Share completed handouts in small groups, then in plenary. Discuss: What changes would you need to make to engage these practices more fully?

2. KNOW THE NEIGHBORHOOD

Locate and contact a community via www.communityofcommunities.info. Ask whether your group might share a meal and worship with members of this community, or join with them in a service project.

*For the Good of All

1. COMMUNITY GONE AWRY

Read aloud the last full paragraph on p. 57. Ask the group to name other “not-so-healthy communities” and reflect on what has made them unhealthy and destructive.

2. COMMUNITY AND CONFESSION

Post and read aloud these two quotations:

There is no ideal form of Christian community. In the places where we are, the practice of living as community calls us to ask, “How is God leading me deeper into life with other people?” ~ Wilson-Hartgrove (55)

Community is that place where the person you least want to live with always lives. . . . And when that person moves away, someone else arises to take his or her place! ~ Parker Palmer, *The Company of Strangers* (124)

Discuss: What *ideals* of Christian community shape our imaginations? How do we respond when communities disappoint, when we confront their shortcomings? How important are confession and forgiveness for sustaining healthy community?

3. DEMONSTRATION PLOTS OF THE KINGDOM

Wilson-Hartgrove describes communities that are “demonstration plots of the kingdom,” often in defiance of forces that fragment and segregate. As homework, ask participants to prepare a brief report on the following communities, naming ways they provide radical hospitality and promote healing and reconciliation:

- * Christian Community Development Association: www.cdda.org
- * Taizé: www.taize.fr/en
- * Iona: www.iona.org.uk
- * Holden Village: www.holdenvillage.org
- * The Open Door Community: www.opendoorcommunity.org
- * L’Arche: www.larche.org
- * Catholic Worker Communities: www.catholicworker.org

*In Response to God

LECTIO TEXT: Ephesians 4:1-6

(See instructions for *lectio divina* in the introduction of this Guide.)

PRAY A PSALM

Psalm 133

CLOSING PRAYER

Holy God,
anoint us with your Spirit,
make us one in the love of Christ,
and draw us into the community of your life.
Amen.

1. PRAY THE DAILY OFFICE

For centuries Christians have practiced the Daily Office (or Hours), a cycle of prayers that punctuate daily activities in the morning, midday, afternoon, evening, and night-time. The Daily Office is a liturgy of prayers, praise, psalms, and daily readings. Whether prayed alone or in assembly, the Daily Office joins Christians together in a world-wide communion of prayer. Pray Morning Prayer (Matins), Evening Prayer (Vespers), or Night Prayer (Compline) as it is printed in your church's worship book or: http://daily.commonworship.com/daily.cgi?today_mp=1

2. CELEBRATE A "FEAST DAY"

Christians all around the world celebrate feast days throughout the year to remember particular saints who bore witness to the love of God in Christ Jesus. Research and plan a "feast day" to celebrate saints who are significant to your faith community.

*Resources for Living as Community

1. *Making Room: Recovering Hospitality as a Christian Tradition*, by Christine Pohl (Eerdmans, 1999). This book tells how individuals and communities are blessed and transformed by greeting, welcoming, and sheltering others, especially strangers, in the name of Christ. A study guide is available at: www.practicingourfaith.org/cfm/library/view.cfm?id=462&page=1&practice=2
2. To explore the doctrine of the Trinity: *God For Us*, by Catherine Mowry LaCugna (HarperOne, 1993); *God as Trinity*, by Ted Peters (WJK, 1993); *Baptism and Christian Identity*, by Gordon Mikoski (Eerdmans, 2009).
3. *The Beloved Community of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.* King's vision of the beloved community: www.thekingcenter.org/prog/bc/index.html
4. *The Desert Fathers: Sayings of the Early Christian Monks*, by Benedicta Ward (Editor) (Penguin Classics, 2003).
5. *Life Together and Prayerbook of the Bible* (Dietrich Bonhoeffer Works Vol.5), edited by Geoffrey Kelly (Augsburg Fortress, 2004). A Lutheran pastor and theologian reflects on living in Christian community in Nazi Germany.
6. *The Long Loneliness*, by Dorothy Day (HarperOne, 1996).
7. *New Monasticism: What It Has to Say to Today's Church*, by Jonathan Wilson-Hartgrove (Brazos Press, 2008). (www.newmonasticism.org)

8. Learn more about the saints at the Catholic Encyclopedia online: Francis of Assisi: www.newadvent.org/cathen/06221a.htm; Clare of Assisi: www.newadvent.org/cathen/04004a.htm; Benedict of Nursia: www.newadvent.org/cathen/02467b.htm
9. *The Road to Daybreak* by Henri Nouwen (Doubleday, 1988). One man's life-transforming experience at Daybreak, a L'Arche community in Canada.
10. *Timbered Choir: The Sabbath Poems 1979–1997*, by Wendell Berry (Counterpoint 1998). A good introduction to Berry's lyrical wisdom.

5* Friendship and Intimacy

The Practice: Tenderly holding and carefully cultivating the holy gifts of friendship and intimacy, honoring the mystery of the other, so that our life with others and our life with God, who first loved and befriended us, may become one life (see 87).

*Attentive

1. SING A SONG OF FRIENDSHIP

Invite participants to bring a favorite friendship song and (if possible) a copy of the lyrics. As a group, reflect on what each song says about the nature of friendship with respect to these questions:

- * What qualities does a true friend exhibit?
- * What does being a good friend require?
- * What makes a friendship strong and resilient?

Option: focus on the themes and images in songs sung at weddings.

2. CIRCLE OF FRIENDS

Provide a handout with the following friendship categories and ask participants to jot down a friend or two for each category:

- * *Social network* and long distance relationships
- * *Companions* with whom you literally share bread
- * *Mentors*: older, wiser guides and coaches
- * *Soul mates* to whom you confide your deepest joys, struggles, longings

* *Kindred spirits* from any era with whom you share beliefs, attitudes, feelings

What claims does friendship make on your own life? How do these claims differ within the varying circles of your life, school, work, family, home?

3. BFF?

Post and read aloud this Paulsell quotation (78): “Choose your friends carefully, and let your friendships develop slowly. . . . Knowing a friend—really knowing—takes time, and presence, and patience. It’s not possible to speed up the process of coming to know someone; it’s the work of a lifetime. Friendship cannot be rushed, even over the Internet. We lack reverence for our friend when we think it can.” Discuss how Paulsell’s view contrasts with a BFF (Best Friend Forever) approach to friendship.

Then read this quotation: “Friendship makes us both strong and vulnerable . . . an intimate relationship with another can alter us, shape our character, change our lives” (71). Ask: How does friendship make us strong? Share examples of such friendships. Now consider how friendship can be risky and render us vulnerable. Ask: How do you react when a friend betrays a confidence, takes advantage, manipulates?

*Together

1. PREFERENTIAL OPTION FOR FRIENDS?

Drawing on questions posed by Paulsell (74), debate the following resolution: *Christianity should be about loving strangers and our enemies more than about loving our friends. Jesus asks us to practice solidarity with all people rather than focusing on our relationships with particular people whose company we enjoy.*

Divide group into two teams, one supporting the resolution and one opposing. Give each team ten minutes to prepare arguments, then proceed with debate beginning with the affirmative team.

2. FRIENDSHIP AND FAITH COMMUNITY

Paulsell reminds us that the Christian life is rooted in the practices of friendship. With that in mind discuss the following questions:

With what words or gestures does your faith community convey the value of friendship?

How could your community strengthen this practice?

3. BIBLICAL IMAGES OF FRIENDSHIP

Divide into small groups and give each a Bible passage, newsprint, and markers. Ask them to draw an image conveying the quality of friendship present between:

- * David and Jonathan (1 Samuel 18:1-4 and 1 Samuel 20)
- * Ruth and Naomi (Ruth 1:1-18)
- * Mary and Elizabeth (Luke 1:39-56)
- * Jesus and Mary, Martha, and Lazarus (John 11:1-44)

Share the drawings with whole group. Discuss the covenantal features of these friendships, referring to Paulsell (83-86).

4. WITH ALL THE SAINTS: AELRED OF RIEVAULX (1109-1166)

A twelfth-century Cistercian monk, Aelred proposed that what is true of *love* in I John 4:16 is also true of *friendship*: God is friendship, and those who abide in friendship abide in God, and God abides in them. Ask: If friendship animates the inner life of God as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, how might the ordinary practices of cultivating friendship draw us more deeply into God's own life?

*In the Real World

1. INTERVIEW LONG-TERM FRIENDS

Host a meal for several sets of long-term friends (e.g., married couples, neighbors, church members). Invite these friends to share stories about the history of their friendship, reviewing Paulsell's chapter to formulate prompts such as: How has your friendship evolved over time? How has it made you both strong and vulnerable? Has this friendship deepened your relationship with God? How?

Option: Prepare for these interviews by listening to friendship stories archived at <http://story-corps.org/listen/stories/category/friendship>

2. FRIENDSHIP FILM FESTIVAL

Over a series of nights show movies that portray friendship themes: e.g., *The Soloist*, *Lars and the Real Girl*, *Juno*, *Once*, *84 Charing Cross Road*, *Forrest Gump* (see also Resources for Friendship). Explore qualities of mutual care, trust, and loyalty that animate these film character friendships.

Retreat option: provide plot summaries and show film clips, prompting discussion of particular scenes.

3. WITH THIS RING

Distribute copies of the marriage service from a denominational worship book. With reference to Paulsell's chapter, how does the marriage ceremony reflect themes of friendship, intimacy, and covenant? What makes such services significant, even sacramental, for couples? For families? For the church? For society?

*For the Good of All

1. COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS

Contact a local chapter of Compassionate Friends, an agency that brings together bereaved families after the death of a child: www.compassionatefriends.org. Invite a representative to speak with your group about this ministry.

2. FRIENDS FOREVER USA

Learn about this initiative to promote peace among teenagers in Israel and Northern Ireland: www.friendsforeverusa.org. Interview alumni about their experience in this program. *Recommendation*: review OOW chapters 10-12 to prepare for this activity

*In Response to God

LECTIO TEXT: John 15:9-17

(See instructions for *lectio divina* in the introduction of this Guide.)

PRAY A PSALM

Ruth 1:15-18

CLOSING PRAYER

Lord Jesus Christ,
you bind yourself to us in love,
you promise never to leave us,
and you risk everything for our sake.

Teach us so to love and honor one another
that we might delight in your gifts
of friendship and intimacy,
and through these gifts,
give you thanks and praise. Amen.

1. GOD AS FRIEND AND LOVER

Teresa of Avila understood her relationship with God as that of a true friend and a spouse. Prayer was the way she communicated intimately with her friend and lover. Think about a concern you have for yourself or for someone else. Write a prayer to God as though you were having a conversation with an intimate friend.

2. GODLY DESIRE

Read the Song of Songs slowly, prayerfully. How does this sacred poetry move you to frame your intimate relationships with respectful and blessed desire? Spend some time thanking God for the person or people in your life who have shown respect for your body and treated it as one of God's beautiful creations. If this is something you have yet to encounter, spend some time boldly and unabashedly praying that you would learn and experience what it means both to treat another person's body with intimate and adoring respect and to receive these gifts from another.

3. "WHAT A FRIEND WE HAVE IN JESUS"

An Irishman named Joseph Scriven penned this hymn in 1855 for his sick mother who lived far away. Sing (or read aloud) this hymn: www.hymnsite.com/lyrics/umh526.sht Note the communal language of friendship—not "I/my" but "we/our." Ask participants to meditate quietly (and perhaps pen short poems/prayers) on how they live into their friendship with Jesus.

Other hymns: "Draw Us in the Spirit's Tether," "What a Fellowship," "Blessed Be the Tie That Binds," "Jesu, Jesu, Fill Us with your Love," "Jesus, Priceless Treasure."

*Resources for Friendship and Intimacy

1. "Friendship in the Bible," by Benedict Janecko in *Spiritual Life*, Fall 2002. http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_qa3885/is_/ai_n9100617?tag=artBody;coll
2. *Becoming Friends: Worship, Justice, and the Practice of Christian Friendship*, by Paul J. Wadell (Brazos Press, 2002). Christian friendship is nurtured by worship in community and requires the formation of virtues like justice, hope, forgiveness.

3. *Aelred of Rievaulx: The Way of Friendship: Selected Spiritual Writings*, introduced and edited by M. Basil Pennington (New City, 2001).
4. *Aquinas on Friendship* by Dan Schwartz, (Oxford University, 2007). Reflections on the compiled writings of Thomas Aquinas' understanding of friendship.
5. Learn more about the poet Mark Doty: <http://www.poets.org/poet.php/prmPID/91>
6. Other films for a film festival: *Now and Then* (1995), directed by Lesli Linka Glatter, is a playful and warm tale about the growth of four childhood girlfriends.
Smoke Signals (1998), directed by Chris Eyre, explores the tumultuous friendship between two Native American young men who were raised together.
The Kite Runner (2007), directed by Marc Forster, is the story of an adult who seeks to atone for his betrayal of a childhood friendship.
7. David J. Wood, "The Recovery and Promise of Friendship," *The Princeton Seminary Bulletin*, Vol.28, No.2, 2007 <http://scdc.library.ptsem.edu/mets/mets.aspx?src=PSB2007282&div=7>

6* Singing Our Lives to God

The Practice: Sharing our whole lives—our hopes and joys, losses and longings, fears and failings, praise and thanksgiving—with God and with one another, through lyrics, rhythms, and melodies old and new.

*Attentive

1. MUSIC AND MEMORIES

Invite participants to discuss one of the following:

- * Is there a particular song or a piece of music that goes straight to your heart? What feelings does it stir up in you?
- * Recall a happy song . . . a sad song . . . a song you enjoy singing with family or friends. What memories do these songs evoke?
- * What song or piece of music means the most to you right now?

2. SATURDAY NIGHT . . . SUNDAY MORNING

Alonso disputes the distinction between *sacred* and *secular* music, advising that we instead ask: “Does this music lead us to God?” (90) Ask participants to ponder songs that lead them to God without using explicit religious language.

3. SOLO CONCERTS

Discuss Alonso’s claim that modern technology (iPods, mp3 players) has led to “musical isolationism”—another way people isolate themselves from one another (96-97). Do you agree? What would you offer as a counter argument?

*Together

1. MAKE A MIXTAPE

As a group, think of someone who needs encouragement, perhaps someone who's going through a rough time. Choose songs to include on a mixtape and designate someone to produce it.

2. ISAIAH 55: A HYMN OF JOY AND RENEWAL

Divide group into teams. Assign one team to prepare a brief report on the history of Second Isaiah (chapters 40-55). Assign another team to summarize commentary on Isaiah 55, focusing on images of restoration and celebration. Assign a third team to find hymns based on Isaiah 55 (e.g., "Light Dawns on a Weary World," by Mel Bringle.) Share reports and sing hymns together.

3. PRAY THE PSALTER

The Psalter, or the Book of Psalms, was Jesus' hymnal. This collection of 150 psalms/songs is now Jesus' prayer for the church for all time. Challenge your group to pray one psalm a day until reading the entire book. [Option: email daily Psalm to participants by copying NRSV text from <http://bible.oremus.org/>] Provide the following questions to guide reflection on each psalm:

- * What is this psalm/song about?
- * How does the psalmist express emotions to God in this song? (Note raw, unfiltered, even vengeful feelings in some psalms.)
- * In what ways does this psalm invite me to sing my own life to God?

4. WITH ALL THE SAINTS: HILDEGARD OF BINGEN (1098-1179)

Dubbed "Sibyl of the Rhine," Hildegard entered a Benedictine monastery at age eight and later became abbess. A mystic, artist, and visionary leader, she wrote letters, plays, poetry, essays on medicine and nature, and songs—over seventy of which have survived and many have been recorded: <http://www.9timezones.com/ia/ghildgrd.htm> Listen to Hildegard's music (e.g., the recording *A Feather on the Breath of God*) accompanied by a slide show of her illuminations (create your own from images available online or see www.maclester.edu/~warren/courses/hildegard/art.html).

*In the Real World

1. MUSICAL DNA

“Each of us has a musical DNA,” observes Alonso, reflecting on his own Cuban roots and visceral response to Latin rhythms (92). Ask participants whether they agree or disagree with this claim. For those who agree, what song or piece of music resonates with their roots/heritage?

2. BEYOND AD JINGLES

Brainstorm popular ad jingles, listing them on board/newsprint as participants sing them from memory. Discuss how advertisers effectively employ the power of music to sell products and services. How might singing regularly with a faith community give us an alternative, more life-giving song repertoire?

3. FREEDOM SONGS

Alonso reminds us that “music has the power to change the world” (97). Compile a collection of freedom songs, including South African selections (www.folkways.si.edu/albumdetails.aspx?itemid=1068) as well as African-American spirituals (www.folkways.si.edu/albumdetails.aspx?itemid=3043). In these songs, note the theme of God’s care and liberating love for oppressed peoples.

*For the Good of All

1. MUSIC BOTH UNITES AND DIVIDES

Watch the movie “The Sound of Music” and discuss following questions:

- * How is music used to express certain emotions and evoke specific reactions from the viewers?
- * When does music “strengthen the tribe” in this film?
- * How do the characters use and abuse the power of music?
- * Note where music divides and where it unites people.

2. LEARNING LULLABIES

Alonso suggests learning the songs and lullabies of another culture—especially those with whom we are at war—to deepen compassion and understanding (97). Listen to songs from a country where our nation is currently confronting “enemies,” such as the 2004 album *Lullabies from the Axis of Evil*. See also songs featured on Mama Lisa’s World: www.mamalisa.com/?t=eh

3. TAIZE AND IONA

Learn about the history and ecumenical witness of the Taize Community in France (www.taize.fr/en) and the Iona Community in Scotland (www.iona.org.uk). Both Christian communities were born at the very time Europe was being ripped apart by nationalism and war.

Option: Plan a simple, contemplative worship service using songs from Taize and Iona.

*In Response to God

LECTIO TEXT: Colossians 3:14-17

(See instructions for *lectio divina* in the introduction of this Guide.)

PRAY A PSALM

Psalm 100 or 98 or 150

CLOSING PRAYER

Holy God,
to whom saints and angels sing,
you pour the song of your love into our hearts.
Breathe your Spirit into our singing
until the rhythms of your mercy
and the melody of your peace
shape all our music-making,
and with earth and sea and all their creatures
we give you thanks and praise
now and always.
Amen.

1. LEARN A HYMN BY HEART

Alonso quotes his mentor Gabe Huck saying, “We are surrounded by music but robbed of song.” No one can rob us of the songs that are written on our hearts. Choose a song or hymn beloved of your faith community and commit it to memory. Sing it each morning when you rise, or on your way to work or school, or during your daily exercise until you know it by heart. Then do the same thing with a new or unfamiliar song or hymn. Repeat this pattern again and again.

2. PRAY THE CHORISTERS’ PRAYER

Alonso quotes composer Marty Haugen: “What we sing over time, we come to remember. What we remember, over time, we come to believe. What we believe over time, we come to live” (95). These words echo a 4th-century blessing for cantors: *Vide ut quod ore cantas corde credas et quod corde credis operibus comprobas* (“See that what you sing with your lips you believe in your heart, and that what you believe in your heart you show forth in thy works.”) Prior to singing a closing song/hymn, pray together the “Choristers’ Prayer” from the *Choristers’ Pocket Book* (1934):

Bless, O Lord, us Thy servants,
who minister in Thy temple.
Grant that what we sing with our lips,
we may believe in our hearts,
and what we believe in our hearts,
we may show forth in our lives,
through Jesus Christ our Lord.
Amen.

*Resources for Singing Our Lives to God

1. Listen to “The End of Suffering,” a musical meditation featuring Thich Nhat Hanh: www.youtube.com/watch?v=NMab_IYY5lE
2. *A Song to Sing, A Life to Live: Reflections on Music as Spiritual Practice*, by Don Saliers and Emily Saliers (Jossey Bass, 2004). Download free study guide: www.practicingourfaith.org/documents/GuideforASongToSing_001.pdf
3. “Holy Spirit, Root of Life,” a hymn text by Jean Janzen is based on the writing of Hildegard of Bingen can be sung to *Puer Nobis* or other Long Meter tunes.

7* Care for Creation

The Practice: Delighting in and caring for God's creation as we reflect God's image and become more deeply aware of how God cares for and delights in us.

*Attentive

1. WHERE DO YOU FEEL MOST ALIVE?

Spencer describes feeling invigorated in the mountains. Ask participants: What terrain makes you feel most alive? In what ways is soul-nurturing creation present in cityscapes and urban terrains?

2. DESCRIBE YOUR LOCATION

Use a GPS receiver to calculate your group's precise physical location. Discuss the difference between these GPS coordinates and a "thick description" of the place that includes the earth/land, people/creatures, and stories. Consider the following:

- * What primary geological event or process shaped this place?
- * Name three different trees native to this area.
- * Name several bird species native to this area.
- * From what source does the tap water come?
- * Where does the garbage go?
- * What people/animals inhabited this land three-four hundred years ago?
- * What current ecological challenges affect this place?

Option: View the 1968 short film “Powers Ten,” by Ray and Charles Eames, available online. What does this film’s cosmic perspective suggest about our sense of *location*?

3. SHARE PET STORIES

Often young adults must leave behind family pets to attend college or take a job away from home. Invite participants to bring photos of a favorite family pet. Share memories of how they cared for their pets and how their pets cared for them.

Option: plan a blessing of the animals service for your worship community to celebrate the Feast of Saint Francis (October 4).

*Together

1. CREATION CARE AND MISSION TRIPS?

As U.S. mission teams envision and plan for outreach ventures, creation care is often a low priority or an afterthought. Interview mission team leaders from a local congregation or campus ministry to assess how creation care has informed a recent trip or might shape an upcoming trip.

2. OUR DUTY AND DELIGHT

Read aloud Genesis 2, highlighting how the earthling (*adam*) is created to till/serve the earth (*adamah*) and tend the garden of delight (*Eden*). Just as this creature needs the garden for sustenance, so the flourishing of the garden depends on this creature’s labors (102). Ask participants to name specific ways to fulfill our original human calling to be soil-tenders.

3. PONDER THE PARABLE OF OWEN AND MZEE

Read the tale of Owen and Mzee, a tsunami-stranded baby hippo who befriends a Giant Aldabran Tortoise: www.npr.org/documents/2005/jul/owen&mzee_ebook.pdf Discuss this story in light of Spencer’s observation that “God’s relational character is reflected in and throughout God’s creation” (106). Ask: How is the improbable friendship between Owen and Mzee a parable of the relational web of creation?

4. SABBATH REST FOR THE LAND

Read these passages that extend Sabbath-keeping to non-human creatures and to the land itself and as well as to people: Deuteronomy 5:12-15; Exodus 23:10-12; Leviticus 25:1-7. Ask: what contemporary methods of farming and conservancy honor the Sabbath?

5. WITH ALL THE SAINTS: FRANCIS OF ASSISI (1182-1226)

Francis was born into a wealthy Italian family. As a youth Francis was renowned for his wit, charm, military prowess, and *joie de vivre*. At age twenty-five, Francis abandoned his privileged status and property and gathered a community to live close to the natural world and to the poor and despised. Francis is now widely honored as the patron saint of ecology (107). Meditate on his “Canticle of Creation” and find other prayers and hymns that praise God for the glory and majesty of creation. Learn more about Francis’ care for creation in chapter six of *St. Francis and the Foolishness of God*, Dennis et al. (Orbis, 1993) and http://conservation.catholic.org/st__francis_of_assisi.htm

*In the Real World

1. LOCAL HARVEST

Plan a meal and ask everyone to contribute a food item grown locally and in season. To find local, sustainably grown food see www.localharvest.org.

Option: as a group, support a local CSA and host a meal and worship gathering at the farm.

2. TEND A COMMUNITY GARDEN

Help cultivate a local community garden, especially a church-supported garden—see www.communitygarden.org. To prepare for this soil-tending work, watch a short film about the Anathoth Community Garden (available online in two parts):

www.youtube.com/watch?v=IxW0mBwLPiE

www.youtube.com/watch?v=fS6Akm47p-8

In small groups reflect on these questions:

- * What biblical stories/images animate this garden? (stories of betrayal and forgiveness, death and rebirth, injury and healing, hunger and abundant food)
- * How did this garden take root as a faithful response to tragic circumstances?
- * In what ways are garden-tenders as well as crops being cultivated?

3. GARBOLOGY AS SPIRITUAL PRACTICE

Spencer describes the process of sorting garbage at Holden Village (113). Challenge participants to take on one new discipline in dealing with their daily garbage—e.g., recycling, composting, buying food with less packaging. Share insights after adopting the discipline for several weeks.

4. "TO DUST YOU SHALL RETURN"

Read aloud and reflect on Barbara Brown Taylor's meditation about digging in dirt and decomposition from *An Altar in the World* (HarperOne, 2009), 151:

Keeping the earth is hard work. You get dirty doing it. You break fingernails and wear holes in the knees of your pants. You wear yourself out. You also remember where you came from, and why. You touch the stuff your bones are made of. You handle the decomposed bodies of trees, leaves, birds, and fallen stars. Your body recognizes its kin. If you have enough nerve, you also foresee your own decomposition. This is not bad knowledge to have. It is the kind that puts other kinds in perspective. Feel that cool dampness? Welcome back to earth, you earthling. Smell that dirt? Welcome home, you beloved dust-creature of God.

*For the Good of All

1. INDICTED

The Hebrew prophets often railed against injustice by making a legal complaint before the court of Yahweh. See, for instance, charges pressed by the prophet in Hosea 4:1-3. Provide copies of the past week's newspapers and news periodicals. In teams of two or three, find headlines and articles that portray the land mourning and non-human creatures perishing. Ask each team to craft a concise complaint against humanity on behalf of these aggrieved parties, making specific allegations about ecological injustice. Share with the whole group.

2. JOIN THE 350 CAMPAIGN

Scientists say that 350 parts per million CO₂ in the atmosphere is the safe limit for humanity. Having exceeded that threshold, and the earth's climate is warming at an alarming rate. Learn more at www.350.org—consider organizing a 10/10/10 work party.

3. ECO-JUSTICE IN THE GLOBAL SOUTH

Select a country in the Global South and learn about the ecological challenges in that land. Identify ways North Americans can support remedies and contribute to solutions. Option: Become "clean water ambassadors" via www.livingwatersfortheworld.org

*In Response to God

LECTIO TEXT: Psalm 65: 9-13

(See instructions for *lectio divina* in the introduction of this Guide.)

PRAY A PSALM

Psalm 148

CLOSING PRAYER

We praise you, O God;
With glittering stars and moonlit sky, we praise you.
With swimming whale and running deer, we praise you.
With ocean deep and dark rain clouds, we praise you.
With fruit trees, cedars, and sparrows, we praise you.
As part of creation's choir, we praise you.
In caring for creation, we praise you.
With every breath, we praise you, O God.
Amen.

1. BE LIKE HILDEGARD

Read about Hildegard of Bingen's concept of *viriditas* or "greenness" (106-107). For a week carry a small pocket journal and write a single line of praise or thanksgiving every time you encounter creation witnessing to God's power and holiness.

2. COMPOSE PRAYER OF ADORATION

Read Psalm 19:1-4 and ponder how all creation "declares the glory of God." Rewrite the verses from this psalm sharing how you have witnessed the heavens, the skies, the day and the night declaring God's glory, and proclaiming God's handiwork.

3. LAMENT SPOILED LANDSCAPES

Identify eroded landscapes and places that have become anonymous, disembodied "spaces" with little connection to earth, people, and stories. Go to one near you and offer a lament for this place.

4. BAKE BREAD

Volunteer to bake the communion bread for your worship community. Contemplate how different ingredients in the bread are like the different members of your community: some, like flour, provide the basic “stuff” of common life; some, like oil and water, bind community together; some, like salt, add flavor; others, like yeast, leaven the loaf.

*Resources for Caring for Creation

1. Learn about the Evangelical Environmental Network at <http://www.creationcare.org/>
2. Gather a group of friends for a book club to read Bill McKibben, *Deep Ecology*, or Ellen F. Davis, *Scripture, Culture, and Agriculture*.
3. Research about cooperative organic farms nation-wide and in your local area. Visit CROPP Cooperative at <http://www.farmers.coop/>
4. The Live Green, Live Smart Institute website provides access to interesting blogs on green living. Read the blog, *The Green Suburbanite* at http://livegreenlivesmart.org/blogs/green_suburbanite/default.aspx and learn some helpful easy ways to “green” up your life!
5. The Network Alliance of Congregations Caring for the Earth (NACCE) is an ecumenical organization created in 1986 to help Christians care for the earth. The website has helpful information about books, links, articles, movies and many more ways to engage in the creation care discussion and practice. Visit the site at <http://nacce.org/library/>.
6. Watch the Bill Moyers PBS documentary *Is God Green?* www.pbs.org/moyers/moyers_onamerica/green/watch.html
7. The Evangelical Lutheran Church of America (ELCA) has a beautiful and creative social statement on why the church needs to care for the Environment. The statement, “Caring for Creation: Vision, Hope, and Justice,” suggests Christians care out a form of environmental tithing. Read or download the social statement on the ELCA website at: www.elca.org/What-We-Believe/Social-Issues/Social-Statements/Environment.aspx
8. William P. Brown, *The Seven Pillars of Creation: The Bible, Science, and the Ecology of Wonder* (Oxford, 2010).
9. *Just Eating?* Seven-week study exploring how Christians relate to food in regard to: the health of our bodies; the access others have to food; the health of the earth, which our food choices influence; and the ways we use food to extend hospitality and enrich relationships. www.practicingourfaith.org/cfm/library/index.cfm?practice=16

8* Making a Good Living

The Practice: Engaging in economic life critically, thoughtfully, and prayerfully by making the choices that allow us both to develop our own capabilities and to further justice, peace, and well-being in God's world.

*Attentive

1. MONEY INVENTORY

Provide a handout with the following questions. After time for personal inventory discuss in small groups or as large group.

- * Growing up, how was money treated and perceived in your household? What images or stories come to mind?
- * List one or two *rules regarding money* learned by observing family members.
- * Of what economic behaviors are you most proud? What economic behaviors do you wish to change?
- * If someone were to shadow you for two weeks observing all your economic habits, what would that person surmise about your economic values?
- * In what ways have your moral and faith-based convictions played a role in how you think about money?
- * How will you know when you are *making a good living*? What will determine that for you?

2. WHAT'S IN YOUR BACKPACK?

Read aloud the “Dealing with Stuff” section (119-120). Distribute a sketch of a giant backpack and ask participants to make a personal packing list of the stuff that fills it. Discuss: Which possessions require the most closet space? Psychic space? What stuff do you keep because of sentimental attachment (Aunt Tanya’s china)? What stuff causes the most worry for you? What stuff would you like to unload from your pack?

3. STUDENT DEBT

Host a forum on dealing with student debt. Invite participants to share concerns about how their vocational choices are being or might be constrained by repaying student loans and credit card debt. If possible, ask a financial adviser to meet with group.

4. BUY THIS!

Ask participants: When did you last make an impulse purchase? Buy something you really don’t need simply because it looked appealing—either online or in the store? Are you more likely to buy on impulse when by yourself or with friends? For what products are you the *target audience* (120)?

*Together

1. WHEN DOES WEALTH BECOME IDOLATROUS?

Post this definition: A god is that to which we look for all good and to which our hearts cling in times of need.

Read aloud Matthew 6:24-33. Note that the Greek word Jesus uses for “wealth” is *mammon*, wealth obtained by greed and worshiped as a deity. How does Jesus advise his followers to free themselves from the idolatrous grip of mammon? What does mammon look like in today’s world, and how can disciples resist its idolatrous influence?

2. LIFE ABUNDANT VS. LIFESTYLES OF ABUNDANCE

Divide into three groups and give each group one the following passages:

- * Luke 12:13-21 (parable of rich fool)
- * Luke 18:18-25 (parable of Lazarus and Dives)
- * Luke 16:19-31 (parable of rich ruler)

Ask each group to discuss these questions:

- * Where do I see myself in this parable?
- * Where do I see my country in this parable?
- * How does this parable contrast “life abundant” with a “lifestyle of abundance?”

3. A LITTLE HELP FROM MY FRIENDS

Hicks encourages us to rethink our economic values with the help of friends. Who are the friends in your life that would be interested in taking this step of faith with you? Why would these particular people be the ones to journey with? How can you begin your initial steps in a way that fosters community, patience, honesty, and grace?

4. WITH ALL THE SAINTS: DOROTHY DAY (1897–1980)

Day worked closely with Peter Maurin to launch the Catholic Worker movement in 1933, advocating direct aid for poor and homeless persons with nonviolent direct action on their behalf. Learn more about the Christian convictions that ground this movement and visit a Catholic Worker community where you live: www.catholicworker.org

*In the Real World

1. GLEAN PRODUCE

Explore how the book of Ruth portrays the provision of field-gleaning as mandated in Leviticus 19:9-10 (and 23:22) and in Deuteronomy 24:19-22. Get involved with the contemporary gleaning ministry of the Society of St. Andrews: www.endhunger.org

2. MUTUAL AID

Launch a list-serve of people in your community or church who are willing to share and pool certain resources. Share everything from bicycles to cars and gas money, cooked meals, backpacks, camping gear, and whatever else you can think of. In developing this mutual aid network, emphasize your community’s gifts and assets and draw on Amartya Sen’s concept of “human capabilities” (122-123).

3. PARADOX OF MATERIALISM

We typically suspect that materialistic culture creates over-attachment to stuff. In *Being Consumed: Economics and Christian Desire* (Eerdmans, 2008), William Cavanaugh contends that our ad-induced

craving of novelty promotes detachment and devaluing of the stuff, especially stuff we already own. Discuss this insight. Ask participants if they own anything they will value for a lifetime. How are Christians “called to embrace our material nature without becoming materialistic” (121)?

Option: Watch the Danish film *Babette’s Feast* and discuss how strangers/guests help a legalistic, ascetic community embrace their material nature in spite of themselves.

4. ALTERNATIVE GIFT-GIVING

Throughout the next calendar year commit to gift-giving through alternative methods. Each time you want to purchase a gift for birthdays, weddings, Christmas, etc. make a donation to a charity like Family Health Ministries or Oxfam, or buy an animal for a family or village through Heifer International. Use this gift opportunity to not only help meet the basic needs of men, women, and children worldwide but also as a way to educate your friends and family!

*For the Good of All

1. JOE AND DIEGO

Role-play the encounter that Hicks describes between Joe and Diego (126). Ask one or two persons to assume the role of affluent North American tourists looking for a bargain at local Mexican market. The “merchant” is selling handmade rugs. Role-play the scenario twice, each time asking the players to share how they feel about the encounter. Take One: tourists barter to buy rug below cost. Take Two: tourists appreciate the merchant’s economic realities. After second role-play debrief with whole group.

2. TALK TO TITHERS

Interview persons who tithe at least 10% of their income. Ask them how this discipline both *challenges* and *liberates* them in regard to money.

3. SOCIALLY RESPONSIBLE INVESTMENTS

As a group, use the following guidelines to evaluate the stock portfolio of your college (www.earlham.edu/policies/investing.html), local congregation/parish, or denomination (www.usccb.org/finance/srig.shtml). How socially responsible is this portfolio? What would strengthen investments in regard to commutative, distributive, and social justice standards (127-129)?

*In Response to God

LECTIO TEXT: Isaiah 55:1-13

(See instructions for *lectio divina* in the introduction of this Guide.)

PRAY A PSALM

Psalm 145

CLOSING PRAYER

Gracious God, giver of every perfect gift,
you are near to all who call upon you
and your mercy is without end.
Free us from all fear and greed
and set our hearts on you,
until with all creation
we live securely in the wealth of your love
lavished on the world in Christ Jesus.
Amen.

1. FAST FROM STUFF

Encourage participants to commit with at least one or two other friends to a one-week *stuff fast*. Don't buy anything for a full week! Stay away from stores, catalogues, and online shopping. Whenever you crave new stuff, write it down. Whenever you stray or stumble, fine yourself \$5 and donate the money to charity. Debrief experience at the end of the week. Ask: Were you tempted to break your fast? How did you resist (or succumb to temptation)? Did knowing others were fasting make a difference? Did "fasting" make you more aware of your neighbor's need and God's provision (129-131)?

2. READ PROVERBS 30:7-9

The author of Proverbs 30 is aware of the virtue of moderation and the pitfalls of having either too much or too little wealth. Consider the different areas of your life, your relationships, your monetary wealth, your possessions, and your capabilities. Where are you in danger of being too full? Where are you in danger of not having enough? Compose your own proverb of wisdom and warning based on your own circumstances.

*Resources for Making a Good Living

1. *Choosing the Right Pond: Human Behavior and the Quest for Status*, by Robert Frank (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985). Economist Robert Frank reflects on the futility of the race for status in America as no one really ever gets ahead.
2. *Luxury Fever: Money and Happiness in an Era of Excess*, by Robert Frank (Princeton University Press, 2000).
3. *The Overspent American: Why We Want What We Don't Need*, by Juliet B. Schor, (Harper Perennial, 1999). Juliet B. Schor, Professor of Sociology at Boston College, explores why Americans spend money so lavishly and are yet unsatisfied.
4. *We Drink From Our Own Wells: The Spiritual Journey of a People*, by Gustavo Gutierrez (Orbis, 1984). Dominican priest and theologian Gutierrez offers reflections on spiritual liberation from poverty for Latin Americans.
5. *Good News to the Poor: John Wesley's Evangelical Economics*, by Theodore W. Jennings, Jr. (Abingdon Press, 1990). Jennings reflects on John Wesley's belief that Scripture calls us to engage the economic realities of our times.
6. *Celebration of Discipline: The Path to Spiritual Growth*, by Richard Foster (HarperOne, 1998). Chapter 6 of this book focuses on the outward discipline of simplicity and is a worthy read for the topic of "Making a Good Living."
7. Learn more about *Make Poverty History* at www.makepovertyhistory.org
8. Learn more about *The ONE Campaign* at www.one.org
9. United Nations Millennium Development Campaign
10. Learn more about *Bread for the World* at www.bread.org
11. If you are interested in alternative gift-giving consider Family Health Ministries—www.familyhm.org or Heifer International at www.Heifer.org
12. Learn more about *America's Second Harvest*, now renamed *Feeding America*, at <http://feedingamerica.org>
13. Amartya Sen was the Indian Nobel Prize winning economist of the Sveriges Riksbank Prize in Economic Sciences in Memory of Alfred Nobel 1998. Learn more http://nobelprize.org/nobel_prizes/economics/laureates/1998/sen-autobio.html

9* Honoring the Body

The Practice: Grace becomes tangible through God's gift of the human body. This gift is what allows us to be in relationship with others, to honor every body as strong yet vulnerable, created in God's own image.

*Attentive

1. SLEEP-DEPRIVED?

Ask participants: How many of you get enough sleep each night? Statistically, long-haul truck drivers and emerging adults are the most sleep-deprived groups in this country. And yet, as Parker observes, "Few activities honor our bodies as richly as does sleep" (147). Discuss the benefits of a good night's rest. Identify disciplines for getting more sleep and "releasing our bodies into God's care."

2. WHAT STORIES ARE YOU WEARING?

Forms group of three or four. Invite each person to share a story about one article of clothing or adornment that person is wearing. How does what we wear convey respect for our bodies? Does being Christian make any difference in what one wears?

3. HOMECOMING

Read aloud Parker's recollection of traveling to be with her dying father (133-134): *We arrived at my parents' house a little before 11:00 pm. My father was lying in a hospital bed in the guest room, his six-foot three-inch body crammed into its metal frame. He was reaching upward and pointing with his right hand, mumbling words we couldn't understand. "It's Evelyn," I said, touching his arm in greeting and blessing. "I'm home."*

Discuss: Describe an experience when someone's touch felt like a blessing and a homecoming. What were the circumstances? Who touched you and what was your relationship to that person?

*Together

1. JESUS' CARE FOR BODIES

In small groups read one of the passages listed below. Discuss these questions: What *specifically* does Jesus do in these stories to show care and compassion for bodies? What bodily gestures does he use to care for the bodies of others? Have you ever seen someone in your faith community show similar care and compassion?

- * Mark 6:30-44 (takes weary disciples away to rest, feeds hungry crowd)
- * Mark 10:13-16 (takes children in his arms and blesses them)
- * Luke 8:26-33 (heals the Gerasene demoniac)
- * Luke 8:43-48 (heals the woman with flow of blood)
- * John 9:1-7 (heals a man born blind)

2. BODY OF CHRIST

Read aloud I Corinthians 12:12-31. Discuss the implications of this passage for including persons who are differently abled (physically or mentally) in the church.

3. WITH ALL THE SAINTS: JUAN MARTIN DE PORRES (1579-1639)

Born in Lima, Peru, to a Spanish father and a freed black slave, Juan Martin de Porres became an apprentice to a doctor at age ten and was soon using his skills to heal the poor and tend to the sick and dying. Martin was regarded as a man of deep humility and he cultivated relationships with people from different cultures and social classes.

*In the Real World

1. DISCRETION SHAME VS. DISGRACE SHAME

Have learners skim the chapter and note places where Parker mentions shame or feeling ashamed. Ask: How do our bodies express shame? In what circumstances is *discretion* shame an appropriate

and even healthy response? When is shame an indication of brokenness, humiliation, and *disgrace*? How does honoring the body address disgrace shame?

2. DETACHMENT AND DISTANCE

Parker critiques the “dominant view in modern Western culture” that truth is best gained by detachment, distance and objectivity (137). In what instances might distance and detachment in a relationship be necessary and even healthy?

3. SUFFERING BODIES

Encourage participants to visit someone with chronic health problems, for whom “feeling at home with one’s body” is a real challenge. Ask them to imagine how that person experiences the body’s *limits and vulnerability*. If the person is comfortable sharing his or her experience, the visitor should listen with care and respect. Discuss with participants how their church does or does not make space for this vulnerability and honor this person’s body.

*For the Good of All

1. UNTOUCHABLES

Form groups of two or three and review Parker’s experience serving people with HIV/AIDS (139). Discuss: Have you, like Parker, ever felt ashamed by your reluctance to touch people the world labels as *untouchable*? What groups of people do you consider “unclean” and try to avoid physical interaction with? How does Luke 10:29-37 speak to your resistance?

2. JESUS’ RESURRECTED BODY

Jesus’ resurrected body teaches us that bodies matter and shows us the beauty God intends for all bodies. How might Jesus’ broken body help us to see the bodies of the sick and wounded and exploited? As we seek God and each other in our bodies, as we pay attention to ways to honor the body, we remember that every body is blessed by God, deserving of protection and care.

3. DIA DE LOS MUERTOS

Learn how Hispanic culture celebrates *Dia de los Muertos* to honor ancestors who have died. The tradition dates back over 2500 years ago to the Aztec culture. November 1st is celebrated as *Dia de los Inocentes* (Day of the Innocents) to remember children and infants who have died. Adults who have died are commemorated on November 2nd, *Dia de los Muertos* (Day of the Dead). In what ways might this Hispanic festival enrich your congregation’s commemoration of All Saints Day?

*In Response to God

LECTIO TEXT: I Corinthians 3:16; 6:19-20

(See instructions for *lectio divina* in the introduction of this Guide.)

PRAY A PSALM

Psalm 139:1-6, 13-18

CLOSING PRAYER

Blessed God,
you created us in your image,
your love took on flesh in Christ Jesus,
and your Spirit dwells within and among us.
Teach us to cherish and care for our bodies
and the bodies of friends and strangers,
even as you cherish and care for us,
that we might become bearers of your grace,
through Christ Jesus.
Amen.

1. TEMPLES OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

Parker reminds us that our bodies are shelters and temples of the Holy Spirit. As an imaginative prayerful exercise gather crayons, markers, pencils, and blank sheets of white paper. Find a quiet space and spend about 15 to 30 minutes creating an illustration of your body as a temple and shelter for God. How would you depict your heart, your mind, your hands, your feet, and your shoulders? Don't be afraid to dwell in your right brain. Use your illustration as a guide for a time of verbal prayer to God.

2. HAND-WASHING RITUAL

Place a pitcher of water, basin, and towel on a small table in the center of the room. Invite participants to come forward as pairs and wash each other's hands, using a blessing appropriate to your church tradition. Here are some examples you may suggest:

- * "In the name of God: Creator, Christ, and Holy Spirit. Amen."
- * "In the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen."
- * "Bless these hands to your service, O God."

*Resources for Honoring the Body

1. Learn about St. John Paul II's catholic encyclical on the "*Theology of the Body*" and his understanding of God's intention for the human body, mind and spirit. <http://www.theologyofthebody.net/>
2. Visit denominational websites to learn about their social statements regarding issues affecting politics, economics, health and justice:
Evangelical Lutheran Church of America www.elca.org/What-We-Believe/Social-Issues.aspx
Presbyterian Church (USA) www.pcusa.org/101/101-social.htm
United Methodist Church <http://archives.umc.org/interior.asp?mid=1686>
3. Watch the 1993 movie *Philadelphia*, directed by Jonathan Demme.
4. The 2001 movie *I Am Sam*, directed by Jessie Nelson, tells the story of a mentally challenged man who loves his mentally healthy daughter and wants to retain custody of her. It is a film about how we treat bodies that function differently from ours. How can Parker's chapter help us see more deeply into such a movie?
5. Read *Honoring the Body: Meditations on a Christian Practice*, by Stephanie Paulsell (Jossey-Bass, 2002). Study guide available at www.practicingourfaith.org
6. View documentaries by the author and activist Jean Kilbourne (www.jeankilbourne.com) about how advertising impacts bodies:
Killing Us Softly III: Advertising's Image of Women
Slim Hopes: Advertising and the Obsession with Thinness
Pack of Lies: The Advertising of Tobacco

10* Knowing and Loving Our Neighbors of Other Faiths

The Practice: Following Christ in humility and grace across cultural and religious boundaries in ways that engender greater solidarity within the human family and enable us to more fully realize the reign of God on earth.

*Attentive

1. FEELING ALIVE

Read aloud Scott Alexander's story of his friendship with Ahmed (150-52). Reflecting on this experience Alexander says "I had never felt so spiritually alive in conversation as I did when I was talking to Ahmed" (152). Invite participants to consider and then describe the last time they felt alive in conversation. What was the conversation about and with whom did they speak?

2. WHO IS MY NEIGHBOR? WHO ARE MY FRIENDS?

Post a map of the county, city, or town in which the participants live. With the help of the Internet, flag the churches, temples, mosques, stake houses, synagogues and other places of worship within a reasonable radius of where they work or live or go to school. Take some time to look at this map together.

Then ask: If these are our neighbors, who are our friends? Which religious traditions and beliefs, if any, are practiced among your friends? How important do you consider a shared faith life or perspective to be in fostering a genuine friendship with someone? A dating relationship? A marriage?

3. CURIOUS?

Alexander's first genuine encounter of interreligious dialogue and friendship was with a Muslim.

Ask: Which non-Christian faith (if any) do you find yourself most interested in, curious about, or perhaps even wary of? Have you had any experiences with someone of another faith tradition? What was/is it like? What did/do you need to learn and unlearn?

Option: Ask the same questions about other Christian communions and denominations.

4. LOOK, LISTEN, READ

The media played a significant role in shaping Alexander's early perceptions of people of Islamic faith and culture. Invite participants to pay attention to the way faith traditions, communities, and practices are described or represented in the media.

Option: Create a collage with print media images of a wide variety of persons and communities of faith.

*Together

1. LOVE ONE ANOTHER

Divide the participants into three groups. Give each group one of the following readings:

- * I John 4:16-21
- * Mark 12:28-34
- * John 15:1-17

Have each group ask: What is the connection between our love of God and our love for one another in this text? Which comes first? What is the source of this love? Who is the "other" in this text? What are the limits or boundaries placed around this love?

2. ON THE BUS

If a person of another faith, or no faith at all, sitting next to you on a bus asked about your faith and what difference it made in your life, what would you say? What if this person challenged you saying, "Religion just divides people and starts wars"? Role play several different scenarios

3. VISIT YOUR NEIGHBORS

Prepare to visit the local houses of worship of your neighbors of other faiths. Call ahead. Explain your intentions. Ask if there is anything you need to know before coming. Be a considerate guest;

consult a reliable resource on the community's traditions, rituals, and practices such as *How to be a Perfect Stranger* (see the resource section below).

4. WITH ALL THE SAINTS: MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR. (1929-1968)

Known primarily for his work in the U. S. Civil Rights Movement, King, a Baptist pastor, also called for a worldwide “neighborly” concern—an all-embracing, unconditional love—that reached beyond one’s tribe, race, religion, class and nation. He wrote, “When I speak of love, I am speaking of that force which all the great religions have seen as the supreme unifying principle of life. Love is the key that unlocks the door that leads to ultimate reality. This Hindu-Moslem-Christian-Jewish-Buddhist belief about ultimate reality is beautifully summed up in the First Epistle of Saint John: “Let us love one another: for love is of God: and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God” (“The World House” in *Where Do We Go From Here: Chaos or Community?* 1967).

*In the Real World

1. REAL NEEDS IN A REAL WORLD

Alexander identifies two basic human needs that are addressed when we know and love our neighbors of other faiths: each person’s need for dignity as a beloved child of God and our need for reconciliation with God and with others in the human community. Post and read these two basic human needs. Host a discussion prompted by these questions:

- * Where and how are these needs being met in your community?
- * Where are they not being met?
- * Who is working to address these needs in your community?
- * How might you join them?

2. MAPPING YOUR JERICHO

Alexander writes of the Good Samaritan story and reminds us that the world is full of Jericho roads, rough and full of a variety of social, political, and religious difficulties. (159-160) And yet, Christ invites us to bravely travel these roads. Ask: Can you name Jericho roads you are familiar with and describe what makes them Jericho roads?

3. HOST A FILM FESTIVAL

Over the course of several nights or weeks, watch together a series of films that depict the challenges, tensions, and blessings of interfaith relationships. Invite the wider community. Consider the following films.

Freemont, USA

Rachel Antell, Elinor Pierce, and the Pluralism Project, 2008. Narrated by Diana Eck, this documentary offers a glimpse of religious diversity on the local level: Fremont, CA is a city transformed by new immigration. Through civic engagement and interfaith action, strangers have become neighbors. Fremont has faced challenges, especially after 9/11. This film makes the challenges of pluralism vivid, visible, and accessible for discussion.

A Son's Sacrifice

Yoni Brook, 2006. Directed and produced by a Jew and a Muslim, this documentary tells the story of a young American Muslim man who takes over his father's business in Queens, NY, as it opens the larger themes of immigrant identity and interfaith relations.

Divided We Fall: Americans in the Aftermath

Valerie Kaur (writer and producer, 2006), an American college student, journeys across the country in the aftermath of September 11, 2001, to capture the unheard stories of individuals and communities caught in the cross-fire; she seeks to discover “who counts as ‘one of us’ in a world divided into ‘us’ and ‘them.’”

Acting on Faith: Women's New Religious Activism in America

Rachel Antell and the Pluralism Project, 2005. Narrated by Dr. Diana L. Eck, this film offers an intimate look at the lives and work of three American women—one Buddhist, one Hindu, and one Muslim—for whom faith, activism, and identity are intertwined.

Becoming the Buddha in L.A. (WGBH, VHS)

With a focus on the increasing religious diversity of the U.S., this 1993 documentary film chronicles the experience of young Buddhists in Los Angeles as they participate in age-old traditions in a new context.

*For the Good of All

Post, each on a large piece of paper, the four modes of interreligious dialogue:

- * The dialogue of life
- * The dialogue of social action
- * The dialogue of spiritual experience
- * The dialogue of theological exchange

Invite participants to write their names under the mode that interests them most. Then have them write under the appropriate mode(s) where or when they are already engaged in this practice. Next, invite them to list people they have heard or read about who are engaged in each mode. Finally, ask how, when, where could they imagine themselves engaged in one or more of these modes of interreligious dialogue. What would be their next best step toward deeper engagement?

*In Response to God

LECTIO TEXT: Luke 10:29-37

(See instructions for *lectio divina* in the introduction of this Guide.)

PRAY A PSALM

Psalm 133

CLOSING PRAYER

God of grace,
you created all people in your image.
Give us the humility of heart and wisdom of spirit
to love our brothers and sisters of other faiths as Christ loves us.
By your Spirit open our minds and our hearts
to receive the gifts you give us through them.
Amen.

1. AND ALSO WITH YOU

Many Christian communities share the peace of Christ when they worship (John 20:19-20; Rom. 16:16; I Pet. 5:14.) Learn the gestures and words shared in other faith communities when they

greet one another in peace and humility. Hebrew: *Shalom*, Arabic: *Salaam*; Sanskrit: *Namaste*, etc. Practice using these phrases and gestures with one another. Consider introducing them to your worshipping community.

2. KEEPING THE FAST

During Ramadan, the ninth month in the Islamic calendar, Muslims fast for spiritual growth. From dawn to dusk, Muslims do not eat, drink, smoke, or have sexual relations as a discipline to foster patience, self-restraint, modesty and spirituality. More time is spent in prayer and in studying the Koran.

Christians have a tradition of fasting as well. Read the following verses: Acts 13:1-3, 14:21-23, Luke 2:36-38; 5:33, Matthew 6:16-18, Luke 18:9-14, Joel 2:15-16, Nehemiah 9:1-3. What do these verses suggest to you about fasting in the Judeo-Christian tradition? What, if any, is your experience with fasting? How might fasting be connected to feasting for a Christian? What do you see as the possible blessings and dangers of fasting? Why might fasting best be understood as a community practice?

3. PRAYERS FOR PEACE

Use this brief order of worship to pray for God's blessing on our land and every land.

- * Sing stanza 1 of "This is My Song" (tune: Jean Sibelius; text: Lloyd Stone) or listen to the Indigo Girls sing it on a hidden track at the end of their "Come on Now Social" disc.
- * Read Isaiah 25:6-10 aloud, then Revelation 22:1-2.
- * Keep a time of silence.
- * Offer prayers for the healing of the divisions between peoples and nations.
- * Sing stanza 2 of "This is My Song," or listen to the hidden track again.
- * Close by sharing a sign of peace.

*Resources for Knowing and Loving Our Neighbors of Other Faiths

1. *Blood Brothers*, by Elias Chacour (Chosen Books, 2005). A beautiful memoir that weaves history of the Middle East conflict with a story about a Palestinian Christian working for peace in Israel.
2. *Exclusion and Embrace*, by Miroslav Volf (Abingdon Press, 1996). Native Croatian Dr. Volf teaches at Yale Divinity School. This book explores issues of identity and otherness, how to address the prevalence of hatred and move towards the practice of reconciliation.
3. *The Selected Poetry of Yehuda Amichai*, translated by Chana Bloch and Stephen Mitchell (University of California Press, 1996). This book is a collection of poems about life and faith in the Middle East written by one of Israel's most renowned modern day poets.
4. Visit the website for the *Journal of Inter-Religious Dialogue*, a resource engaging academic and social issues related to this topic. <http://irdialogue.org/>
5. Read the statement issued by the World Council of Churches on "The Future of Inter-Religious Youth Education in the US." It was written after the tragedy of 9/11. <http://www.wcc-coe.org/wcc/what/interreligious/cd41-02.html>
6. View this image of Saint Francis Assisi with the Muslim Sultan al-Kamil in the 15th century. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:SaintFrancisAssisiWithAlKamil15thCentury.JPG>
7. To learn more about the history of the Crusades, visit <http://www.middle-ages.org.uk/the-crusades.htm>
8. *Sharing Sacred Space: Interreligious Dialogue as Spiritual Encounter*, by Benoit Standaert (Liturgical Press, 2009). How to dwell in the spiritual spaces of Jews, Muslims, Buddhists, and Agnostics while firmly grounded in the space of Christ.
9. *How to be a Perfect Stranger: The Essential Religious Etiquette Handbook*, 4th ed., by Stuart M. Matlins and Arthur J. Magida (SkyLight Paths Publishing, 2006).
10. *Interfaith Dialogue at the Grass Roots*, edited by Rebecca Kratz Mays (Ecumenical Press, 2008).

11 * Peacemaking and Nonviolence

The Practice: Naming and disarming the powers of violence, doing the things that make for peace, practicing nonviolence, and trusting the transforming mercy of Christ Jesus, the incarnate God who reigns in and among us.

* Attentive

1. PRACTICE NONVIOLENCE

Give each person a pencil and two slips of paper. Pass out copies of the *Vow of Nonviolence* (169) and this list of questions for them to ponder for a time:

- * Which line in the vow intrigues you most?
- * Which line puts you off?
- * Which part seems (almost) possible to practice?
- * Which part seems (mostly or totally) impossible?

Then give these instructions: Choose one part of this vow (one “bullet point”) to practice for a week. Write that line on two slips of paper. Keep one of the slips with you (carry it in your wallet or backpack, tape it to your mirror or dashboard or refrigerator). Give the other slip to one of the other participants, asking that person to pray each day for you as you seek to practice nonviolence. Pay attention to how and when you find yourself keeping or breaking this “vow.” Check in with each other and decide at the end of the week whether to continue in this practice for another week, and another.

2. ENVISION THE PEACEABLE KINGDOM

Read Isaiah 11:6-9. The prophet paints a picture that seems unimaginable. Animals whose natural instinct is to kill for survival now lie peacefully with one another. Look up the following iconic art image by American artist Edward Hicks (1780-1849) inspired by Isaiah’s peaceable kingdom.

* <http://www.worcesterart.org/Collection/American/1934.65.html>

What would your rendition of a peaceable kingdom include? What would you paint?

Option: Create a contemporary “Peaceable Kingdom” mural, collage, or painting.

3. ONE STEP AT A TIME

Read Matthew 5:23-24 and Matthew 18:21-35.

Duba tells the story of a painful fracture in her relationship with her best friend. Another friend named Mary gave her the gifts of patience, time, and grace. Duba describes this beautifully as a process of peacemaking she calls “disarming my heart.” This process took more than two years. Peacemaking is practiced one step at a time, she says, until it becomes a way of life. Ask: What would be a good first step or next step in practicing peacemaking in your own life?

*Together

1. IMAGINE TOGETHER

Watch the documentary *Weapons of the Spirit* by Pierre Sauvage about the south central French village Le Chambon sur-Lignon that helped save 3,000-5,000 Jews during WWII. After the film, discuss ways in which this community practiced subversive and collective imagination. Ask: How might such a communal imagination be formed over time?

Option: Watch the documentary *The Danish Solution: The Rescue of the Jews in Denmark* by Karen Cantor and Camilla Kjaerulff (Singing Wolf Documentaries, 2005).

2. LEARN AND UNLEARN THE CHRISTMAS STORY

Post and/or read: Duba writes, “The Incarnation—God dwelling among us in Jesus—is God’s supreme and subversive act of peacemaking. . . . God subverted the occupying powers with the weakness of a baby” (170). There are two distinct nativity stories in the New Testament. Have half the group read Luke 2: 1-20, the other half Matthew 2:1-21

Give each group a piece of paper with these questions:

- * With whom in this story do you identify?
- * With whom in the story would the first hearers have identified?
- * How are the “powers of this world” named and present?
- * Where is “weakness” named and present?
- * What is God up to in this story?

* Where in the world might God be subverting power with weakness today?

Invite the two groups to share and compare their findings. Ask: What might your findings invite you to learn and unlearn about the meaning of Christmas?

3. WITH ALL THE SAINTS: PETER CLAVER (1580-1654)

Peter Claver was a Jesuit priest born in Catalonia, Spain. At age 30 encouraged by a spiritual mentor he traveled to Cartagena (present day Colombia) where he ministered to and cared for the thousands of African slaves brought to the market. He was known for his unfailing dedication to pleading for the freedom of slaves and for providing whatever respite he could for them. He would even enter the bowels of the slave ships to offer solace and aid whenever possible before the ships set sail.

*In the Real World

1. MAPPING VIOLENCE

Post a large map of the world on the wall. Ask participants to name and flag (with small tags and straight pins or tape) first the places where their own country is involved in armed combat, then other places where wars are being fought, then places where new terrors or old animosities are dividing people from one another, then places where corruption, greed, or scarcity is provoking violence.

Ask each person—or the group as a whole—to choose one place to study, track in the news, and pray for during the next month. Encourage them to investigate if, where, and how peacemaking is being practiced in the midst of this violence. At the end of the month Ask: Is there a first or next step here for us?

2. NONVIOLENCE: THE VIDEO GAME

Play *A Force More Powerful—the Game of Nonviolent Strategy*, the first and only interactive teaching tool in the field of nonviolent conflict. This game, developed by The International Center on Nonviolent Conflict, media firm York Zimmerman Inc. and game designers at BreakAway Ltd., is built on successful nonviolent strategies and tactics used in real conflicts in the real world. Learn more at www.aforcemorepowerful.org.

Option: Watch and discuss the PBS documentary, *A Force More Powerful: A Century of Nonviolent Conflict* by Peter Ackerman and Robert DuVall.

3. JESUS' THIRD WAY

Duba describes how Jesus instructed his followers in practices of nonviolent, active resistance to humiliation (175-78). Walter Wink calls these “Jesus’ Third Way responses” because they transcend instinctive fight or flight reactions. Ask the group to identify contemporary examples of Third Way responses. Imagine and role-play scenarios in which someone is being publicly humiliated and “turns the other cheek.”

*For the Good of All

1. HOST A PEACEMAKERS FAIR

Provide a list of local, national and international groups and organizations dedicated to conflict management, peacemaking, and peace-witnesses, and active nonviolence. Ask each participant to select an agency, research that agency during the coming week, and prepare a one-minute “elevator pitch” that covers:

- a. Who is my group?
- b. What is their mission?
- c. Where do they do their work?
- d. What makes my group distinctive?
- e. How can others support or join this vital work?

2. PREPARE CO FILES

Support any members of your group who wish to prepare a preliminary file establishing their conviction as a conscientious objector to war (182-84).

3. FOR THE HEALING OF THE NATIONS

Plan a prayer service for healing among the nations and peoples of the world. Consider using the service “For the Healing of the Nations” or another liturgy in *Holden: Prayer Around the Cross* (see Resources section below).

*In Response to God

LECTIO TEXT: Micah 4:1-4

(See instructions for *lectio divina* in the introduction of this Guide.)

PRAY A PSALM

Psalm 85:7-13

CLOSING PRAYER

God of grace and steadfast love,
in Christ Jesus you speak mercy to your people,
by your Spirit you bring justice to the land.
Open our ears to hear your voice,
turn our hearts to trust in you,
and guide our feet on the path of peace
for the sake of your whole creation.
Amen.

1. A LENTEN JOURNEY

During Lent, the forty days before Easter, Mary Emily's congregation met weekly to study the practice of peacemaking. At the end of this time they gathered for worship in which some of the members took the Vow of Nonviolence (169). Read her story. Invite others to join you in such a study. (Check out Resources for Peacemaking for ideas.) See where it takes you.

2. PEACE BE WITH YOU

Look in your community's worship book, or watch and listen the next time you worship, for the number of times the word "peace" is used. How is it used? What does it mean? How is peace enacted or embodied in worship?

Option: Search for hymns and songs about peace and peacemaking in your community's songbook or hymnal. Host a Songfest where individuals and small ensembles can offer songs of peace and the whole assembly can sing songs and hymns of peace together.

*Resources for Peacemaking and Nonviolence

1. Learn more about the community of Le Chambon. Visit the Chambon Foundation website at www.chambon.org
2. *The Prophetic Imagination*, by Walter Brueggemann (Fortress Press 1978). Explores the poetic and subversive role a prophetic mindset.
3. Discover subversive imagination at work through community gardening. Anathoth Community Garden is a faith based project in North Carolina that uses gardening to foster peace

and reconciliation in a community once divided by racial injustice and violent crime. Visit <http://www.anathothgarden.org/>

4. *Dead Man Walking* (1995), directed by Tim Robbins. This powerful, painful tale based on the true story of Sister Helen Prejean's spiritual advisory relationship with two convicted killers, addresses notions of God's shalom, grief, coping with the violence of our enemies, and peacemaking.
5. *A Lesson Before Dying*, by Ernest J. Gaines (Knopf 1993). A beautiful, challenging work of fiction about racial and institutional injustice.
6. Learn more about Christian Peacemaker Team stance on nonviolence and war. Visit the website at <http://www.cpt.org/>
7. *Jesus and Nonviolence: A Third Way*, by Walter Wink (Fortress Press 2003), offers a Christian understanding of nonviolence.
8. *Peace Is the Way: Writings on Nonviolence from the Fellowship of Reconciliation*, edited by Walter Wink (Orbis Books 2000). Sixty essays by some of the world's most inspirational voices address theories, practices, and spiritualities of nonviolence.
9. Learn more about Nonviolent Peaceforce, "an unarmed, professional civilian peacekeeping force that is invited to work in conflict zones worldwide. With international headquarters in Brussels, Nonviolent Peaceforce has worked in the conflict areas of Sri Lanka, the Philippines and Guatemala." <http://www.nonviolentpeaceforce.org/>
10. In 1948 the United Nations General Assembly in Paris proclaimed the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Visit the United Nations Office of High Commissioner for Human Rights website to view the document with translations available in multiple languages. <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/UDHR/Pages/Introduction.aspx>
11. The Presbyterian Church of America hosts an informative blog as part of their Peacemaking Program. The blog is called Swords into Ploughshares and provides resources for further peacemaking education and activities. <http://presbyterian.typepad.com/peacemaking/>
12. "For the Healing of the Nations," a prayer service based on Revelation 21, in *Holden Prayer Around the Cross*, by Susan Briehl and Tom Witt (Augsburg Fortress 2009), as well as the companion audio CD and full accompaniment edition *Singing Our Prayer*.

12* Doing Justice

The Practice: Living in a way that takes into account the common good and seeks flourishing for all.

*Attentive

1. TRACK “FUEL” CONSUMPTION

Hollyday writes that like the ancient Israelites we too are held captive, captive to an empire that runs on four powers: violence, greed, gluttony, and most of all, anxiety (189).

Post these four powers. Discuss how each fuels their personal lives, the nation, and the world. Then ask participants to choose one of these fuels and track its use for a week. Encourage them to be attentive throughout each day to how they:

- * witness that power at work in their community.
- * recognize this power at work in national and world events.
- * experience that power fueling their own actions and decisions.

Option: Reflect on Martin Luther King Jr.’s assessment of power (from his August 16, 1967, speech *Where Do We Go From Here?*):

Power properly understood is nothing but the ability to achieve purpose. It is the strength required to bring about social, political and economic change. . . . There is nothing wrong with power if power is used correctly. What is needed is a realization that power without love is reckless and abusive, and love without power is sentimental and anemic. Power at its best is love implementing the demands of justice, and justice at its best is power correcting everything that stands against love.

2. EXAMINE YOUR SCRIPT

Read Hollyday's description of the life-script she was given at birth and how that script took an unexpected turn (190). She claims "we all have such figurative scripts, based on such factors as our skin color, economic class, gender, and education." Invite participants to think about the script of their lives. What factors shaped it? How would you describe its plot line? What would be an apt title for your script? How closely are you following it? Has your life taken any unexpected turns? Can we choose to rewrite or redirect the script of our lives?

3. SEEING THROUGH A JUSTICE LENS

Ask participants to complete this assignment before gathering to discuss Chapter 12: Submit two digital photos, one that portrays "injustice" and one that portrays "justice." If possible take the photos yourself, asking permission when appropriate. The photos may be spontaneous or staged.

Display photos for the assembled group, projected as a slideshow or printed and mounted. Ask each person to comment on the choice of images and how they are influenced by chapter themes.

4. NOTICE SIGNS OF HOPE

Hollyday admits that when she visited South Africa in 1988 hope for change felt unrealistic to her. And yet, two years later apartheid was deemed illegal. Ask: What about today's world causes you to confess that hope feels unrealistic? How might the subversive imagination Duba talks about in chapter 11 rekindle hope (172)?

*Together

1. GO TO WILDERNESS SCHOOL

Read "God's Justice Reaching Out to Humanity" (187-89). The wilderness is a central motif in the biblical narrative. Wilderness often appears to be a training ground for the people of God. Divide the following passages among the teams of two or three. Ask them to read the passage(s) and name what role the wilderness plays in the text.

- * Exodus 16:1-3, 9-21 (Manna in the Wilderness)
- * 1 Samuel 23:6-14 (Protection of David)
- * Psalm 63 (A Psalm of David)
- * 1 Kings 19:1-16 (Elijah in the wilderness)
- * Luke 1:57-80 (Preparation of John the Baptist)

- * Luke 3:1-6 (Proclamation of John the Baptist)
- * Matthew 4:1-11 (Temptation of Jesus)

Reconvene the group. Ask willing participants to share a “wilderness school” experience from their own lives addressing this question: What did you learn or unlearn in the wilderness? Then ask the whole group: How do you imagine that an experience in the wilderness might shape our capacity to recognize injustice and practice justice?

2. START A BOOK CLUB

Select a book that deals with issues of justice and organize a book club. Partner with your local library and/or bookstore to host the discussion. Review this list of books for ideas.

- * *Half the Sky: Turning Oppression Into Opportunity for Women Worldwide*, by Nicholas D. Kristof and Sheryl WuDunn (Knopf, 2009).
- * *Perspectives on Health and Human Rights*, edited by Sofia Gruskin (Picador, 1998).
- * *We Wish to Inform You That Tomorrow We Will Be Killed With Our Families: Stories from Rwanda*, by Philip Gourevitch (New York: Routledge, 2005).
- * *King Leopold’s Ghost: A Story of Greed, Terror, and Heroism in Colonial Africa*, by Adam Hochschild (Boston: Mariner Books, 1998).
- * *The End of Poverty*, by Jeffrey D. Sachs (Penguin Press, 2005).

3. SING A SONG FOR JUSTICE

Learn and sing a wide variety of songs of justice and freedom from around the world. Invite participants to share justice songs, secular, sacred, political, and personal.

4. WITH ALL THE SAINTS: OSCAR ARNULFO ROMERO (1917-1980)

Oscar Romero was appointed Archbishop of San Salvador, El Salvador in 1977, when the country was in the midst of political and social upheaval. Wealthy ruling families were oppressing the poor and middle class, and social protests and demonstrations had led to violent kidnappings and disappearances among the people. Because of Romero’s quiet and studious demeanor, political and Church leaders assumed he would calm the waters. But the more he witnessed the injustices in his country, the more he felt called to speak out. He began preaching for justice and against violations of human rights. His sermons were broadcast across Central America. Eventually, he was assassinated while serving mass. Many have petitioned the Vatican to declare Romero a saint, but for now he remains the saint of the people.

*In the Real World

1. WHEN "GOOD NEWS" DOESN'T SOUND SO GOOD

Jesus gave his first sermon in his home synagogue (Luke 4:16-27), drawing from a text from the prophet Isaiah (61:1-2). The congregation rejected him and his message (Luke 4:28-30). Why? Ask participants to paraphrase Luke 4:18 for their local community.

- * Who would you identify as "the poor"? The "the oppressed"?
- * Who would you identify as the "captive"? The "blind"?
- * What would you say is God's "good news" to them?
- * Who in the community might not hear this as good news? Why?

2. MORAL UNIVERSE?

Post this Martin Luther King Jr. quotation (from his August 16, 1967, speech *Where Do We Go From Here?*): "When our days become dreary with low-hovering clouds of despair, and when our nights become darker than a thousand midnights, let us remember that there is a creative force in this universe, working to pull down the gigantic mountains of evil, a power that is able to make a way out of no way and transform dark yesterdays into bright tomorrows. Let us realize the arc of the moral universe is long but it bends toward justice."

Discuss: Do you share King's view that the universe is moral and bending toward justice? What cosmology shapes King's faith conviction and instills this hope in him?

3. STORIES OF DOING JUSTICE IN THE REAL WORLD

Watch one of the following films (or another film that tells the story of people who love kindness and do justice in the real world). Invite others to join you.

- * *Cry Freedom* (1987). Based on true events during South African apartheid. A black nationalist, Steven Biko (Denzel Washington), befriends a white journalist, Donald Woods (Kevin Kline), as both strive for racial freedom.
- * *Hotel Rwanda* (2004). During the 1994 Rwandan genocide, over 700,000 people were massacred in 100 days. One ordinary man saved over 1000 people by refusing to remain captive to a world of violence and fear.
- * *In This World* (2003). The story of two young Afghan refugees, their friendship, and their journey from Pakistan to London.

4. COMPARE ECOLOGICAL FOOTPRINTS

Have participants take the Ecological Footprint Quiz (www.myfootprint.org) and compare your group's resource consumption to the global profile. Discuss what justice requires when we ponder this comparison.

*For the Good of All

1. BE AN ADVOCATE, WRITE A LETTER

Is there is an issue of injustice that you feel strongly about and want your elected officials to address? Let your Congressperson or Senator know what matters to you and make a request that s/he take a more active stance on the issue. To find out how to contact your local elected officials visit <http://www.usa.gov/Contact/Elected.shtml>.

Option: Host a “letter writing” campaign in your community of faith, perhaps in a gathering area following worship. Set up tables with information about the issues, provide addresses for elected officials, example letters, stationery, envelopes, and stamps.

2. JUSTICE BY OTHER NAMES

Invite leaders of other faith traditions to speak with your group about words, images, and stories that convey concepts of “justice” and “mercy.” How might these terms enrich Christian understanding and practice?

3. UNLEASH THE WEAPONS OF CONSTRUCTION AND COMPASSION

Post these three questions, each on a separate board or paper:

- * Where in the world could we support the work of “digging wells, laying roads, building hospitals and schools” (190)?
- * Where in our community could we feed the hungry, visit the imprisoned, clothe the naked, comfort the grieving, tend the sick, or accompany the dying?
- * How in your home or among your circle of friends could you more fully love mercy, do kindness, and live humbly?

Pass out markers and invite participants to post answers/suggestions beneath each question. Give everyone the opportunity to read everything that has been written. Then ask: What would be our next best step?

*In Response to God

LECTIO TEXT: Exodus 14:10-14

(See instructions for *lectio divina* in the introduction of this Guide.)

PRAY A PSALM

Psalm 146

CLOSING PRAYER

Faithful God,
whose promises are sure,
we pray for all who are orphaned by war,
bent low by poverty, or held captive by prejudice.
Teach us to practice your justice and seek your mercy
until every creature flourishes in the garden of your grace.
Amen.

1. PRACTICE FORGIVENESS

“There will be no freedom without forgiveness,” writes Bishop Desmond Tutu. Read together Matthew 18:15-17, an early church “handbook” on practicing forgiveness and reconciliation. Note the various “steps” in this process. What is the goal? Who takes the first step? What if that doesn’t work? Role-play this process using a couple of scenarios.

Finally, the text says, if the person refuses to respond to any of these steps, “treat that person like a gentile and a tax collector.” To see what Jesus might mean by this, read Matthew 9:9-13; Matthew 10:1-3; Luke 5:27-32; Luke 15:1-2 [3-32]; Luke 19:1-10.

Option: Give participants paper and pens and invite them to write a letter to someone with whom they need to be reconciled. In this letter, ask them to seek and offer forgiveness. They may later choose to send the letter or not.

2. LET JUSTICE ROLL

Plan a worship service with a justice theme. For ideas see “Let Justice Roll” an article by Jay Blankespoor and Elizabeth Vander Haagen, posted on the Reformed Worship Resources: http://www.reformedworship.org/magazine/article.cfm?article_id=1222

*Resources for Doing Justice

1. To learn ways of teaching children about social justice issues and tools visit the D.C. based organization Teaching for Change: Building Social Justice starting in the classroom. <http://www.teachingforchange.org/about/overview>
2. *The Land*, by Walter Brueggemann (Fortress Press, 1977), explores how the wilderness can serve as a blessed, essential part of the journey of faith.
3. *No Future Without Forgiveness*, by Desmond Tutu (Doubleday, 1997). South African Archbishop Tutu recounts the establishment of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission after Apartheid.
4. *The Powers, Vol 1: Naming the Powers, Vol. 2: Unmasking the Powers*, by Walter Wink (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984, 1986).
5. Visit the website for *Sojourners: Faith, Politics, Culture*, a magazine whose mission “is to articulate the biblical call to social justice, inspiring hope and building a movement to transform individuals, communities, the church, and the world.” <http://www.sojo.net/index.cfm>
6. Learn about what has happened in Darfur, Sudan and ways you can getting involved with efforts to aid the Sudanese. Visit the Save Darfur website. <http://www.savedarfur.org/>
7. Learn about Immigration issues and rights at the National Immigration Forum website. <http://www.immigrationforum.org/>
8. Visit the website Global Issues: Social, Political, Economic and Environmental Issues That Affect Us All. It discusses how issues affecting the world are interrelated. <http://www.globalissues.org/>
9. Learn about the legal defense advocacy work of Bryan Stevenson and the Equal Justice Initiative. www.eji.org

13* Living in the Presence of God

The Practice: Living in God’s presence invites us to see the world with new eyes, to see God’s presence in the little and the least, and to become what God created us to be, merely, fully human beings.

*Attentive

1. BE WONDER-FULL

Invite participants to share stories of childhood wonder. Consider using these prompts: As a child where did you first experience wonder in your world? What things did you think were beautiful, fascinating, or awe-inspiring? Who helped “open your eyes” and “widen your heart” to the “mysteries of the universe?”

2. SEE THE INVISIBLE

Susan Briehl writes, “. . . what is visible makes the Invisible known, the finite speaks of the Infinite” (202). This suggests that God comes to us through the things we can see and touch and experience. Where and how has this proven true for you in the last two weeks?

3. BE (MERELY, FULLY) HUMAN

Read “Knowing Where we Come From” (202-205) to prepare for this. Ask participants to consider these questions. When have you felt “fully human,” flourishing as the person God created you to be? When were you most recently grateful to be “merely human”? What experiences have made you feel “less than truly human?” And when are you tempted to believe you are “more than human?” Briehl uses physical postures to describe these human conditions. Invite participants to demonstrate with their bodies what each of these conditions looks like. Then ask them to do the

same thing as a group. What does a whole community look like when it is “fully human,” “curved in on itself,” etc.

Option: Have participants create “universal signs” (those iconic signs that depict things like “Men’s Room” and “Pedestrian Crossing”) for the “postures” of these human conditions.

*Together

1. WALKING THROUGH DOUBT’S DESERT.

Pass out paper and pencils. When we are overwhelmed with doubt or grief or unbelief, Briehl suggests, “we are wise to ask a trusted friend or mentor to walk beside us” (211). Ask participants to take a moment to remember who has been (or might be) such a friend or mentor to them. Then invite them to write a brief note of gratitude to one of these persons. (They can decide later whether or not to give or send the note.)

Ask participants to share one of the characteristics of this person that makes him or her a trustworthy mentor in such times. Write the answers for all to see. Ask if these are qualities that could be evoked from or nurtured in themselves or one another. How?

2. WALK TO EMMAUS

Read Luke 24:13-43 [or divide into four teams and divide the text into sections: 24:13-21; 24:21-27; 24:28-35; 24:36-43] and identify where and how Jesus is encountered. Some scholars say this is a story-form description of early Christian worship. Ask: Where and how do you and your faith community have similar encounter experiences.

3. READ POETRY

This chapter draws deeply upon the poetry of Gerard Manley Hopkins (203) and Denise Levertov (211-12). Stephanie Paulsell turns to the poetry of W. H. Auden (72) and the Song of Solomon for wisdom on friendship. Jonathon Wilson-Hargrove says he “fell in love with the poetry of Wendell Berry” (55). Tony Alonso wrote song lyrics in response to the events of 9/11 (95) and Dan Spencer is inspired by Hildegard’s poetic visions of creation (107). Briehl claims that “though centuries or continents may separate us from them, writers can be cherished companions” (211). Invite participants to bring and share a poem (including one they have written) that has comforted, encouraged, inspired, or shaped them in their faith journey.

Option: Host a “coffee house” or “open mike night” with drinks and snacks and an atmosphere conducive to reading poetry aloud and singing songs.

4. WITH ALL THE SAINTS: DENISE LEVERTOV, POET (1923-1997)

A British-born American poet, Levertov wrote her first book of poetry between the ages of 17 and 21. The passions and practices of her life in the world—peacemaking, care for creation, and justice for women—are part of the fabric of her art. In the last year of her life she gathered 39 poems written over two decades in *The Stream & the Sapphire*. These poems, she says in the foreword, “trace my slow movement from agnosticism to Christian faith, a movement incorporating much doubt and questioning as well as affirmation.” She offers this slim volume to readers who “are themselves concerned with doubt and faith,” to “stuff in a pocket, or place by their bedside.”

*In the Real World

1. PRACTICE SEEING JESUS

Read “Receiving New Life, New Eyes” (205-207). Working in teams of two or three, with one passage assigned to each team, identify where Jesus is seen or encountered.

- * Matthew 10:40-42
- * Matthew 18:1-5
- * Matthew 18:15-20
- * Matthew 25:31-40
- * Luke 2:1-7

Ask each person, in light of the text they have read, to name one surprising place they have seen Jesus or one unlikely person in whom they have encountered Jesus. Share these “sightings” with the whole group.

2. WE’VE ALWAYS DONE IT THAT WAY?

Post and/or read Acts 2:42. Briehl asserts that much about Christian worship has remained the same for two thousand years (214). Ask: Which aspects of the description of the Christian community in Acts are visible in the worship of your faith community?

Then read the third and fourth paragraphs on page 214. Ask: Does any of this sound familiar? Compare and contrast this description of Christian worship, based on a second century document, with the practices in your faith communities. What is present in this description that is also practiced in your community? What is not? What does your community do at worship that is not

mentioned in this description? Discuss the validity of this statement: Christian worship, like the Word of God, is ever ancient and ever new.

Option: Attend a worship service together. Gather afterward to have this conversation.

*For the Good of All

1. FACING THE HEART OF DARKNESS

Post and read this question, “What good is being wide-eyed and awake when all around us people are bought and sold, murdered and tortured, degraded and ignored?” (208). Ask: Have you ever asked such questions? When? Do you tend to avoid such questions? How? What place do wonder and joy have in a world full of war, injustice and despair?

Remind participants that Briehl poses this question after she tells of visiting the National Holocaust Memorial Museum. Then post and read Briehl’s second question: “What does ‘practicing faith’ mean when your own church, your own people, your own way of life are complicit in such horrors?” Ask participants to name (aloud or in writing) “horrors” in which they believe their church or nation is complicit. Then ask them to consider whether they see themselves as complicit. How does their faith community, including their “ancestors in the faith,” provide them with resources for responding to this complicity?

2. BECOME BREAD

Read the epilog (217). Post: “Eventually we become bread, God’s bread, sent to nourish a hungry world.” Do you see this happening in your life, your community? What might you do together “as bread, blessed, broken, and given” for the sake of the life of the world?

Option: Read “Becoming what we receive” (215) and as a group commit to “being bread” for a hungry world by choosing one place to “give yourselves away” in service.

3. CONNECT THE DOTS

Challenge participants to make connections between the liturgy of worship and the liturgy of daily life. How might what we do in worship form and empower us to live more faithfully in the world? In light of this chapter, how would they respond to the charge that communal worship is a form of escapism, a way of avoiding or even legitimating social injustice? Perhaps stage a debate on this topic as a way of sharpening arguments on both sides.

*In Response to God

LECTIO TEXT: Philippians 2:5-11.

(See instructions for *lectio divina* in the introduction of this Guide.)

PRAY A PSALM

Psalm 111

CLOSING PRAYER

Holy and awesome God,
who creates out of nothing but sheer love,
fill us with your wisdom,
open our eyes to the wonders of your grace,
that we might love you with our whole heart
and our neighbors as ourselves,
through Jesus Christ,
your Word among us.
Amen.

1. GRACE AND GRATITUDE

Post this quotation from Karl Barth: “Grace evokes gratitude like the voice its echo. Gratitude follows grace like thunder the lightening.” Ask participants to name gifts that God has first given them. Urge them to be as specific and concrete as possible. Write them for all to see. Then ask them to discuss whether they think Barth had it right. *Does* grace evoke gratitude as inevitably as the voice evokes its echo? Is gratitude a natural, spontaneous human response? Can gratitude be taught and practiced? Give examples.

Option: Read Luke 17:11-19 (The Ten Lepers) and/or Matthew 18:21-35 (The Ungrateful Servant) as part of this discussion. What blocks gratitude as a response to grace and mercy? Is it our sense of entitlement? A deep sense that the universe owes us something, and that what has been restored to us is no more than what we rightly deserved all along?

Option: View the short film *The Lunch Date*.

Ask: What does the woman’s laugh at the close of the film reveal, express? Comic relief? Embarrassment? Or is she struck by the amazing grace of the shared meal. Does the woman “become what she has received” through that meal?

2. TAKE A DEEP BREATH

Briehl makes the connection between humility and our deeper awareness of self, knowing that a loving God creates us. Humility is like a deep breath. Find a quiet space to pray, alone or with others. Close your eyes and take several deep breaths. Then, continuing this pattern of slow, deep breathing, with each intake of breath turn your palms downward and envision the things, people and experiences for which you are most grateful. With each exhale of breath turn your palms upward and envision sending gratitude to God.

3. PRAY FOR MERCY

Plan a time of prayer for the places of heart-breaking suffering in your community or in the world. Invite everyone who comes to bring something that represents the pain in the world for which they pray. Begin the service by singing a Kyrie eleison, or another song pleading for God's presence and mercy. During the singing invite each person to place their symbol in the middle of the room. Continue to sing until all symbols have been shared. Close the service with each person offering a prayer.

*Resources for Living in the Presence of God

1. *Getting Involved With God*, by Ellen F. Davis (Cowley Publications, 2001).
2. *Poems and Prose by Gerard Manley Hopkins*, ed. by W. H. Gardner (Penguin Classics, 1953).
3. *The Road to Daybreak: A Spiritual Journey* by Henri Nouwen (Doubleday, 1988). Catholic priest and spiritual teacher shares about his experience living and working with the mentally and physically disabled in a L'Arche community in Canada.
4. *The Stream and the Sapphire; Selected Poems on Religious Themes*, by Denise Levertov (New Directions Publishing, 1997).
5. Download the song "God of Wonder" by the rock group Third Day.
6. *Toward a Theology of Beauty: A Biblical Perspective*, by Jo Ann Davidson (University Press of America, 2008.)
7. *Words of Delight: A Literary Introduction to the Bible*, by Leland Ryken (Baker Academic, 1993).
8. *The Christian Imagination: The Practice of Faith in Literature and Writing*, by Leland Ryken (Shaw Books, 2002).
9. *Grace and Necessity: Reflections on Art and Love*, by Rowen Williams (Morehouse Publishing, 2005), explores the role of art in Christian thought.
10. *Turn My Heart: A Journey from Brokenness to Healing*, by Susan Briehl and Marty Haugen (GIA, 2003). Songs, poems, and simple liturgies for times of loss.