Study Guide on Christian Practices

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We are living in a time of great spiritual yearning and widespread social change. Christian ministers, educators, and congregations have much to offer in this context—but we too are often shaken by change and torn by the demands of life in a fast-paced culture. In this context, we desperately need to ask how we might build one another up in a way of life that is good for ourselves, for others, and for all creation, a way of life that has meaning and coherence because it is grounded in God and oriented toward God.

I believe that a significant portion of the spiritual hunger that is so evident in contemporary society arises from hunger for such a way of life. We who are Christians might call this a way of life abundant (John 10:10). This is very different from the lifestyle of abundance that so often disorients the desires of the contemporary heart.

During the past several years, I have been part of an ecumenical group of theologians, ministers, educators, and youth who have been trying to describe (and, dare I say, to live) such a way of life.[1] Describing such a way of life all at once would be impossible, for it would encompass all that is, so we have usually explored this way of life (or Way of Life) one practice at a time. In *Practicing Our Faith*, for example, we invited readers into what the subtitle called "A Way of Life for a Searching People" by advocating twelve practices which, when woven together, constitute such a way of life: honoring the body, hospitality, household economics, saying yes and saying no, keeping sabbath, discernment, testimony, shaping communities, forgiveness, healing, dying well, and singing our lives to God.

I hope that this study topic will help you to see that many of the things you do every day are related to enduring Christian practices, and I hope that it will encourage you to grow stronger in these practices, together with other members of your community. Each practice is a dynamic cluster of activities, words, and images that has been held and embodied by Christian people across the centuries and in many cultures, and each addresses a fundamental human need in ways that reflect and respond to God s grace to us and to the world in Christ.

I hope that your study of Christian practices will offer a perspective on Christian living that will allow you to consider the obstacles to and the opportunities for a way of life abundant in your own context. Studying Christian practices involves some conceptual work (what is a *Christian practice* anyway? and so what?) and some experiential engagement. (How does your community participate in the Christian practice of feasting and fasting? Note: this is a very different matter than bingeing and dieting!) The purpose is to develop a way of thinking about the shared life of Christian people, within congregations and in other life-contexts, that encourages participation in practices that are attuned to God's presence and to the well-being of all creation.

Structuring your study and conversation on Christian practices

This guide contains two different sets of suggestions.

First, I offer ways of delving into the particulars of one practice at a time, considering how it is present and/or misshapen in your life at home, in your congregation, and in our culture; how it addresses fundamental human needs; how it is related to biblical stories and concepts; and so on. Here we gain insights and resources that help us to perceive God's presence within this practice, to acknowledge the brokenness of this practice and our own embodiment of it, and to receive the gifts it may provide as we build one another up in a way of life that more fully reflects and responds to God's grace.

Second, I offer commentary on the concepts that inform this way of thinking about our way of life and provide suggestions for discussing these concepts. I conclude with suggestions for reflecting on the life of your congregation from this perspective.

Some folks like to begin with the more abstract material and then get specific. My mind works the other way. You may do these sessions in whatever order makes sense to you.

Reflecting on one practice at a time

In preparation for your first meeting on practices, I would suggest reading the first and last chapters of *Practicing Our Faith* and also one or two of the chapters that explore specific practices. Also, look over the one-page definition at the end of this study guide.

1. Work together to "write a chapter" on a practice that is not set forth in *Practicing Our Faith*. One that has tremendous importance within the Christian life is the practice that orders our producing, preparing, ingesting, and renouncing of food. We might call this the practice of "breaking bread," or "feasting and fasting." In *Way To Live: Christian Practices for Teens* there is a chapter on "Food" that deals with this practice.

   Have this conversation over a meal, the more down-to-earth and made-by-you the better. (I don't recommend ordering fast food—but if you do, that is something to discuss! Why do people in our society consume so much of this? What are the implications of fast food for the flourishing of creation as a whole? for life together at table? and so on.)

   Start by telling each other about one meal experience that stands out in your mind as very special—either because it was so good or because it was so bad. Each person should describe the experience and explain what made it special. These stories will provide a pool of examples as you reflect on these questions, which I've designed to bring different aspects of this practice into awareness:

- What is at stake when we eat? What fundamental human needs are addressed? Physical nourishment, of course, but what else? Use your stories as examples. What do we learn from this about who we human beings are?
- What Bible stories and passages feature food? This could take all day! See if you can discern any patterns to hold the many, many examples together. You might even construct a "biblical history" of the practice of feasting and fasting that runs from garden to eschatological banquet, by way of famine, fleshpots, manna, milk and honey, locusts and wild honey, bread and wine, meat sacrificed to idols . . .
- How has this practice changed over time? Across cultures? Explore traditions, cultural distinctives . . .
- Where is this practice distorted, broken, corrupted today? For example, world hunger, eating disorders . . .
- How and with whom do we share this practice? Daily, weekly, annually? Across the life cycle? Who taught you to engage in it?
- What words are important parts of this practice? (Practices are not just in the bodily doing; a practice also involves thinking and saying, images and language.)
- What skills and virtues are important to excellent engagement in this practice?
- What kinds of knowledge are required if this practice is to be strong? (Note: not every practitioner has to possess this knowledge to the same degree; this is a *shared* practice.) How are the youngest among us drawn into this practice?
- What different specific forms might this practice take in different family, class, or cultural situations? Where do you find common ground, where differences?
- How does this practice come to a focus in worship? How does this send us forth to engage in this practice in daily life? How might worship be crafted to make these connections more vivid?
- Check this claim with the group: The way in which we engage in this practice provides a snapshot of our way of life as a whole (for good or ill). True? False?

- Check this claim with the group: Faithful engagement in the Christian practice of feasting and fasting would soon draw us into many of the other practices of the Christian life: hospitality, sabbath, prayer, forgiveness, dying well (why do many congregations serve a meal after a funeral?), household economics?
- How is this practice not so much a task as a gift—God's gift to us and to the world? Would faithful engagement be primarily (1) a matter of getting everything under control, or (2) a matter of becoming more trusting, grateful, and receptive?
- What is one thing you and your family, friends, or congregation could do to more fully know God's grace within this practice?

2. You could do a very similar exercise with the practice of hospitality. This practice, which is deeply embedded in the narratives and teachings of the Christian tradition, recognizes the vulnerability of strangers, the dangers of exclusion, and God s special presence in the guest-host relationship. An excellent resource is Christine Pohl's book *Making Room: Recovering Hospitality as a Christian Tradition*. A very stimulating and extensive study guide accompanies this wonderful book.

The film *Weapons of the Spirit: The Story of Le Chambon and How Goodness Happened There* tells the story of how the Protestant residents of a French village protected thousands of Jews during World War II. Watch this film and read Craig Dykstra's interpretation of it in "The Power of Christian Practice," Chapter Four of *Growing in the Life of Faith.*

Let me take this opportunity to report a pet peeve. Many people pick up *Practicing Our Faith*, see the lovely titles of the practices . . . hospitality, forgiveness, discernment . . . and get all mushy and sentimental. Note: Hospitality is not just a quality of the spirit or a form of niceness. As those who serve homeless people know, it can be harsh and dreadful. The practice requires material as well as emotional resources: soup and socks and labor. It takes time and is often frustrating. Gifted practitioners have realized that offering welcome requires them to structure their entire way of life in specific ways; think of the Benedictines, or the Open Door Community in Atlanta. Even when your concern is welcoming newcomers to your congregation, far more will be needed than smiles on the faces of the greeters.

This example also provides a good opportunity for me to remind you of something many students of this perspective have trouble remembering within our individualistic context: the practices of the Christian life are meant to be *shared* with one another. We are called corporately to welcome strangers in ways we could not manage as individuals. Within a world of overwhelming human need, how can each of us engage fully in all these demanding practices? This and related questions are addressed by Christine Pohl in her essay in *Practicing Theology*, which reflects on communities that have a calling to emphasize one practice above others (e.g. a ministry to homeless people) and how other members of the Body of Christ can and do contribute to this, though perhaps less engaged in a face-to-face way.

3. My own personal favorite Christian practice is keeping sabbath. When the authors of *Practicing Our Faith* were dividing up the chapter assignments, I was so aware of my own need for this practice that I was ready to arm-wrestle for the privilege of writing about it. (Fortunately that wasn't necessary; my colleagues were generous.) When the book was published, it was evident that many people resonated with this practice. However, I was concerned about its effect on some readers. Theologically, my research for the chapter had led me to conclude that the word "sabbath" refers to one day in seven—not to a more generalized "sabbath time" that we can divide up into little bits and enjoy here and there. I was troubled that many people—including some of those who are least privileged—really do have to work on Sunday and lack the option of taking another day off instead. I addressed this concern by arguing that engagement in the practice of keeping sabbath entails working for greater economic freedom for all; but I wanted to tell these folks that the Christian tradition has more immediate gifts for them as well. These are the practices through which we receive the gifts of God within each day and during the course of each year.

   In *Receiving the Day: Christian Practices for Opening the Gift of Time*, I made a case for daily prayer, weekly sabbath observance, and annual remembrance and

celebration, arguing that these practices can foster our capacity for attentive and loving relationships with God and one another. Frankly, I had begun to read and write about sabbath and related practices because I was tired and needed a rest. The longer I spent with them, however, the more I realized that the human needs addressed by these practices went beyond the need to rest. These practices also teach us our finitude and mortality; cultivate our capacity for wonder and attentiveness; and enable us to understand our own brief life stories as woven now and forever into the ongoing Story of God.

Historically, Presbyterians have been strong adherents of the practice of keeping sabbath, and you have also been showing renewed interest in this practice in recent years. (Does that mean that you get a full day of rest weekly?) At this point, I want to challenge you also to take seriously the other Christian practices for opening the gift of time: the practice of receiving the day, and the practicing of living within the story of the Christian year. (A confession: I wrote Chapter Six, on the liturgical year, partly to explain to my Presbyterian parents why the seasons and rhythms of the year as we Lutherans observe them are so amazing.) The point of participating in these practices is not simply to order time; the point is to be formed by them, to become people who know in our entire selves the truths upon which the practices rest. Within your Rehoboth group or with others, covenant to offer focused attention to the liturgical seasons as they bear their gifts to the Church this year.

4. Many resources are available for more fully exploring any of the Christian practices addressed in this literature. The study guides that accompany most of the books discussed here suggest topics for conversation. The Valparaiso Project website, www.practicingourfaith.org, includes sermons, worship resources, bibliographies, lists of relevant films, and ideas for "practicing the practices."

   I want to urge you also to take a look at *Way To Live: Christian Practices for Teens*, no matter how old you are! Though written with first- and second-year high school students in mind, the chapters in this book contain some remarkably thorough and challenging accounts of specific practices. An online Leader's Guide at www.waytolive.org provides ideas for Bible studies, prayer, activities, questions, and other resources related to each chapter. For example, the chapter on "Stuff" addresses the way in which consumerism corrupts our lives in a way that adults find as compelling as youth do.

   Way To Live adds some practices not found in *Practicing Our Faith*—sometimes simplifying ("Hospitality" becomes "Welcome"); sometimes breaking practices clustered within one chapter of the earlier book into separate chapters ("Household Economics" becomes "Stuff," "Work," and "Creation"); and sometimes just plain adding: "Food," "Prayer," and "The Story."

   In *Practicing Our Faith*, prayer and Bible study (the topic of the *Way To Live* chapter "The Story") did not receive separate chapters. Instead, the authors emphasized that both of these undergird all the practices. We wanted especially to

emphasize that our purpose was to address the ways in which people were actually thinking about and conducting the daily, material activities of their lives. We wanted to overcome the tendency of many books about what most people call "spiritual practices" to emphasize disciplines of piety while giving little attention to patterns of social existence.

I think the chapters on The Story and Prayer in *Way To Live* are terrific. I commend them to adults as earnestly as I would commend them to teenagers. I wish we had included these practices in *Practicing Our Faith.* However . . . I really want those of you who study Christian practices not to stop with these, as those interested in spirituality too often do these days (in my humble opinion). I urge you to reflect as well on the material arrangements of your *way of life.* It is not enough to add prayer and stir. What I most hope for, for your life and in my own, is attentiveness to God's presence within both the active and the contemplative aspects of the life I share with my family, congregation, colleagues, and fellow world citizens.

Overarching issues

What is a Christian practice?

Christian practices are shared patterns of activity in and through which life together takes shape over time in response to and in the light of God as known in Jesus Christ. Woven together, they form a way of life.

Each practice is a complex set of acts, words, and images that addresses one area of fundamental human need. Hospitality. Sabbath-keeping. Forgiveness. Making music.

First of all, practices are things we *do*. A child or adult can participate in a practice such as hospitality through warm acts of welcome, even without comprehending the biblical stories and theological convictions that encourage and undergird this practice. Most of our practicing takes place at this unreflective level, as we go about our daily living.

At the same time, practices are not *only* behaviors. They are meaning-full. It is important to note that within a practice, thinking and doing are inextricably knit together. Those who offer hospitality come to know themselves, others, and God in a different way, and they develop virtues and dispositions that are consistent with this practice. When people participate in a practice, they are *embodying* a specific kind of wisdom about what it means to be a human being under God, even if they could not readily articulate this wisdom in words.

While affirming the unreflective character of most participation in practices, I believe that it is also helpful to reflect in the light of our faith on the shape and character of the practices that make up our way of life. Indeed, such reflection may be especially important at this point in history, when the shape of our lives are changing so rapidly. These are practices in which Christian communities have engaged over the years and

across many cultures, practices which it is now our responsibility to receive and reshape in lively ways in our own time and place.

When we do reflect on practices such as those explored in *Practicing Our Faith*, we can see that central themes of Christian theology are integrally related to each Christian practice: our practices are shaped by our beliefs, and our beliefs arise from and take on meaning within our practices. For example, Stephanie Paulsell bases her chapter and book on "Honoring the Body" on the theological convictions that God created human bodies and declared that they are good; that God shared our physical condition in the incarnation of Jesus; and that God overcame death through Christ's resurrection. Through everyday activities—for example, resting, bathing, and caring for those who suffer—we live out our deepest convictions about who we are as embodied children of God in specific, often stumbling, ways. We learn to do so from those with whom we share our lives, and likewise, it is with them that we need to reflect on practices as they take shape in the light of and in response to God's grace.

A practice is small enough that it can be identified and discussed as one element within an entire way of life. But a practice is also big enough to appear in many different spheres of life. For example, the Christian practice of hospitality has dimensions that emerge as (1) a matter of public policy; (2) something you do at home with friends, family, and guests; (3) a radical path of discipleship; (4) part of the liturgy; (5) a movement of the innermost self toward or away from others; (6) a theme in Christian theology; and probably much else. Thinking about this one practice can help us make connections across spheres of life—connections that often get disrupted in our fragmented society. For example, reflection on the Christian practice of hospitality would provide a way of exploring the relations between spirituality and social justice.

Note that our concept of practices describes a larger chunk of life than most uses of this term imply. For example, we would not call tithing a practice; rather, it would be one discipline within the larger practice of household economics.

Notice that each of the practices (keeping sabbath, honoring the body, hospitality, discernment) necessarily leads to the others; in fact, you can tell when you are doing one well when it necessarily involves you in the others. For example, if you are practicing hospitality so intensely that you neglect sabbath and don't honor your body, your practice of hospitality is misshapen.

Is worship a practice? Yes. However, it is important to note that worship is an overarching master practice rather than one practice among many.[2] The term "worship" has a double meaning: it is what we do together in church (as we speak, sing, listen, and gesture, *embodying* the wisdom of Christian faith in a specific form), and it is the purpose of the entire Christian life. Bringing these two meanings into right relation requires us to ask questions like these: How does the way we worship together form us to engage in Christian practices in other contexts? And how can our participation in practices beyond our worship services also be offered up as worship to God?

Some would call the sacraments "practices." However, in Valparaiso Project literature we have seen the sacraments as more normative and all-encompassing than any given practice can be. Craig Dykstra and I put it this way in our essay in *Practicing Theology*:

> At its heart, baptism is not so much a distinct practice as it is the liturgical summation of all the Christian practices. In this rite, the grace to which the Christian life is a response is fully and finally presented, visibly, tangibly, and in words. Here all the practices are present in crystalline form—forgiveness and healing, singing and testimony, sabbath keeping and community shaping, and all the others. Unlike each particular practice, baptism does not address a specific need; instead, it ritually sketches the contours of a whole new life, within which all human needs and ways of living can be perceived in a different way. Under water, we cannot secure our own lives, but we can know, in a knowing beyond words, that God's creativity overcame the darkness that covered the face of the deep at earth's beginning, and that water flowed from Jesus' side on the cross, and that the new creation to which we now belong anticipates a city where the river of the water of life nourishes the roots of the tree whose leaves are for the healing of the nations. When a new Christian rises from the baptismal water, human needs are not just met; they are transformed. Even the need not to die no longer overpowers all other needs, and the true freedom of a life formed in love, justice, mercy, and hope is no longer too frightening to embrace. "In baptism," said St. Francis, "we have already died the only death that matters." [3]

Why does all this matter? How does this idea of "practices" help us think about—and live—the Christian life?

- **It points beyond the individualism of the dominant culture** to disclose the social (i.e., *shared*) quality of our lives, and especially the social quality of Christian life, theology, and spirituality. Our thinking and living take place in relation to God and also to one another, to others around the world and across the centuries, and to a vast communion of saints. I remember a line that got cut from *Practicing Our Faith*: "This is not a self-help book but a mutual-help book."

- **It helps us to understand our continuity with the Christian tradition—an important matter during this time of change and in the midst of a culture infatuated with what is new.** The way of life we are describing is historically rooted. Practices endure over time (though their specific moves have changed in the past and will surely change again). This perspective can help contemporary people to treasure their continuity with the past. Continuity is not the same as captivity, however. Caring for a *living* tradition means encouraging adaptation and inventiveness within ever-changing circumstances. Moreover, the history from which Christian practices emerge is expansive, encompassing many cultures and denominational traditions.

- **It makes us think about who we truly are as the created and newly created children of God.** An important claim is that Christian practices address "fundamental human needs." We live in a culture that is very confused about what people need—a culture where "needs" are constructed and marketed. In contrast, awareness of Christian practices helps us to reflect theologically on who people really are and what we really need. (Our vulnerability and our strength are disclosed in the

practice of honoring the body, our finitude and gratitude in the practice of keeping sabbath, etc.)

- **All of this means that people need to *craft* the specific forms each practice can take within their own social and historical circumstances**. This approach thus requires attention to the concrete and down-to-earth quality of the Christian life. It invites attention to details such as gestures and the role of material things. This crafting is an important responsibility of ministers and educators.

All people engage in most or all of the practices in *Practicing Our Faith* in one way or another. After all, all human beings necessarily rest, encounter strangers, help one another to find healing, and so on. However, those who embrace Christian practices engage in these fundamentally human activities in the light of God's presence and in response to God's grace is it is known in Jesus Christ. Ultimately, Christian practices can be understood not as tasks but as gifts. Within these practices, we do not aim to achieve mastery (e.g., over time, strangers, death, nature) but rather to cultivate openness and responsiveness to others, to the created world, and to God.

Congregations and Christian practices

Honoring the body, hospitality, household economics, saying yes and saying no, keeping sabbath, testimony, discernment, shaping communities, forgiveness, healing, dying well, singing our lives to God—each of these practices could be found somewhere in the life of every Christian congregation. Sometimes one practice, or more, might be so frail that detecting it would be quite a job, and obstacles keep the practices from being fully realized almost everywhere. Yet sometimes a certain congregation knows a certain practice by heart, and we can see the practice taking shape in that concrete setting with great profundity. Reading the practices as they take shape in the life of a particular congregation can help us to discern what knowledge of God's active presence in the world these little bands of human beings bear.

Viewing congregations in this way, we would see the practices not only in the activities done in or by the congregation officially acting as congregation, however. We would also see practices in the activities of members in their homes and schools, in their places of work and play, sometimes conflicting and sometimes congruent with those of the congregation. On one hand, congregations aspire to model the way things are supposed to be, developing shared internal practices that are accountable to an ancient, normative tradition. On the other, congregations are deeply embedded in very specific localities, where members live elbow-to-elbow with nonmembers. They are porous; the members, and the surrounding culture, seep in and out all the time, mixing the worlds of home, school, work, the media, a city, and the congregation. These qualities make congregations places where the patterns of people's daily lives beyond the church can encounter the critical challenge, the gracious help, and the transforming power of Christian faith, over long periods of time. They are places where members can *practice* the practices of Christian faith.[4]

Christian practices appear in slightly different forms in each unique local congregation and surrounding community. Deliberate and ordered thinking, observing, and participating could enable people to notice, analyze, renew, and publicly explain the practices in their own situations. The concreteness of practices and their grounding in the Bible and theology make them an excellent way to focus on many dimensions of a congregation's life, both as they are and as we yearn for them to be. An exploration of this sort could focus on any of the practices named above. It would include attention to questions such as these:

- How is this congregation already participating in each practice in its life together? What would an analysis of a week's schedule disclose about how various church activities embody specific practices? What practices are provided with room and resources within the church building itself? Where in the church building do people participate in specific practices?

- How does this congregation's participation in the practices prepare members to engage in the practices in their daily lives, at home and at work? Conversely, how does their participation in the practices in those places influence what happens among the people when they are gathered as church?

- Are some of the practices done especially well here? Certain congregations have a gift for a certain practice, such as singing our lives or surrounding one another with care when death comes. Similarly, certain denominational or cultural streams within Christianity are more closely attuned to a certain practice, such as testimony, forgiveness, or sabbath keeping. Attention to practices can help congregations to identify the gifts they bear.

- Where are the practices missing or broken in this congregation? Is there evidence of pain or yearning that suggests that a certain practice is in trouble? With what practice does this congregation need help? What biblical, theological, historical, and practical resources can help to cleanse and amplify their participation in the practice?

- How are the practices related to one another in this congregation? How does participating in one of them lead people into the others? Or does it?

- How does what happens in Sunday morning worship help the gathered people to understand and grow in Christian practices? Do the words, gestures, images, sounds, and feel of the liturgy vividly manifest the active presence of God in and for the life of the world and warmly invite worshipers to offer response?

In workshops, I sometimes ask people to draw a map of their congregation. Some draw what looks like a blueprint of the building, while others show their members dispersed in the world. Then I ask them to draw where on this map the various practices are being practiced. Then they discuss what they see. What is surprising? What is missing? What is strong? This exercise offers a good way to begin your conversation about the practices that shape the way of life of Christian congregations. [5]

A one-page definition

A Christian practice is a cluster of activities, ideas, and images, lived by Christian people over time, which addresses a fundamental human need in the light of and in response to God's active presence for the life of the world in Jesus Christ.

A practice

- addresses fundamental human needs and conditions through practical human acts.
- involves us in God's activities in the world and reflect, in the way we participate in the practice, God's grace and love.
- is social in character
  - we learn practices with and from other people
  - though we sometimes do some of the activities that comprise a given practice alone.
- endures over time
  - each practice arises out of living traditions, having taken numerous forms in the past and in various cultures around the world, and
  - will carry those traditions into the future, in specific forms not yet imagined.
- involves a deep awareness, a profound knowing; a practice
  - is imbued with thought; it is embodied wisdom
  - carries particular convictions about what is good and true;
  - embodies these convictions in physical, down-to-earth ways;
  - becomes articulate in concepts, ideas, and images, expressed through rich vocabularies and carefully developed bodies of thought;
  - incorporates both words and gestures, some of them grand but others apparently small and mundane.
- is done within the church, in the public realm, in daily work, and at home.
- shapes the people who participate in it
  - as individuals and as communities,
  - in ways that conform to the particular content and patterns of the specific practice, thus
  - nurturing specific habits, virtues, and capacities of mind and spirit.
- possesses standards of excellence
  - having that which is good as its purpose and goal
  - relying on certain competencies and embodying certain norms
  - though practices often become distorted and corrupt
  - and so are open to criticism and reform, particularly with reference to the shape of God's practice.
- comes to a focus in worship
  - which makes manifest in words, gestures, images, and material things the normative meaning of the practice and its place in the mysterious life of God, and
  - discloses the practice as gift, not task.
- adds up to a way of life when interwoven with other practices
  - through their mutual interdependence, as each practice strengthens the others, and
  - in their reliance on the God of Life.

[1] I'll be referring to several books that comprise a still-growing body of literature about Christian practices. Several are accompanied by study guides written specifically to further conversation, learning, and growth. The books and guides are available for purchase, with free download for most of the guides, at www.practicingourfaith.org. This website also contains other resources to assist communities interested in Christian practices. At this writing, these books are:

> Dorothy C. Bass, ed., *Practicing Our Faith: A Way of Life for a Searching People (*San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1997).
>
> Dorothy C. Bass, *Receiving the Day: Christian Practices for Opening the Gift of Time* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 2000).
>
> Dorothy C. Bass and Don C. Richter, eds., *Way to Live: Christian Practices for Teens* (Nashville: Upper Room Books, 2002), with related website and Leader's Guide at www.waytolive.org.
>
> Craig Dykstra, *Growing in the Life of Faith: Education and Christian Practices* (Louisville: Geneva Press, 1999).
>
> John Van Engen, ed., *Educating People of Faith* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004).
>
> Christine Pohl, *Making Room: Recovering Hospitality as a Christian Tradition (*Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1999).
>
> Stephanie Paulsell, *Honoring the Body: Meditations on a Christian Practice* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 2002).
>
> Miroslav Volf and Dorothy C. Bass, eds., *Practicing Theology: Beliefs and Practices in Christian Life* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002).
>
> Thomas Long is working on a book on testimony. Don and Emily Saliers are working on a book on music. Both are due to appear in 2004.

[2] *Practicing Our Faith*, 9.

[3] *Practicing Theology*, 30-31; see also Miroslav Volf on this point, 248.

[4] For a more extensive treatment of congregations and practices, see "Christian Practices and Congregational Education in Faith," in *Changing Churches: The Local Church and the Structures of Change,* ed. Michael Warren (Portland, Oregon: Pastoral Press, 2000), by Craig Dykstra and Dorothy C. Bass. This essay is also posted on practicingourfaith.org.

[5.] Suggestions for this process are in Dorothy C. Bass et al., *Practicing Our Faith: A Guide for Learning, Conversation, and Growth* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1997).