Community of Christ

Initial Steps

Leading a Congregation in Mission

A Guide for Pastors and Leaders

Community of Christ

1001 W. Walnut St.
Independence, MO 64050-3562

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This is a pilot resource produced by Leading Congregations in Mission. These resources are designed to engage the church in thoughtful dialogue, new imagination, and practice as we seek to live fully into our identity and calling as communities of Christ in a changing world.

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Disk One

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How to Use This Guide

This guide has an introduction (first five pages), five initial steps that lead a congregation into mission, and a resources section at the end. You also will find videos referenced throughout this guide that can be found attached to the back of this booklet. Consider studying this guide as a congregation, leadership team, or small group using the process below:

First, begin each session by sharing in joys and concerns, a time of prayer, and Dwelling in the Word on the following passage from Doctrine and Covenants 164:9a–b, d–f

> 9 a. Beloved children of the Restoration, your continuing faith adventure with God has been divinely led, eventful, challenging, and sometimes surprising to you. By the grace of God, you are poised to fulfill God's ultimate vision for the church.
>
> b. When your willingness to live in sacred community as Christ's new creation exceeds your natural fear of spiritual and relational transformation, you will become who you are called to be. The rise of Zion the beautiful, the peaceful reign of Christ, awaits your wholehearted response to the call to make and steadfastly hold to God's covenant of peace in Jesus Christ.
>
> d. If you truly would be Community of Christ, then embody and live the concerns and passion of Christ.
>
> e. The challenges and opportunities are momentous. Will you remain hesitant in the shadows of your fears, insecurities, and competing loyalties? Or will you move forward in the light of your divinely instilled call and vision?
>
> f. The mission of Jesus Christ is what matters most for the journey ahead.

Consider the following questions from the passage above:

- *Is there a word, phrase, or image that captures my attention?*
- *What is God's invitation to me/us in this text?*

Second, study each section over the next nine weeks. Allow 1.5 to 2 hours for Dwelling in the Word and discussion of each section.

Week 1: Building a Foundation of Trust and Credibility	Pages 6–7
Week 2: Where is the Dial?	Pages 8–9
Week 3: Tinkering or Transforming Mission	Pages 10–11
Week 4: Getting Started and Step 1: Share in Practices Together	Pages 12–14
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Week 9: Review the Practices in the Resource for Further Exploration	Pages 26–44

Study each section together and consider the following questions:

- How do these concepts/practices apply to our experience as individuals and a congregation or small group?
- What is one concept or idea we could try to implement?

Building a Foundation of Trust

It is essential that leaders of congregations or small groups work to earn the trust of those they seek to lead in mission. Leadership is about inviting people to a journey they ordinarily would not embark on themselves. Risking initial steps into an unknown future is possible only when we take those steps *together* in trust. We lead *with* others. Leadership is not something we do *to* others.

Review the ***video, "Basic Approaches for Leading During a Time of Transition***." Discuss specific ways you can be proactive in your relationships with one another as a team and with the congregation or small group.

Building a Foundation of Credibility

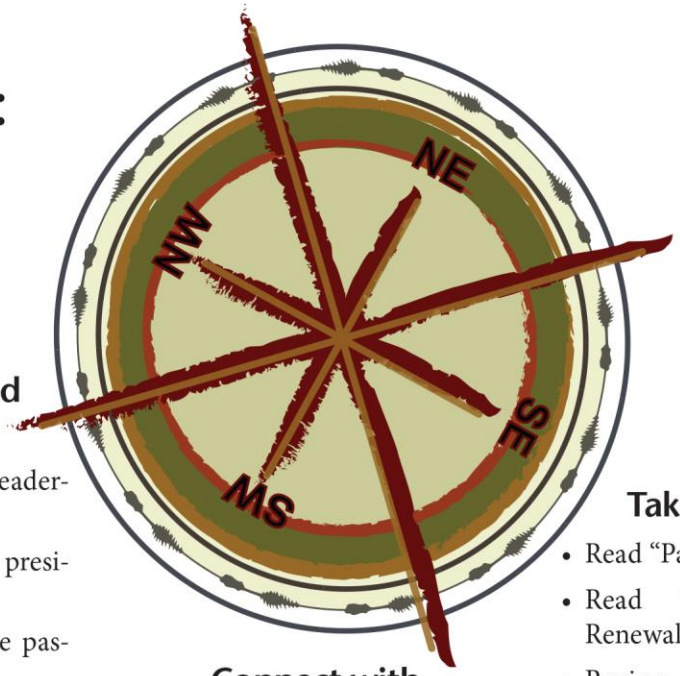
There are basic practices of leadership that if executed consistently over time lead to credibility. The ***Pastors and Leaders Field Guide*** provides some **Getting Started** suggestions in the areas of basic organization, communication, team leadership, mission, and budgeting. Begin by focusing on the suggested articles under **Take Care of Basics**.

If you are new to congregational leadership or have been a leader for many years, these basics are helpful to review and implement. Doing the basics well builds credibility and trust for the more difficult missional challenges facing a group. The graphic on the next page suggests areas of the ***Pastors and Leaders Field Guide*** to focus on first. You can find a PDF of the entire guide by typing ***Pastors and Leaders Field Guide*** in the search bar at *www.CofChrist.org*.

As we will explore further in this guide, shared leadership is the foundation for leading a congregation in mission. This means we share in the joys and struggles of leading a congregation or small group in mission. We share in practices of discernment, asking essential questions, consensus building, planning for mission, and implementation.

When we approach leadership as a mutually accountable team the significant task of leadership is not so overwhelming. Consider asking members of the pastor leadership team to read specific articles suggested in the **Getting Started** section on next page. Ask members to come prepared to share an outline of key points and a question or two for the leadership team to process together. Review an article or two each time you meet, and within a few months you will have worked through the operational basics of leading a congregation.

New Pastors: GETTING STARTED



Invite Others to Lead with You

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

Connect with Christ's Mission

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

Take Care of Basics

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

Where is the Dial?

Several years ago a father gathered his children during a challenging financial situation. He informed them they might have to discontinue use of their smart phones and exchange them for push-button cell phones. The youngest daughter replied, "you mean a phone with buttons?" The father thought to himself, what would she do with a dial? Depending on your age you may or may not remember phones with dials.

When we look back over the last several decades things have significantly changed around us. During this same time our congregations have not changed all that much except for their size—they now are smaller in most cases. More and more people reminisce about the good times when their congregations were full and growing—or were they?

According to the Barna Research Group (*www.barna.org*) most congregations were growing internally because the Baby Boom Generation was having lots of babies, and families stayed close to home. Most congregations were complacent as society gradually was changing. Adult children became mobile and moved away from home, and increasing numbers of people stayed home on Sunday mornings to be with family and get much needed rest from longer hours at work.

Here are a just a few trends that have impacted society and the church:

- Dual career families
- Decrease in denominational loyalty
- Increase in work week hours
- Fewer babies (i.e. smaller families) post Baby Boomer Generation
- Increased mobility of children (i.e., families now geographically disbursed)
- The congregation is no longer the center of community life.
- People are turning to sources other than the church to address spiritual yearnings and questions (i.e. Internet, spirituality section at bookstore, friends, etc.).
- Vastly different religious landscape (i.e., increase in religious diversity, decrease in Christianity)
- Increase in nonaffiliated spirituality (i.e., not connected with a denomination) but not a religious group
- Increase in ethnic diversity in many towns, neighborhoods, and cities
- Expansion of social networks (i.e., people connecting in new virtual ways though technology)
- Technology and instant access to information provide new ways to explore and seek answers to questions.
- Increased skepticism about institutions in general and institutional religion in particular
- Shift from modern (i.e., concrete, linear, more concrete view of the world) to post-modern (i.e., shades of gray, relational, relativism, situational view of the world)

Essential questions for leaders:

- How have these trends impacted your congregation?
- What opportunities and challenges do these trends present for our mission?
- How is God calling us to be the church in new ways to respond to these trends?

The list of trends could go on, but you probably get the picture. Monumental shifts in society have been occurring while the church (i.e., our congregations) has remained relatively unchanged. There has been some tinkering with signage, worship times, and worship styles, but the basic format and approach that comprises church has remained constant.

We have continued to do the same basic things while hoping for different results.
Doing the same thing over and over and expecting different results is the definition of insanity.—Albert Einstein

Tinkering or Transforming Mission?

Let's look at a quote from a book about mission entitled *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission* by David Bosch:

If we are going to take the incarnation seriously, the Word must become flesh in every new context.

Or to state it bit clearer…

If we are going to reintroduce Jesus Christ to our neighborhoods, we have to figure out how to live and share Christ's message and mission in ways people can experience and understand!

President W. Grant McMurray shared similar prophetic insight in Doctrine and Covenants 162:2e:

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

This is an amazing insight that helps us see a pathway into the future. God is reminding us that we are called to be a dynamic movement! We are called to share and live "essential truths" in "new language and form" so that people from all walks of life can experience Jesus Christ and the church as though they were encountering them both for the first time!

We are not called to withdraw in fear or hold on to what we have so tightly that no one can experience it but us. We are called to "let the Spirit breathe" renewal and fresh insight into how we live and share Christ's peace in ways people can experience and understand today.

This requires three things of us:

1. We must encounter daily the One we claim to follow. Who is the Living Christ to me?
2. We must awaken to the Spirit's movement in the world around us.
3. We must be willing to *risk inviting others* into safe spaces where they are *freed* to explore their deepest yearnings in loving community.

This leads to two essential questions:

1. What does it mean to me/us to be *in relationship* with the Living Christ?
2. How do I/we make room in our individual lives, congregations, or small groups to be totally shaped and sent by the Spirit?

*Review the **video, "Who is Jesus to Me?"** and discuss the questions above.*

President Stephen M. Veazey challenged us in Doctrine and Covenants 164:9d,

If you would truly be Community of Christ, then embody and live the concerns and passion of Christ.

This leads to a very important question we need to explore and live with for a while:

What does Jesus care most about?

Or stated another way:

What would Jesus do and say if he moved into our neighborhood today?

When we can answer this question, we can begin to organize **EVERYTHING** we do in congregations around this increasingly clear understanding of Christ's message and mission. This is what it truly means to embody and live the concerns and passion of Christ as congregations! The church becomes a vehicle or conduit through which the concerns of Christ are made real and addressed in our families, congregations, neighborhoods, places of work, and our world.

In April 2011, President Stephen M. Veazey and the World Church Leadership Council shared five world-changing Mission Initiatives that lead us into the heart of God's vision for the church and our world. The initiatives, grounded in Luke 4:18–19, provide tangible ways for us to live with the question: What would Jesus do and say if he moved into our neighborhood today?

The many ways these initiatives are lived will look different in every congregation or small group. *Invitation is the entry point* through which we discover the stories of others and how we can share the peace of Jesus Christ (i.e., our Mission Initiatives). This is not about doing mission *to* others. This is about being *in* mission *with* others as we recognize our mutual need for wholeness and healing. Whether it is invitation to a conversation over coffee, a walk in the neighborhood, or a journey of discovery and purpose in Christ, mission begins with our response to the promptings of the Spirit toward others.

Reflect on the following question:

How is the Spirit disrupting me/us to risk Spirit-led invitations with friends, neighbors, and strangers?

Getting Started

So where do we begin? The answer lies deep in our identity and calling. The answer is in our name—Community of Christ. We begin by returning to the two pillars of identity:

> **Relationships** = Sacred Community
> **Encounter** = Jesus Christ

Put them together and you get Community of Christ—the essence of who we are and are called to become! Doctrine and Covenants 163:1 challenges us to go much deeper in discerning and embracing our identity and calling as Community of Christ. From this passage of scripture, we discover an essential question for our future:

> *How will we discern, embrace, and risk living fully into our identity and calling as Community of Christ in a changing world?*

Where do we begin? We start with ourselves! Missional practices lead us into disruptive and transformative relationships with God, one another, and our neighbors. Missional practices are repetitive acts that help us awaken to God's movement around us and lead us into *new* relationships of *invitation, hospitality and healing*.

We are called to rediscover the Living Christ *in relationship* with one another and our neighbors. This is where we will discover our future!

It is in risking *new and deeper* relationships with God, one another, and our neighbors that we discover God's future for us in ministry and mission!

Review the ***video,*** "***Why LCM?"*** and discuss how the Spirit is nudging you to become fully awake and ready to respond. If you have not sensed the nudging of the Spirit discuss how you might make room for a new awareness of the Spirit (see the ***Mission Prayer Practice***).

In other words, the answers we seek for our congregations and the future of the church will be found in new relationships with those we have yet to meet. As we risk new relationships and deeply listen to the stories of others, we will begin to discover the concerns and passion of Christ. We will discover our future in God's unfolding story in our lives together!

Review ***Receive, Embody, and Share the Invitation to Christ's Peace*** and ***Receive, Embody, and Share the Invitation to Christ's Peace***: ***Companion Study Guide*** for more in-depth exploration on ways to boldly live Christ's radical invitation and hospitality in the world today. This can be found on *www.missionalleaders.org.*

It all begins with a simple invitation.

STEP #1—*SHARE IN PRACTICES OF SPIRITUAL FORMATION AND MISSION TOGETHER*

Essential Question: How do we discover and respond to what God is up to all around us?

*Review the **videos, "Missio Dei"** and "**Open Your Eyes,"** included with this booklet and reflect on the question above.*

A missional practice (i.e., also known as a spiritual practice) is a commitment to consistent behaviors that lead to new understandings, ways of being, and ways of living as disciples and small groups or congregations. Early in this overview we acknowledged our world is constantly changing. Like hiking in the woods, we may enter a clearing thinking we will recognize the way forward only to see unfamiliar territory. We feel lost and unsettled. As much as we may desire there is no turning back!

When we find ourselves in strange territory (our changing world), we must learn to navigate in that space and gain our bearings again. This is where the missional practices help!

Missional practices are navigational tools that help us gradually live into new ways of living Christ's mission and connect us with the Spirit's movement in the world around us.

In Mark Chapter 12 Jesus shared with a Sadducee about what mattered most in the law—what matters most is that we love God and love our neighbors. This challenge connects with two of our Enduring Principles—*Worth of All Persons* and *Blessings of Community*.

We engage in missional practices because we always need spiritual awakening! Missional practices are how we take incremental steps toward *seeing, being, and doing* new things in Christ. To get started we share together in four simple missional practices:

1. **Mission Prayer (daily practice)**
2. **Sharing in the Round (once or twice a month)**
3. **Dwelling in the Word (every time the congregation gathers)**
4. **Walking the Neighborhood (several times a week)**

Share in Dwelling in the Word every time you meet! Pray the mission prayer daily! Share in the Round with your brothers and sisters in Christ and then risk sharing with your neighbors each month. Begin to walk the neighborhoods around your home and church with prayer and intention to meet your neighbors. See how these practices begin to lead to new relationships, insights, and ways of living Christ's mission!

The missional practice descriptions are found in the Resources Section with 12 months of suggested Dwelling in the Word scripture passages and questions.

Caution: These practices will lead to some disruption in our lives and new vision for ministry and mission! Be prepared to be a bit unsettled. Commitment to the practices is absolutely essential to awaken to what God is up to all around us. Begin by inviting the congregation to join leadership in the mission prayer. Make it part of every service. Mission Prayer cards are available at *www.HeraldHouse.org*. In the advanced search bar, type "mission prayer cards."

In addition, review the following sites for more information on missional (i.e., spiritual) practices:

www.CofChrist.org/spiritualformation

www.missionalleaders.org

STEP 2—*MEET AS A PASTOR LEADERSHIP TEAM*

Essential Question: How are we learning/modeling to care for another, discern, develop consensus, and lead mission?

*Review the **video, "Tuality Conversation on Missional Practices,"** and discuss the question above.*

We are Community of Christ! If anyone understands the importance of shared leadership, we do. We are in this together, and it is the pastor's responsibility to establish a leadership team that meets monthly to discern and lead mission together.

It is important for the leadership team to do four things when it meets each month:

1. Build relationships as a team by taking the time to share with one another joys and concerns. Over time this will become a meaningful time of sharing and may take considerable time. This is the essence of what it means to be Christian community.

2. Share in 20 to 30 minutes of Dwelling in the Word or another practice that centers you in God's presence and vision.

3. Establish a clear agenda, including *essential questions* that the team discerns are important to the future of the congregation's mission. Remember our essential question on page 10: *How will we discern, embrace, and risk living fully into our identity and calling as Community of Christ in a changing world?* This primary, essential question points us in the direction of our future with God.

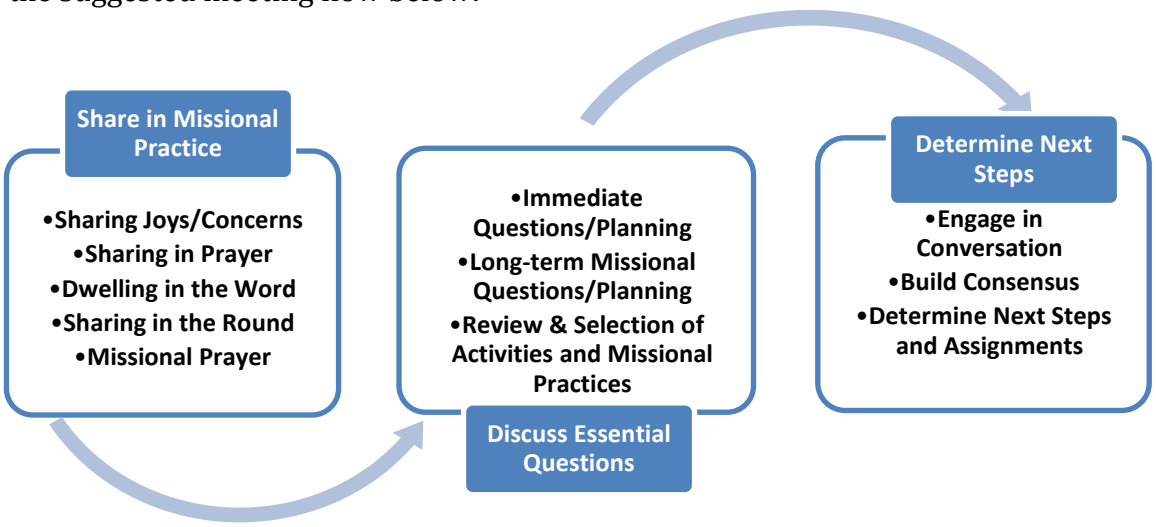
   In addition, developing clear questions for discussion helps move a group through an agenda. For example, there may need to be some discussion about youth ministry in a congregation. Asking questions will help focus the conversation. Use questions like:

   - Is there value in scheduling youth activities next quarter?
   - What is the hoped for outcome of these activities?
   - Who is in the best position to lead these activities?
   - How will we communicate these activities?
   - How can the leadership team support these activities?

   Note: For more information on developing essential questions as a tool for discernment and planning see "**Framing Essential Questions**" at *www.missionalleaders.org*.

4. Share in conversation together, make decisions together, and determine next steps together. Shared leadership is about mutual accountability. We are in this together. Being clear about decisions and next steps ensures we all understand and agree to specific assignments between now and the next meeting.

See the suggested meeting flow below:



The ideal size for a leadership team is typically three to five people. However, do what makes sense for your congregation. See "Sharing Leadership and Ministry" in the ***Pastors and Leaders Field Guide*** and "Building a Pastor's Leadership Team." These resources can be found at *www.CofChrist.org*. In the search bar, type *Pastors and Leaders Guide*. You can download all the articles or just the articles referenced above.

Taking the time to discern and lead together will result in five key outcomes:

1. Development of meaningful relationships (i.e., *Blessings of Community*). You will model in your pastor leadership team what you hope the congregation can experience over time.
2. Better discernment, planning, and coordination of congregational ministries and activities.
3. Greater consensus on important congregational decisions and a team to help with implementation. (Note: This assumes the pastor truly utilizes the team as a team for discernment and decision-making)
4. Greater continuity during pastor transitions. (Note: This assumes the majority of the leadership team stays in place, and the new pastor picks up where the prior pastor left off.)
5. If time is invested in relationship-building, missional practices, and meaningful conversation around mission, an increasing clarity about how to embody and live the concerns and passion of Christ will emerge.

It is suggested that the pastor leadership team spend as much time in relationship-building and a missional practice as it does processing its agenda. In most cases pastor leadership teams plan on two to three hours of meeting time each month.

STEP 3—*SIMPLIFY AND DEEPEN WORSHIP*

Essential Question—How do we encounter the One who calls us to new life and ministry?

*Review the **videos, "Tables"** and "**Worship Roundtable"** and discuss the question above.*

What is worship? What makes worship a formational experience that leads us into mission? Let's look at three elements of worship:

1. Centered in Christ
2. Grounded in scripture
3. Leads us into deeper and transformative relationships with God, one another, and our neighbors.

Somewhere in our evolution many congregations got the idea that worship needs to be formal and sometimes complicated. In many places throughout the USA small groups gather and try to conduct services as though they were a much larger congregation. It is as though we believe there is only one legitimate way to worship, or we believe that when we cease to worship a particular way we no longer are a "real congregation."

Simple does not mean simplistic!
Some of the most profound and deeply moving worship is simple yet intentional.

Have you ever experienced the power of the Holy Spirit in a simple conversation with another person? Do you remember experiences of meaningful sharing in prayer and testimony services or small groups? They were simple but often deeply impactful experiences of worship!

Doctrine and Covenants 162:7b reminds us:

> *Do not be unduly concerned with numbers. Be fervent in your witness, passionate in your discipleship, and vigorous in your labor on behalf of peace and justice. Where two or three such disciples form community, there will the Spirit be. Many will come to see.*

We are being reminded of something very important here! This passage is again calling us to return to our basic identity and calling as a people.

- It is about *what we do together* as brothers and sisters in Christ that points the way toward God's future for our world!

- It is about the *Blessings of Community*—how we are in relationship with one another and our neighbors.

- It is about *inviting* people into loving and authentic community—not performance-based church!

People are longing for meaning and connection—***it is that simple***.

What will we offer them? A tired routine, or an encounter with the Living Christ with others who seek Christ's peace amid life's joys and challenges?

So how do we do this? Here are a few simple steps:

1. **Center your worship in Christ!** Whether looking at a passage of scripture, planning songs, considering prayers, or thinking about how to convey a message, consider how all your elements of worship lead to a deeper understanding of Christ's mission today! EVERYTHING we do should lead us into a deeper experience, understanding, and response to Christ' s mission (i.e., Invite People to Christ; Abolish Poverty, End Suffering; Pursue Peace on and for the Earth).

2. **Always anchor what you are doing in the story of scripture**. Worship Resources available from Herald House and on the World Church website provide the weekly lectionary scripture at *www.CofChrist.org*. Share this scripture in advance so people can prepare. Consider the following questions as you plan worship:

    a. How is this passage calling us into a deeper understanding of God's vision and Christ's mission for our world? In other words, how does this passage illuminate God's unfolding story of healing, reconciliation, and wholeness?
    b. How is this passage inviting us to *live and share* Christ's mission today?
    c. How can we invite one another into meaningful reflection around the scripture passage?

    Dwelling in the Word is a simple but powerful practice that enables a group or small groups of individuals to reflect on scripture and consider its invitation to us as disciples and congregations. The following questions are helpful to ask with respect to any passage:

    - Is there a word, phrase, or image that resonates with you or causes you to pause?
    - What is God's invitation to you in this text?
    - What is God's invitation to our congregation in this text?
    - How is this passage calling me/us to embody and live the concerns and passion of Christ in the coming week?

    REMEMBER: A good Dwelling in the Word experience can take the place of a sermon. This is important for congregations that have few gifted speakers. Even for those that do, Dwelling in the Word invites the congregation to collectively share in the message together and is a meaningful experience.

3. **Keep it simple**! Remember, in the first century the church came together in homes, broke bread together, prayed for one another, and shared what God was up to in lives. Worship Resources available from Herald House or on the World Church

website can help but should not be used in their entirety. Use this resource for ideas and add some of your own creativity as you approach planning thoughtfully and prayerfully.

4. **Plan worship around the gifts of those sharing in the service**. If you don't have many people who are gifted preachers, then don't plan a sermon every Sunday! Remember, there are many ways to proclaim the Living Word, including practices like Dwelling in the Word, Dwelling in a Hymn Text, sharing of testimony, sharing of poems or hymn texts, etc.

5. **Consider how your worship leads to deeper and transformative relationships with God, one another, and your neighbors?** Do elements in the service draw us together as a loving community? Do elements of the service also call us into our neighborhoods to be Christ's presence of invitation, hospitality, and healing? Always think about how the worship leads us into a deeper experience of sacred community. This is why we worship together instead of staying home.

Note: See Isaiah 58 in the Message Bible by Eugene Peterson for a fresh new definition for worship.

So what might some alternative forms of worship look like? Here are a few simple outlines that do not include a sermon:

Missional Worship Outline #1: Dwelling in the Word Practice

- Open with Sharing of Joys, Concern, and Prayer
- Gathering Song: *Community of Christ Sings* 96, "Now in this Moment" *(consider having someone read the words before the congregation sings the words. Or ask someone to share a testimony or thoughts on how this hymn calls him or her into mission)*
- A Disciple's Generous Response
- Dwelling in the Word scripture and group sharing (*see Twelve Months of Dwelling in the Word behind "Practices" in the Resources section of this guide. Read the scripture aloud, provide a few moments for reflection, and then ask the congregation to get into groups of three or four to share.*)
- Brief Challenge or Reflection (*based on Dwelling in the Word. This can be as simple as a statement that is prepared in advance, a poem, or the words of a hymn or song that leads us into mission.*)
- Prayer of Sending Forth (*Consider reciting the Lord's Prayer or Mission Prayer together*)

Missional Worship Outline #2: Dwelling in Song Texts Practice

- Open with Sharing of Joys and Concerns
- Prayer of Thankfulness and Petition
- Dwelling in Song Texts (*pick one hymn and apply the Dwelling in the Word practice to the hymn text. As an example, refer to CCS 566,* "Christ Has Called Us To New Visions*")*

- A Disciple's Generous Response
- Singing of the Song Text
- Prayer of Sending Forth

Note: To enhance preparation for the service consider the following**:** Consider providing words to a hymn you want the congregation to pray over and focus on for the coming week. You might want to sing the hymn together and then read it as a congregation much like a Dwelling in the Word format. Then invite folks to take the lyrics with them and recite, sing, or pray them several times a day. Ask them to note different insights they receive through the week and ways they experience the hymn as worship in their daily life. Consider designating one person to provide a closing challenge as part of the worship.

Missional Worship Outline #3: Walking the Neighborhood Missional Practice

- Open with Sharing of Joys, Sorrows, Concerns
- Share in Song, *CCS* 154, "Come, Holy Spirit, Come"
- Prayer of Thanksgiving and Petition
- Walking the Neighborhood Missional Practice (*Provide basic instructions to inform everyone about the practice. See Walking the Neighborhood Practice in the Resources section of this guide. Some from the congregation will remain in the congregation and share in prayer and reflection on 1 Corinthians 9:19–23 from The Message Bible, while others will go in pairs in the surrounding neighborhoods.)*
- A Disciple's Generous Response
- Gathering and Sharing in Prayer *(everyone will gather back 10 minutes before the service closes. A prayer will be offered for the continued movement of the Spirit in the neighborhood and the openness of the congregation to new opportunities for relationships and ministry.)*

Note: *Next week ask those who walked the neighborhood and those who remained in the congregation and prayed to share their experience.*

Other Ideas for Worship

- Project pictures on slides that depict nature, people expressing the first three Mission Initiatives, or other pictures that lead the congregation into reflection about Christ's message and mission. The pictures can take the place of the sermon. Based on their careful selection they will tell a story. Provide an opportunity for people to share their reflections on the pictures and how they led them into a deeper understanding of Christ's message and mission.

- Ask two individuals to share testimonies or reflections based on a Dwelling in the Word or a hymn text. This can take the place of a sermon or message.

- Consider developing a Sharing in the Round experience for Sunday morning, using breads, fruit, juice, etc. that could take place in the fellowship hall or sanctuary depending on the ability to arrange tables, etc. Begin with questions that encourage meaningful conversation about what is occurring in the lives of people and families.

Provide a Dwelling in the Word scripture with focus questions for table conversation. End with large-group sharing on the scripture, a closing song, and prayer.

- Ensure each person in the congregation has a journal. Provide a passage of scripture for everyone to use as a focus scripture for the coming week. It might be a passage you use for Dwelling in the Word. Ask people to write entries in their journal of how they experienced the passage as they went about their daily life during the week. When you come together for worship, consider using a song(s) to help lead people into worship, share joys and concerns, and then share in the reading of the scripture for the week's focus. Allow some time after the scripture is shared for reflection and then ask, "How did you encounter this passage this week?" Another question might be, "Where did you experience God's disruptive grace as you prayed and lived this passage?"

  It's also helpful to ask, "As you prayed and lived this passage, what questions surfaced for you and our experience today?" You can then close with a rereading of the passage, an invitation to generosity (A Disciple's Generous Response), and a prayer for new opportunities to encounter God, one another, and neighbors in the coming week. Close by singing verses 1 and 5 from *Sing for Peace* 15, "Put Peace into Each Other's Hands."

- Consider developing a service around Psalms of Praise written by the congregation. Begin by sharing this statement and experience: "*St. Augustine suggests that praising God is a deeply intellectual and spiritual act. It is not uncontrolled emotions, but a deep appreciation for how we encounter God in the many facets of our experience. Let's spend a few minutes in this sacred space considering the depth and richness of creation; the beauty around us in relationships and purpose. Where are we sensing joy, hope, love, and peace? Also consider the difficulties and challenges that draw us together and closer to the one who seeks a relationship with us."*

  Share in reading Psalm 139:1–18 and ask the congregation: "What is your psalm of praise this morning?" "What words are on your heart this morning?" Let's pause, reflect, and write words of praise we have this morning. After folks have an opportunity to write their psalms, ask those who are willing to share their psalms. This sharing takes the place of the sermon and becomes the message for the morning. You can add other worship elements around this sharing to plan your worship experience.

In addition to the simple outlines above these ideas are intended to stimulate simple ways to share the Living Word together without always relying on a speaker to deliver a sermon.

STEP 4—ORGANIZE AROUND GIFTS AND CALLING

Essential Question: How do we discover and engage the gifts of all ages?

*Review the **video, "Let the Spirit Breathe"** and discuss the many ways people of all ages can respond to the movement of the Spirit in their lives. Then discuss the essential question above.*

God calls ordinary men, women, and children to do extraordinary things! This is the story of scripture. Each Community of Christ congregation or small group is a unique expression of gifts that is unlike any other.

Our response to God's vision and Christ's mission emerges from:

a. Our encounter with God's unfolding story in scripture.
b. Our encounter with the Holy Spirit in relationship with others.
c. Our gifts and emerging sense of call.

Living Christ's mission is not about developing grand plans for what we will do for God and then trying to fit people into a preconceived agenda. We are called to be unique expressions of mission that emerge from our gifts and sense of call as God's people in the places where we serve.

Here are a few simple things to keep in mind:

a. **Do what you can do well**. Don't try to be all things to all people. Encourage others to do the same. Help them to find what they can do well and free them to do it! When we are able to serve out of our giftedness and sense of call it is energizing and empowering.

b. **Be in meaningful conversation with each other about your gifts** and ways you feel called to serve. Practices like Dwelling in the Word can help bring clarity to this ongoing conversation in the congregation. When we ask, "What is God's invitation to me in this passage?" we are inviting the Holy Spirit to reveal ways we can embody and live Christ's mission today.

   We need to be very attentive in listening to one another. Ask individuals what they sense the Spirit is prompting them to do in the congregation or in their neighborhood. The only way we will uncover these insights is by making time and space for meaningful conversations in the Spirit.

c. **Eliminate positions you don't need in your congregation**. After gaining a better understanding of the gifts in your congregation, develop positions based on the gifts and calling of your people. Some smaller congregations have moved simply to a leadership team that meets monthly to plan all congregational activities, ministries, and worship. They have eliminated most positions and simplified to just a few, including pastor, financial officer, secretary, and building and property director.

d. **Remember our basic call is found in Mark 12**—Love God (individual and community practices of worship and encounter), Love one another (practices of community building and caring for another), and love our neighbors (practices of invitation, hospitality, and healing). These three dimensions of love are what our congregations should be all about! These expressions of love also align with our Mission Initiatives and call us into relationship with God, one another, and our neighbors.

When we slow down to be in relationship with God, one another, and our neighbors we discover new ways we can live and share Christ's mission and message with others. We discover gifts we did not realize we had among our congregation and in our neighborhoods.

STEP 5—LET THE SPIRIT BREATHE AND RESPOND IN JOY

Essential Question—How is the Spirit breathing new life and understanding into our shared journey?

*Review **videos, "Risking Something New" and "Invite,"** and discuss the question above.*

Remember, Jesus invites us to abundant living! It is important as we respond to Christ's invitation to embody and live his concerns in the world that we find joy in what we are doing. As the world is telling us to SPEED UP, the Holy Spirit is challenging us to SLOW DOWN and awaken to God's movement and unfolding purposes all around us.

We are being called to see with new eyes—ourselves, God, and our neighbors!

What our world needs is not busier people but people of depth who live life with intention, awareness, and openness to the disruptive promptings of the Holy Spirit, leading us into *new* and *deeper* relationships with others.

There is no quick way to slow down. We are called to live into a new way of being! We are called to become signal communities that point toward an alternative future, God's future.

What will mission look like for your congregation? The *invitation* to Christ's peace (i.e., our Mission Initiatives) will take many forms as it is expressed through our unique giftedness in community. The Spirit is moving and creating opportunities for Spirit-led moments of awareness and connection with others *if we are awake to see it.*

We will experience suffering and joy as we risk Spirit-led invitations to a conversation, a relationship, a journey of discovery and purpose, and a relationship with the Living Christ in sacred community!

Here are a few suggestions as you move into the future together:

a. **Slow down and a take breath!** Talk about ways to simplify what you do in your congregation. Mission does not equal lots of activities for people who already have too much to do. Mission is about being *deeply rooted* in relationship with God and others. Mission is about encounter of the Holy in your times of gathering. Mission is about sharing together in the difficult questions and struggles of life. Mission is about inviting others into a new space of discovery and purpose.

   Essential Question: How can you simplify what you are doing and make your times of gathering *meaningful and Spirit-led*?

b. **There is reason for great hope!** God already is moving in our lives, congregations, neighborhoods, and world. How do we ***tune in*** and ***join in*** with what God already is doing around us? The four missional practices are a great place to start (Mission

Prayer, Sharing in the Round, Dwelling in the Word, Walking the Neighborhood). These practices, if we are willing, will lead us into new relationships that will change our lives.

Essential Question: How do we join in what the Spirit already is doing?

c. **Connect with one another and neighbors outside Sunday morning.** Sharing in the Round encourages us to share in meals with one another and be in conversation about the substance of our lives. This is how we develop deep roots of meaningful relationships in loving community. Rediscover the joy of being together and supporting one another. Then try this practice with your neighbors.

Essential Questions: How do we rediscover joy in our relationships with one another? How do we support one another in risking new relationships with our neighbors?

d. **Give each other permission to experiment!** Let the Spirit breathe new life and insights into your experiences of worship, fellowship, and ministry together. How is God calling each of us to *"Test my words? Trust in my promises for they have been given for your assurance and will bear you up in times of doubt."*[1]

Essential Question: How do we give each other permission and support to risk something new for God as the Holy Spirit disrupts us with new ideas for ministry and mission?

e. **Respond in joy!** Have fun together. Laugh and play and sing and embody the hope and freedom of the gospel![2] As we open ourselves to the Holy Spirit and risk *new invitations and relationships* with our neighbors we will encounter challenging situations and at times perplexing problems. In the midst of living Christ's mission we are challenged to remember Jesus at the wedding feast in Cana, around the table sharing and laughing with friends, and enjoying time with children.

Essential Questions: How do we make space in our individual and congregational experience for joy? Are there things we have been doing that we need to discontinue? How do we find a healthy balance so we truly experience hope and freedom in the gospel?

BE INTENTIONAL ABOUT PAUSING TO ENJOY TIME WITH FRIENDS AND FAMILY. Your ministry will be more balanced and effective If you are sharing from a condition of wholeness.

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[1] Doctrine and Covenants Section 155:7

[2] Doctrine and Covenants 162

Resources for Further Exploration

Dwelling in the Word—A Missional Practice

Missional practices: cultivating new understandings, ways of being, and living Christ's mission.

Purpose: To listen to God and to one another to hear and discover in new ways God's direction by reading scripture and posing questions. "Dwelling in the Word" is a missional practice based on our understanding that God continues to speak to us in the context of our day and calling. Listen for God's voice or sense God's presence in scripture to connect with God's mission in Christ. Listen to the voices of others about what God is doing in their lives. This practice is not about gaining information about scripture. Dwelling in the Word is about imagining how God is calling and sending us to *embody and live the concerns and passion of Christ* in our communities and the world.

Steps
Pre-select a scripture passage **and** form a question(s)* for reflection to explore and discover where God is leading you.

Gather in the spirit of fellowship, taking time to pray for one another.

Provide a copy of the scripture passage and the questions to allow participants to hear and read them for reflection.

The person designated to lead:

- Asks participants to listen for or sense a particular word, phrase, or image in the scripture passage that they feel led to explore or wonder about.
- Reads the scripture passage and provides a moment of silence for reflection.
- Asks participants to share reflections on what aspect of the scripture they were drawn to explore or wonder about.
- Before reading the scripture a 2nd time, asks participants to reflect on a specific question(s) that focuses their attention.
- Reads the passage a second time, pauses for silence, and asks people to share their responses to the question(s).
- Offers prayer to conclude the time in this missional practice or to transition to another activity.

Tips for the Process

Be patient. Take time for being with and deepening relationships with one another. Listen to, affirm, and encourage one another. Be open and allow moments of silence for the reading of scripture to transform our understanding and our way of being and doing. Do not let this become an intellectual exercise that will limit the transformative impact of this practice. If someone wishes to remain silent, that is acceptable. It is important to remember the reflections are to be personal and not become an exercise in biblical interpretation. Like any practice, this will take time to fully understand.

***Selecting the Scripture Passage and Forming Questions for Reflection**

Dwelling in the Word is a key way to explore and discover where God is leading us as persons and congregations in mission. Selecting a scripture passage and forming questions for reflection are important first steps.

In the *LCM Field Guide* are "Twelve Months of Scripture for Dwelling in the Word" from which to choose scripture texts. In addition to these, select passages from the Bible, Doctrine and Covenants, and Book of Mormon that resonate or speak to you. Select ones with imagery, narrative, and people. Especially select ones depicting Jesus or the New Testament church.

Typical questions for consideration:

- Is there a word, phrase or place in the scripture I feel drawn to dwell or explore?
- What words, images, or phrases speak to me in this text?
- What is God's invitation to me in this scripture?
- What is God's invitation to us as a Pastor Leadership Team in this scripture?
- What is God's invitation to our congregation in this scripture?
- How am I or are we being called to live into this story today?

In addition to these typical questions, create or form questions relevant to concerns or opportunities for disciple formation, leadership, or congregational life. Examples:

- What are some ways for us to individually and in community create more space to "Listen to the Voice that echoes across the eons of time and yet speaks anew in this moment?" (See Doctrine and Covenants 162:1b and select additional verses.)
- What might God desire to reveal to us about our sacred journey as a congregation as we read "Lift up your eyes and fix them on the place beyond the horizon to which you are sent. Journey in trust, assured that the great and marvelous work is for this time and for all time?" (See Doctrine and Covenants 161:la and select additional verses.)
- What do we "keep on doing" that "the God of peace" will make known to us as we read Philippians 4:4–9?

Mission Prayer—A Missional Practice

Missional practices: cultivating new understandings ways of being, and living Christ's mission.

Mission Prayer

God, where will your Spirit lead today?
Help me be fully awake and ready to respond.
Grant me courage to risk something new
and become a blessing of your love and peace.
Amen.

Purpose: For all participants (congregation support ministers, pastor leadership teams, members, friends, and staff) in Leading Congregations in Mission (LCM) to pray daily to be led by the Spirit and to have courage to go where the Spirit leads. LCM is about being fully awake to God's activity in all the contexts of personal and congregational life **and** responding to God and human needs by embodying and living the concerns and passion of Christ.

Steps

1. Make a personal commitment to offer this prayer at the beginning of each day.
2. At pastor leadership teams (PLT) and LCM meetings, share with one another how this prayer is impacting your sense of where God is leading and subsequent changes.
3. For the PLT, encourage members of the priesthood and congregation to join you in using this missional practice.

Tips for the Process

Remember the importance of this missional practice becoming a new norm for your congregation. Missional practices are not just personal behaviors. As leaders, let's give the *Mission Prayer* a priority in our personal life. Look for how this missional practice helps you encounter God, deepens relationships, builds community, and promotes hospitality and healing by "loving your neighbor" in contexts outside the congregation. Consider recording your daily experiences and reflections in a journal.

Then share your experience with the congregation.

Sharing in the Round—A Missional Practice

Missional practices: cultivating new understandings, ways of being, and living Christ's mission.

Purpose: For people to visit over meals with one another outside Sunday gatherings at the church to develop and deepen relationships**.** Sharing in the Round is an ancient practice of table fellowship. Some of the most meaningful ministry by Jesus occurred around the table of invitation and hospitality. Good food, friends, and meaningful conversation lead to deeper relationships and community. This missional practice is an important way to follow a model of ministry by Jesus and *embody and live the concerns and passion of Christ*.

Steps

- Commit to the missional practice of *Sharing in the Round* on a regular basis *(*every other week or once a month) by inviting a person or family to have dinner in your home or a place suitable for good conversation.

- Be prayerful for opportunities to share sacred community as you invest in the lives of other people. The counsel in Doctrine and Covenants 154, "My Spirit is reaching out to numerous souls even now…," may guide you.

- Invite people from the congregation and then consider inviting people from your neighborhood.

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

Tips for the Process

Risk something new beyond inviting friends or close associates in ministry. When you plan your invitation list, consider inviting people outside your comfort level such as people in your or the congregation's neighborhood, people from your workplace, and those in the congregation you do not know well.

Walking the Neighborhood—A Missional Practice

Missional practices: cultivating new understandings, ways of being, and living Christ's mission.

Purpose: For people, as individuals or in pairs, to walk their congregational or personal neighborhoods to sense where God is active, enter opportunities for conversation, and offer blessings through silent prayer. By learning to listen and pay attention to what is happening in the lives of people, new understandings, ways of being and living Christ's mission are gained.

The Worth of All Persons and the Blessings of Community, two of the church's Enduring Principles help us to understand that our only motive for this missional practice is to be open to God's presence in and desires for any resulting relationship.

Steps

1. Step out in faith as you offer the *Mission Prayer* and reflect on the counsel in Doctrine and Covenants 161:3 and 4. (See the following page.)

2. Take a family member or go with a friend and begin walking in your home neighborhood or in the neighborhood around your church. As you walk, pray for God's guidance and offer God's blessing on each home and the people who live there. If people are in their yards or on their porches, greet them and wish them a good day.

3. As you become a regular presence in the neighborhood, begin conversations with neighbors. Ask God to lead you to the people with whom God wants you to share in conversation. Listen for where God is moving in their lives. Consider offering this prayer: *God, whom do you want me to meet and form a caring relationship with today?*

Tips for the Process

This missional practice requires genuine investment in forming relationships and takes time. This is not designed to simply "invite people to church." This missional practice helps us understand what God is up to in the lives of people in our neighborhoods by being present where we live and worship. Between walks, share with your partner in prayer and conversation about the people you meet and where God may be leading you in mission. Be creative—bring some cookies or freshly picked vegetables—anything you can offer to people on your walk as a way of sharing God's love in a practical way.

One of 12 Months of Dwelling in the Word*

Theme: Embody and Live the Concerns and Passion of Christ

Doctrine and Covenants 164:9

> a. Beloved children of the Restoration, your continuing faith adventure with God has been divinely led, eventful, challenging, and sometimes surprising to you. By the grace of God, you are poised to fulfill God's ultimate vision for the church.
> b. When your willingness to live in sacred community as Christ's new creation exceeds your natural fear of spiritual and relational transformation, you will become who you are called to be. The rise of Zion the beautiful, the peaceful reign of Christ, awaits your wholehearted response to the call to make and steadfastly hold to God's covenant of peace in Jesus Christ.
> c. This covenant entails sacramental living that respects and reveals God's presence and reconciling activity in creation. It requires whole-life stewardship dedicated to expanding the church's restoring ministries, especially those devoted to asserting the worth of persons, protecting the sacredness of creation, and relieving physical and spiritual suffering.
> d. If you truly would be Community of Christ, then embody and live the concerns and passion of Christ.
> e. The challenges and opportunities are momentous. Will you remain hesitant in the shadows of your fears, insecurities, and competing loyalties? Or will you move forward in the light of your divinely instilled call and vision?
> f. The mission of Jesus Christ is what matters most for the journey ahead.

John 1:14 (The Message)

> The Word became flesh and blood, and moved into the neighborhood. We saw the glory with our own eyes, the one-of-a-kind glory, like Father, like Son, Generous inside and out, true from start to finish.

Questions

1. As you were listening to the scripture, what word, emotion, feeling, phrase, idea, or image do you sense God drawing you to dwell upon?

2. What do you sense God is leading you to explore or to give attention to?

3. What new understanding, way of being, and living Christ's mission is emerging for you?

4. How does this passage call us as a congregation into Christ's mission?

*No required sequence is intended by listing this as "One of 12…" Feel free to select other texts if they are more relevant to the congregation's current context. Suggestion for the four questions: pose one question per week.

Two of 12 Months of Dwelling in the Word*

Theme: Journeying with Christ

Luke 24:13–26, 28–31 (NRSV)

> 13 Now on that same day two of them were going to a village called Emmaus, about
> seven miles from Jerusalem, 14 and talking with each other about all these things
> that had happened. 15 While they were talking and discussing, Jesus himself came
> near and went with them, 16 but their eyes were kept from recognizing him. 17 And
> he said to them, "What are you discussing with each other while you walk along?"
> They stood still, looking sad. 18 Then one of them, whose name was Cleopas,
> answered him, "Are you the only stranger in Jerusalem who does not know the
> things that have taken place there in these days?" 19 He asked them, "What things?"
> They replied, "The things about Jesus of Nazareth, who was a prophet mighty in
> deed and word before God and all the people, 20 and how our chief priests and
> leaders handed him over to be condemned to death and crucified him. 21 But we
> had hoped that he was the one to redeem Israel. Yes, and besides all this, it is now
> the third day since these things took place. 22 Moreover, some women of our group
> astounded us. They were at the tomb early this morning, 23 and when they did not
> find his body there, they came back and told us that they had indeed seen a vision of
> angels who said that he was alive. 24 Some of those who were with us went to the
> tomb and found it just as the women had said; but they did not see him." 25 Then he
> said to them, "Oh, how foolish you are, and how slow of heart to believe all that the
> prophets have declared! 26 Was it not necessary that the Messiah should suffer
> these things and then enter into his glory?" … 28 As they came near the village to
> which they were going, he walked ahead as if he were going on. 29 But they urged
> him strongly, saying, "Stay with us, because it is almost evening and the day is now
> nearly over." So he went in to stay with them. 30 When he was at the table with
> them, he took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them. 31 Then their eyes
> were opened, and they recognized him; and he vanished from their sight.

Questions

1. As you were listening to the scripture, what word, emotion, feeling, phrase, idea, or image do you sense God drawing you to dwell upon?

2. What do you sense God is leading you to explore or to give attention to?

3. What new understanding, way of being, and living Christ's mission is emerging for you?

4. How does this passage call us as a congregation into Christ's mission?

*No required sequence is intended by listing this as "Two of 12…" Feel free to select other texts if they are more relevant to the congregation's current context. Suggestion for the four questions: pose one question per week.

Three (Option1) **of 12 Months of Dwelling in the Word***

Themes: Unity, Giftedness, and Worth of Persons

Ephesians 4:1–6, 11–16 (The Message)

> 1–3 In light of all this, here's what I want you to do. While I'm locked up here, a prisoner for the Master, I want you to get out there and walk—better yet, run!—on the road God called you to travel. I don't want any of you sitting around on your hands. I don't want anyone strolling off, down some path that goes nowhere. And mark that you do this with humility and discipline—not in fits and starts, but steadily, pouring yourselves out for each other in acts of love, alert at noticing differences and quick at mending fences.
>
> 4–6 You were all called to travel on the same road and in the same direction, so stay together, both outwardly and inwardly. You have one Master, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who rules over all, works through all, and is present in all. Everything you are and think and do is permeated with Oneness.
>
> 11–16 But that doesn't mean you should all look and speak and act the same. Out of the generosity of Christ, each of us is given his own gift. He handed out gifts above and below, filled heaven with his gifts, filled earth with his gifts. He handed out gifts of apostle, prophet, evangelist, and pastor-teacher to train Christ's followers in skilled servant work, working within Christ's body, the church, until we're all moving rhythmically and easily with each other, efficient and graceful in response to God's Son, fully mature adults, fully developed within and without, fully alive like Christ.
>
> 14–16 No prolonged infancies among us, please. We'll not tolerate babes in the woods, small children who are an easy mark for impostors. God wants us to grow up, to know the whole truth and tell it in love—like Christ in everything. We take our lead from Christ, who is the source of everything we do. He keeps us in step with each other. His very breath and blood flow through us, nourishing us so that we will grow up healthy in God, robust in love.

Questions

1. As you were listening to the scripture, what word, emotion, feeling, phrase, idea, or image do you sense God drawing you to dwell upon?
2. What do you sense God is leading you to explore or to give attention to?
3. What new understanding, way of being, and living Christ's mission is emerging for you?
4. How does this passage call us as a congregation into Christ's mission?

*No required sequence is intended by listing this as "Three (Option 1) of 12…" Feel free to select other texts if they are more relevant to the congregation's current context. Suggestion for the four questions: pose one question per week.

Three (Option 2) **of 12 Months of Dwelling in the Word***

Themes: Unity, Giftedness, and Worth of Persons

> **Ephesians 4:1–7, 11–16 (NRSV)**
> 1 I therefore, the prisoner in the Lord, beg you to lead a life worthy of the calling to which you have been called, 2 with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, 3 making every effort to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. 4 There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to the one hope of your calling, 5 one Lord, one faith, one baptism, 6 one God and Father of all, who is above all and through all and in all. 7 But each of us was given grace according to the measure of Christ's gift.
>
> 11 The gifts he gave were that some would be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers, 12 to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, 13 until all of us come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to maturity, to the measure of the full stature of Christ. 14 We must no longer be children, tossed to and fro and blown about by every wind of doctrine, by people's trickery, by their craftiness in deceitful scheming. 15 But speaking the truth in love, we must grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, 16 from whom the whole body, joined and knitted together by every ligament with which it is equipped, as each part is working properly, promotes the body's growth in building itself up in love.

Questions

1. As you were listening to the scripture, what word, emotion, feeling, phrase, idea, or image do you sense God drawing you to dwell upon?
2. What do you sense God is leading you to explore or to give attention to?
3. What new understanding, way of being, and living Christ's mission is emerging for you?
4. How does this passage call us as a congregation into Christ's mission?

*No required sequence is intended by listing this as "Three (Option 2) of 12…" Feel free to select other texts if they are more relevant to the congregation's current context. Suggestion for the four questions: pose one question per week.

Four of 12 Months of Dwelling in the Word*

Themes: Relationships with God, Neighbor, and Self

Mark 12:28–34 (NRSV)

> 28 One of the scribes came near and heard them disputing with one another, and seeing that he answered them well, he asked him, "Which commandment is the first of all?" 29 Jesus answered, "The first is, 'Hear, O Israel: the Lord our God, the Lord is one; 30 you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength.' 31 The second is this, 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' There is no other commandment greater than these." 32 Then the scribe said to him, "You are right, Teacher; you have truly said that 'he is one, and besides him there is no other'; 33 and 'to love him with all the heart, and with all the understanding, and with all the strength,' and 'to love one's neighbor as oneself,'—this is much more important than all whole burnt offerings and sacrifices." 34 When Jesus saw that he answered wisely, he said to him, "You are not far from the kingdom of God." After that no one dared to ask him any question.

Questions

1. As you were listening to the scripture, what word, emotion, feeling, phrase, idea, or image do you sense God drawing you to dwell upon?
2. What do you sense God is leading you to explore or to give attention to?
3. What new understanding, way of being, and living Christ's mission is emerging for you?
4. How does this passage call us as a congregation into Christ's mission?

*No required sequence is intended by listing this as "Four of 12…" Feel free to select other texts if they are more relevant to the congregation's current context. Suggestion for the four questions: pose one question per week.

Five of 12 Months of Dwelling in the Word*

Themes: Doing a New Thing, Tradition in Tension with God's Purposes

Mark 7:1–8 (NRSV)

> 1 Now when the Pharisees and some of the scribes who had come from Jerusalem
> gathered around him, 2 they noticed that some of his disciples were eating with
> defiled hands, that is, without washing them. 3 (For the Pharisees, and all the Jews,
> do not eat unless they thoroughly wash their hands, thus observing the tradition of
> the elders; 4 and they do not eat anything from the market unless they wash it; and
> there are also many other traditions that they observe, the washing of cups, pots,
> and bronze kettles.) 5 So the Pharisees and the scribes asked him, "Why do your
> disciples not live according to the tradition of the elders, but eat with defiled
> hands?" 6 He said to them, "Isaiah prophesied rightly about you hypocrites, as it is
> written, 'This people honors me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me; 7 in
> vain do they worship me, teaching human precepts as doctrines.' 8 You abandon the
> commandment of God and hold to human tradition."

Questions

1. As you were listening to the scripture, what word, emotion, feeling, phrase, idea, or image do you sense God drawing you to dwell upon?
2. What do you sense God is leading you to explore or to give attention to?
3. What new understanding, way of being, and living Christ's mission is emerging for you?
4. How does this passage call us as a congregation into Christ's mission?

*No required sequence is intended by listing this as "Five of 12…" Feel free to select other texts if they are more relevant to the congregation's current context. Suggestion for the four questions: pose one question per week.

Six of 12 Months of Dwelling in the Word*

Theme: God Makes His Appeal through Us

2 Corinthians 5:16–21 (NRSV)

> 16 From now on, therefore, we regard no one from a human point of view; even
> though we once knew Christ from a human point of view, we know him no longer in
> that way. 17 So if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has
> passed away; see, everything has become new! 18 All this is from God, who
> reconciled us to himself through Christ, and has given us the ministry of
> reconciliation; 19 that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not
> counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting the message of reconciliation
> to us. 20 So we are ambassadors for Christ, since God is making his appeal through
> us; we entreat you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. 21 For our sake he made
> him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of
> God.

Questions

1. As you were listening to the scripture, what word, emotion, feeling, phrase, idea, or image do you sense God drawing you to dwell upon?

2. What do you sense God is leading you to explore or to give attention to?

3. What new understanding, way of being, and living Christ's mission is emerging for you?

4. How does this passage call us as a congregation into Christ's mission?

*No required sequence is intended by listing this as "Six of 12…" Feel free to select other texts if they are more relevant to the congregation's current context. Suggestion for the four questions: pose one question per week.

Seven of 12 Months of Dwelling in the Word*

Themes: What Matters Most and Being a Servant

Mark 9:30–37 (NRSV)

> 30 They went on from there and passed through Galilee. He did not want anyone to
> know it; 31 for he was teaching his disciples, saying to them, "The Son of Man is to
> be betrayed into human hands, and they will kill him, and three days after being
> killed, he will rise again." 32 But they did not understand what he was saying and
> were afraid to ask him. 33 Then they came to Capernaum; and when he was in the
> house he asked them, "What were you arguing about on the way?" 34 But they were
> silent, for on the way they had argued with one another who was the greatest. 35 He
> sat down, called the twelve, and said to them, "Whoever wants to be first must be
> last of all and servant of all." 36 Then he took a little child and put it among them;
> and taking it in his arms, he said to them, 37 "Whoever welcomes one such child in
> my name welcomes me, and whoever welcomes me welcomes not me but the one
> who sent me."

Questions

As you were listening to the scripture, what word, emotion, feeling, phrase, idea, or image do you sense God drawing you to dwell upon?

1. What do you sense God is leading you to explore or to give attention to?
2. What new understanding, way of being, and living Christ's mission is emerging for you?
3. How does this passage call us as a congregation into Christ's mission?

*No required sequence is intended by listing this as "Seven of 12…" Feel free to select other texts if they are more relevant to the congregation's current context. Suggestion for the four questions: pose one question per week.

Eight of 12 Months of Dwelling in the Word

Theme: Journey in Trust

Alma 16:149–151

> 149 “Now as I said concerning faith—that it was not a perfect knowledge—even so it is with my words. 150 You cannot know of their surety at first to perfection, any more than faith is a perfect knowledge. 151 But, behold, if you will awake and arouse your faculties, even to an experiment upon my words, and exercise a particle of faith, even if ye can no more than desire to believe, let this desire work in you even until you believe in a manner that you can give place for a portion of my words.”

Questions

1. As you were listening to the scripture, what word, emotion, feeling, phrase, idea, or image do you sense God drawing you to dwell upon?
2. What do you sense God is leading you to explore or to give attention to?
3. What new understanding, way of being, and living Christ’s mission is emerging for you?
4. How does this passage call us as a congregation into Christ’s mission?

*No required sequence is intended by listing this as “Eight of 12…” Feel free to select other texts if they are more relevant to the congregation’s current context. Suggestion for the four questions: pose one question per week.

Nine (Option 1) **of 12 Months of Dwelling in the Word***

Theme: Not Losing Heart

2 Corinthians 4:5–18 (The Message)

> 5–6 Remember, our Message is not about ourselves; we're proclaiming Jesus Christ, the Master. All we are is messengers, errand runners from Jesus for you. It started when God said, "Light up the darkness!" and our lives filled up with light as we saw and understood God in the face of Christ, all bright and beautiful.
>
> 7–12 If you only look at *us*, you might well miss the brightness. We carry this precious Message around in the unadorned clay pots of our ordinary lives. That's to prevent anyone from confusing God's incomparable power with us. As it is, there's not much chance of that. You know for yourselves that we're not much to look at. We've been surrounded and battered by troubles, but we're not demoralized; we're not sure what to do, but we know that God knows what to do; we've been spiritually terrorized, but God hasn't left our side; we've been thrown down, but we haven't broken. What they did to Jesus, they do to us—trial and torture, mockery and murder; what Jesus did among them, he does in us—he lives! Our lives are at constant risk for Jesus' sake, which makes Jesus' life all the more evident in us. While we're going through the worst, you're getting in on the best!
>
> 13–15 we're not keeping this quiet, not on your life. Just like the psalmist who wrote, "I believed it, so I said it," we say what we believe. And what we believe is that the One who raised up the Master Jesus will just as certainly raise us up with you, alive. Every detail works to your advantage and to God's glory: more and more grace, more and more people, more and more praise!
>
> 16–18 So we're not giving up. How could we! Even though on the outside it often looks like things are falling apart on us, on the inside, where God is making new life, not a day goes by without his unfolding grace. These hard times are small potatoes compared to the coming good times, the lavish celebration prepared for us. There's far more here than meets the eye. The things we see now are here today, gone tomorrow. But the things we can't see now will last forever.

Questions

1. As you were listening to the scripture, what word, emotion, feeling, phrase, idea, or image do you sense God drawing you to dwell upon?

2. What do you sense God is leading you to explore or to give attention to?

3. What new understanding, way of being, and living Christ's mission is emerging for you?

4. How does this passage call us as a congregation into Christ's mission?

*No required sequence is intended by listing this as "Nine (Option 1) of 12…" Feel free to select other texts if they are more relevant to the congregation's current context. Suggestion for the four questions: pose one question per week.

Nine (Option 2) **of Twelve Months of Dwelling in the Word***

Theme: Not Losing Heart

2 Corinthians 4:5–16 (NRSV)

> 5 For we do not proclaim ourselves; we proclaim Jesus Christ as Lord and ourselves
> as your slaves for Jesus' sake. 6 For it is the God who said, "Let light shine out of
> darkness," who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the
> glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. 7 But we have this treasure in clay jars, so
> that it may be made clear that this extraordinary power belongs to God and does not
> come from us. 8 We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not
> driven to despair; 9 persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed;
> 10 always carrying in the body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also
> be made visible in our bodies. 11 For while we live, we are always being given up to
> death for Jesus' sake, so that the life of Jesus may be made visible in our mortal flesh.
> 12 So death is at work in us, but life in you. 13 But just as we have the same spirit of
> faith that is in accordance with scripture— "I believed, and so I spoke"—we also
> believe, and so we speak, 14 because we know that the one who raised the Lord
> Jesus will raise us also with Jesus, and will bring us with you into his presence. 15
> Yes, everything is for your sake, so that grace, as it extends to more and more
> people, may increase thanksgiving, to the glory of God. 16 So we do not lose heart.

Questions

1. As you were listening to the scripture, what word, emotion, feeling, phrase, idea, or image do you sense God drawing you to dwell upon?

2. What do you sense God is leading you to explore or to give attention to?

3. What new understanding, way of being, and living Christ's mission is emerging for you?

4. How does this passage call us as a congregation into Christ's mission?

*No required sequence is intended by listing this as "Nine (Option 2) of 12…" Feel free to select other texts if they are more relevant to the congregation's current context. Suggestion for the four questions: pose one question per week.

10 of 12 Months of Dwelling in the Word*

Theme: a Pattern of Jesus' Ministry

Mark 1:19–22, 29–39 (NRSV)

> 19 As he went a little farther, he saw James son of Zebedee and his brother John,
> who were in their boat mending the nets. 20 Immediately he called them; and they
> left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired men, and followed him. 21 They
> went to Capernaum; and when the Sabbath came, he entered the synagogue and
> taught. 22 They were astounded at his teaching, for he taught them as one having
> authority, and not as the scribes.
>
> 29 As soon as they left the synagogue, they went with James and John to the home of
> Simon and Andrew. 30 Simon's mother-in-law was in bed with a fever, and they told
> Jesus about her. 31 So he went to her, took her hand and helped her up. The fever
> left her and she began to wait on them. 32 That evening after sunset the people
> brought to Jesus all the sick and demon-possessed. 33 The whole town gathered at
> the door, 34 and Jesus healed many who had various diseases. He also drove out
> many demons, but he would not let the demons speak because they knew who he
> was.
>
> 35 Very early in the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house and
> went off to a solitary place, where he prayed. 36 Simon and his companions went to
> look for him, 37 and when they found him, they exclaimed: "Everyone is looking for
> you!" 38 Jesus replied, "Let us go somewhere else—to the nearby villages—so I can
> preach there also. That is why I have come." 39 So he traveled throughout Galilee,
> preaching in their synagogues and driving out demons.

Questions

1. As you were listening to the scripture, what word, emotion, feeling, phrase, idea, or image do you sense God drawing you to dwell upon?
2. What do you sense God is leading you to explore or to give attention to?
3. What new understanding, way of being, and living Christ's mission is emerging for you?
4. How does this passage call us as a congregation into Christ's mission?

*No required sequence is intended by listing this as "10 of 12…" Feel free to select other texts if they are more relevant to the congregation's current context. Suggestion for the four questions: pose one question each week.

11 of 12 Months of Dwelling in the Word*

Theme: Entering Their World

1 Corinthians 9:19–23 (The Message)

> 19–23 Even though I am free of the demands and expectations of everyone, I have voluntarily become a servant to any and all in order to reach a wide range of people: religious, nonreligious, meticulous moralists, loose-living immoralists, the defeated, the demoralized—whoever. I didn't take on their way of life. I kept my bearings in Christ—but I entered their world and tried to experience things from their point of view. I've become just about every sort of servant there is in my attempts to lead those I meet into a God-saved life. I did all this because of the Message. I didn't just want to talk about it; I wanted to be in on it!

Questions

1. As you were listening to the scripture, what word, emotion, feeling, phrase, idea, or image do you sense God drawing you to dwell upon?
2. What do you sense God is leading you to explore or to give attention to?
3. What new understanding, way of being, and living Christ's mission is emerging for you?
4. How does this passage call us as a congregation into Christ's mission?

*No required sequence is intended by listing this as "11 of 12…" Feel free to select other texts if they are more relevant to the congregation's current context. Suggestion for the four questions: pose one question per week.

12 of 12 Months of Dwelling in the Word*

Theme: Do Not Be Afraid

Luke 5:1–11

> 1 Once while Jesus was standing beside the lake of Gennesaret, and the crowd was
> pressing in on him to hear the word of God, 2 he saw two boats there at the shore of
> the lake; the fishermen had gone out of them and were washing their nets. 3 He got
> into one of the boats, the one belonging to Simon, and asked him to put out a little
> way from the shore. Then he sat down and taught the crowds from the boat. 4 When
> he had finished speaking, he said to Simon, "Put out into the deep water and let
> down your nets for a catch." 5 Simon answered, "Master, we have worked all night
> long but have caught nothing. Yet if you say so, I will let down the nets." 6 When they
> had done this, they caught so many fish that their nets were beginning to break. 7 So
> they signaled their partners in the other boat to come and help them. And they came
> and filled both boats, so that they began to sink. 8 But when Simon Peter saw it, he
> fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, "Go away from me, Lord, for I am a sinful man!" 9
> For he and all who were with him were amazed at the catch of fish that they had
> taken; 10 and so also were James and John, sons of Zebedee, who were partners
> with Simon. Then Jesus said to Simon, "Do not be afraid; from now on you will be
> catching people." 11 When they had brought their boats to shore, they left
> everything and followed him.

Questions

1. As you were listening to the scripture, what word, emotion, feeling, phrase, idea, or image do you sense God drawing you to dwell upon?

2. What do you sense God is leading you to explore or to give attention to?

3. What new understanding, way of being, and living Christ's mission is emerging for you?

4. How does this passage call us as a congregation into Christ's mission?

*No required sequence is intended by listing this as "12 of 12…" Feel free to select other texts if they are more relevant to the congregation's current context. Suggestion for the four questions: pose one question per week.

Notes: