



## **The Art of Spiritual Formation**

**Written by Ellen Shepard with commentary by Mollie Lemon,  
Tavares Stephens, Anjie Woodworth & Andy Woodworth and  
others whose works are cited in the footnotes.**



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## Spiritual Formation at Annual Conference 2018

### Music

Stephen Curtis Chapman's refrain *Let Us Pray*

### Session I

**Greg Ellison/Ellen Shepard**

Know Your Spiritual Type/Conversations with Country Dark

### Session II

**Anjie and Andy Woodworth**

My Life with Others Neighboring  
Care of the Earth  
Hospitality

### Session III

Opening Myself to God Examen; Fasting  
Fixed Hour Prayer

**Lahronda Little  
Julie Boone**

### Session IV

Formed by God's Word Lectio Divina  
Visio Divina

**Millie Kim  
Tavares Stephens**

### Celebration of Disciplines

Spoken Word Poetry

**Tavares Stephens**

## How I Fell in Love with God: Discovering Spiritual Disciplines

I think I have always been in love with the Mystery. Perhaps it was growing up on an island, or spending my teenage years yearning for the next youth retreat, or discovering The Retreat at Round Top that shaped 3 decades of my young adult life or Barbara Troxell's seminary class on Prayer – in fact, it was probably all of these things that led me to a deep hunger for God. When I purchased my first copy of *Celebration of Discipline*, I read it, marked it, taught it, loaned it and read it again. It was as if I have discovered gold!

When I encountered Corrine Ware's work on spiritual typing, I finally had words and a new understanding of why I was drawn to the mystery of God and to the theological underpinnings of my faith. I knew why the words of hymns and creeds were important to me – but also why others in my life had no need of this, but rather needed color and movement and rhythmic music. I began to understand why some were impatient with religion that had no hands and feet. I had a fuller understanding of the word “church”.

As newlyweds, Kelly and I spent a good bit of time looking for a church home in the years prior to the appointive life. The building was important to me – not so much to him. The hymns, the bulletin, the order and structure were important to me – he cared mostly about the scripture and sermon. And at the end of one of those services, when the choir recessed out two by two to a Gregorian chant ending with a seven fold Amen, I knew I was home – and Kelly wasn't sure what had just happened. In Ware's words, Type 1, 3 met with type 2,4.

Ware encourages that we sit with these questions: What is my personal style of spirituality? What is the best way for me to develop my spiritual life? Why is my expression of spirituality different from that of others? I believe that the inventory she created and its implications for our spiritual life are hugely important. I hope you will take this inventory – for yourself – and for your worshipping community. I pray that you will explore the discipline of Lectio Divina, Holy Reading. It speaks to all spiritual types. But there are other disciplines that also enrich our life of faith. Many are included here.

I am a seeker who seeks the Living Word. I seek God's presence and guidance. I seek time alone and time with others on this journey. I have sought spiritual mothers, sisters and brothers who have lead and nurtured me. I hope I might become a spiritual mother to a few. I desire to live my life punctuated with moments of authenticity, beauty, connection, that lead me to love God and others in deeper ways.

I invite you to sink into Mollie Lemon's following commentary on our joint Spiritual Formation:

## Spiritual Formation<sup>1</sup>

*Defining spiritual practices.* It is helpful to first come to agreement on what we mean by spiritual practices, also referred to as spiritual disciplines. Marjorie J. Thompson offers a helpful analogy in her book *Soul Feast*, comparing spiritual practices to garden tools. She writes that, “they [practices] keep the soil of our love clear of obstruction. They keep us open to the mysterious work of grace in our heart and our world. They enable us not only to receive but to respond to God’s love, which in turn yields the fruits of the Spirit in our lives.”<sup>2</sup> Tilden Edwards writes that spiritual disciplines are “ways of intentionally being present to God and reflecting on your own experience and awareness.”<sup>3</sup> Similarly, Henri Nouwen describes a spiritual discipline as “the concentrated effort to create some inner and outer space in our lives, where this obedience [to God] can be practiced. Through a spiritual discipline, we prevent the world from filling our lives to such an extent that there is no place left to listen.”<sup>4</sup> Thus, spiritual practices help us to stop, to be present, to pay attention, to listen. The practices themselves can encompass many things, as we will see, but they are all meant to help us create space for the work of the Holy Spirit.

*Why we need spiritual practices.* Simply put by Henri Nouwen, “A spiritual life without discipline is impossible. Discipline is the other side of discipleship. The practice of discipline makes us more sensitive to the small, gentle voice of God...and willing to respond when we hear it.”<sup>5</sup> We will often spend hours at the gym, or practicing a musical instrument, or in the pursuit of another passion at which we hope to improve, but many of us don’t devote the same dedication to practicing our own spirituality. Dallas Willard compares spiritual disciplines to exercises practiced by star athletes. Like an athlete who hopes to perform well in the moment – in the game – we must discipline our minds and bodies if we expect to perform “at a moment of crisis.” While we are saved by grace, Willard writes that grace is the basis of God’s acceptance of us, “but grace does *not* mean that sufficient strength and insight will be automatically “infused” into our being in the moment of need.”<sup>6</sup> In other words, “To live as Christ lived is to live as he did *all* his life.”<sup>7</sup> While we aren’t saved by our own works, spiritual disciplines create an opening for the Holy Spirit to work in us. And as Edwards writes, “the power of the false self

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<sup>1</sup> This article was written by Mollie Lemon as a part of her final thesis for her Masters of Religion and Public Leadership, Candler School of Theology at Emory University, and is used with her permission.

<sup>2</sup> Thompson, Marjorie J., *Soul Feast: An Invitation to the Christian Spiritual Life* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1995), 10.

<sup>3</sup> Edwards, Tilden, *Living in the Presence: Disciplines for the Spiritual Heart* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1987), ix.

<sup>4</sup> Nouwen, Henri J.M., *Making All Things New: An Invitation to the Spiritual Life* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1981), 68.

<sup>5</sup> Nouwen, 66.

<sup>6</sup> Willard, Dallas, *The Spirit of the Disciplines: Understanding How God Changes Lives* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1988), 4.

<sup>7</sup> Willard, 5.

to reassert itself never finally disappears in this life,” and thus “we need personal and collective spiritual disciplines that assist our vigilance and encourage our constant turning to God.”<sup>8</sup>

*The role of the Holy Spirit.* As we create space in our lives through spiritual disciplines, the Holy Spirit is able to “conform us to the image of Christ”<sup>9</sup> and tutor us in relationship with God.<sup>10</sup> The Spirit “is continuously challenging, changing, and maturing us” through spiritual practices, and helping us to grow in “gratitude, trust, obedience, humility, compassion, service, and joy.”<sup>11</sup> In his classic *Celebration of Discipline*, Richard Foster writes that, “Inner righteousness is a gift from God to be graciously received. The needed change within us is God’s work, not ours. The demand is for an inside job, and only God can work from the inside.”<sup>12</sup> Nouwen agrees that any work or transformation done within us is a result of the Holy Spirit, not of the practices themselves or our own strength or willpower. Of Pentecost, Nouwen writes, “When the Holy Spirit descends upon the disciples and dwells with them, their lives are transformed into Christ-like lives, lives shaped by the same love that exists between the Father and the Son. The spiritual life is indeed a life in which we are lifted up to become partakers of the divine life.”<sup>13</sup> In his classic sermon *The Means of Grace*, John Wesley emphasized the role of the Holy Spirit in transforming people, writing that “Ye are thus saved, not by any power, wisdom, or strength, which is in you, or in any other creature, but merely through the grace or power of the Holy Ghost, which worketh all in all.”<sup>14</sup>

*Spiritual practices are not ends in themselves.* It should be emphasized that the practices themselves are not ends in and of themselves. Foster writes that, “By themselves the Spiritual Disciplines can do nothing; they can only get us to the place where something can be done...[They are] the means by which we place ourselves where [God] can bless us.”<sup>15</sup> Thompson puts it succinctly, writing that spiritual practices “are simply means of grace.”<sup>16</sup> John Wesley puts it a bit more starkly, writing that “all these means, when separate from the end, are less than nothing and vanity...if they do not actually conduce to the knowledge and love of God, they are not acceptable in his sight.”<sup>17</sup> He goes on to say that “We allow, likewise, that all

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<sup>8</sup> Edwards, 6.

<sup>9</sup> Thompson, 6.

<sup>10</sup> Thompson, 10.

<sup>11</sup> Thompson, 7.

<sup>12</sup> Foster, Richard J., *Celebration of Discipline: The Path to Spiritual Growth. Revised Edition* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1988), 6.

<sup>13</sup> Nouwen, 54.

<sup>14</sup> Wesley, John, Sermon 16, “The Means of Grace,” in *The Sermons of John Wesley*, ed. Thomas Jackson, Global Ministries of the United Methodist Church. Accessed April 12, 2018. <http://www.umcmission.org/Find-Resources/John-Wesley-Sermons/Sermon-16-The-Means-of-Grace>

<sup>15</sup> Foster, 7.

<sup>16</sup> Thompson, 10.

<sup>17</sup> Wesley, sermon.

outward means whatever, if separate from the Spirit of God, cannot profit at all, cannot conduce, in any degree, either to the knowledge or love of God.”<sup>18</sup>

*Our role and the role of willpower.* Many of us may have been raised to believe that we can achieve anything we put our minds to. With willpower and determination, we are told that we can realize our goals. Not so with the spiritual life. Thompson writes, “We cannot achieve spiritual growth through sheer grit and willpower. The spiritual life is not a task of self-reformation. There is no fix-it-yourself kit, no manual promising ‘five easy steps to the complete spiritual person’.”<sup>19</sup> This doesn’t mean we don’t have a role to play, however. We are called to cooperate with the work of the Holy Spirit within us by remaining open and receptive to the Spirit’s guidance. Spiritual practices help us to do this since, as Thompson writes, “experience teaches that we don’t cooperate with God’s intentions for us easily.”<sup>20</sup> While God’s grace is unearned and not dependent on what we do or don’t do, “God has given us the Disciplines of the spiritual life as a means of receiving his grace. The Disciplines allow us to place ourselves before God so that he can transform us.”<sup>21</sup> It would also seem that adopting spiritual practices requires our patience. As Carter writes, “A practice itself, since it requires training, repetition, learning, and a span of time, is an argument against one of our culture’s fundamental premises: the desire for immediate results.”<sup>22</sup>

*Results of adopting spiritual practices.* Eventually though, with the help of the Holy Spirit, results do manifest. A change or transformation in our inner person is apparent to us and to others, and we sense an alignment of ourselves and our wills with God’s will. Through spiritual practices, “the Spirit of God can recreate us as truly free people,” free of worry, anxiety, and bondage.<sup>23</sup> Thompson writes that, “As our own desires and intentions become aligned with God’s intentions for us, we find ourselves free to follow and serve Christ. Discipline makes us disciples with a clear and joyful purpose.”<sup>24</sup> We are free to enjoy “a life of relationship and intimacy with God” and are liberated “from stifling slavery to self-interest and fear.”<sup>25</sup> Willard believes the only way to true transformation of the inner person is through the practice of spiritual disciplines in which “we *can* become like Christ in character and in power and thus realize our highest ideals of well-being and well-doing.”<sup>26</sup> According to Edwards, through spiritual disciplines we can come to a place of “contemplative awareness,” a state in which “we

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<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

<sup>19</sup> Thompson, 8.

<sup>20</sup> Thompson, 8.

<sup>21</sup> Foster, 7.

<sup>22</sup> Carter, Jr., Kenneth H., *A Way of Life in the World: Spiritual Practices for United Methodists* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2004), 16.

<sup>23</sup> Nouwen, 16.

<sup>24</sup> Thompson, 11.

<sup>25</sup> Foster, 2.

<sup>26</sup> Willard, ix.

fully embody our being in God, our deepest identity in God, the true self in the heart, our deepest home and widest consciousness.”<sup>27</sup> In other words, God-consciousness.

“The [one] who is wise, therefore, will see his life as more like a reservoir than a canal. The canal simultaneously pours out what it receives; the reservoir retains the water till it is filled, then discharges the overflow without loss to itself ... Today there are many in the Church who act like canals, the reservoirs are far too rare ... You too must learn to await this fullness before pouring out your gifts, do not try to be more generous than God.”

– Bernard of Clairvaux, *On the Song of Songs* 1090-1153

"All shall be well, all  
shall be well... For there  
is a Force of love moving  
through the universe  
That holds us fast and  
will never let us go."  
lady julian of norwich  
( c.a. 1342-1416)

- lady julian of norwich ( c.a. 1342  
-1416)

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<sup>27</sup> Edwards, 5.

## **The Spirituality Wheel A Spiritual Type Selector<sup>28</sup>**

This inventory will help you DRAW A PICTURE of your personal style of spirituality.

Read through the following statements, circling the number corresponding to the statement in each category that best describes your personal belief or preference. *You may select as many statements as you wish; you need not only choose one.*

Match the chosen statement numbers with the quadrant numbers in the circle on the following page. The largest numbers in a quadrant are an indication of your personal spiritual type. If your numbers are similar in all quadrants, you can likely be happy worshipping anywhere.

Please circle all that apply

### **THE ORDER OF WORSHIP**

1. A carefully planned and orderly worship program is a glory to God.
2. A deeply moving and spontaneous meeting is a glory to God.
3. Simplicity and some silence are important elements needed for worship.
4. It is not a service, but ordering ourselves to God's service that is important.

### **TIME**

1. Stick to announced beginning and ending times of worship services.
2. It is important to extend the meeting time if one feels led to do so.
3. All time is God's time. A sense of timelessness is important.
4. Gather whenever and as long as you need to in order to accomplish the task.

### **PRAYER**

1. Words express poetic praise; we ask for knowledge and guidance.
2. Let words and feelings evoke God's presence in this moment.
3. Empty the mind of distractions and simply BE in the presence of the Holy.
4. My life and my work are my prayer.

### **MUSIC**

1. Music and lyrics express praise to God and belief about God.
2. Singing warms and unites us and expresses the soul's deepest heart.
3. Chant and tone bring the soul to quietness and union with God.
4. Songs can mobilize and inspire to greater effort and dedication.

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<sup>28</sup> Ware, Corrine,; Discover Your Spiritual Type, A Guide to Individual and Congregational Growth; Alban Institute, 2000.

## PREACHING

1. The Word of God, rightly proclaimed, is the centerpiece of worship.
2. The gospel movingly preached is the power of God to change lives.
3. Proclamation is heard when the Spirit of God speaks to the inward heart.
4. What we do is our “preaching” and speaks louder than anything we say.

## EMPHASIS

1. A central purpose is that we fulfill our vocation (calling) in the world.
2. A central purpose is that we learn to walk in holiness with the Lord.
3. A central purpose is that we be one with the creator.
4. A central purpose is that we obey God’s will completely.

## SUPPORT OF CAUSES

1. Support seminaries, publishing houses, scholarship, preaching to others.
2. Support evangelism, missions, spreading the word on television and radio.
3. Support places of retreat, spiritual direction, liturgical reform.
4. Support political action to establish justice in society and its institutions.

## CRITICISM

1. Sometimes we (I) are said to be too intellectual, dogmatic, and “dry.”
2. Sometimes we (I) are said to be too emotional, dogmatic, and anti-intellectual.
3. Sometimes we (I) are said to be escaping from the world and are not realistic.
4. Sometimes we (I) are said to have tunnel vision and are too moralistic.

## DOMINATING THEMES

1. Discernment, discipline, knowledge, order, grace, justification.
2. Love, conversion, witness, spontaneity, sanctification.
3. Poverty, humility, wisdom, letting go, transcendence.
4. Simplicity, purity of heart, action, temperance, obedience, martyrdom.

## MEMBERSHIP CRITERIA

(What you or a congregation believes is necessary)

1. Assent to doctrine, baptism, and endorsement by group.
2. A personal inward experience of God; Baptism; public declaration.
3. All who face Godward are incorporated in the Holy.
4. Solidarity with humankind is membership in God’s kingdom.

## RITUAL AND LITURGY

1. Ritual and liturgy evoke memory and presence, teaching traditional truths.
2. Liturgy and ritual ceremonies are not of great importance.
3. Ritual and liturgy are ways in which God becomes present to us.
4. Ritual and liturgy are one way we make statements about inner conviction

## CONCEPT OF GOD

1. God is revealed in scripture, sacrament, and in Jesus Christ and his cross.
2. I can feel that God is real and that Christ lives in my heart.
3. God is mystery and can be grasped for but not completely known.
4. We participate in the mystery of God when we become co-creators with God in the world.

(Count the number of selections for:

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_)

Worship is how we express our love, adoration, admiration, and wonder at God's presence. The Christian breathes in God's goodness and exhales worship.

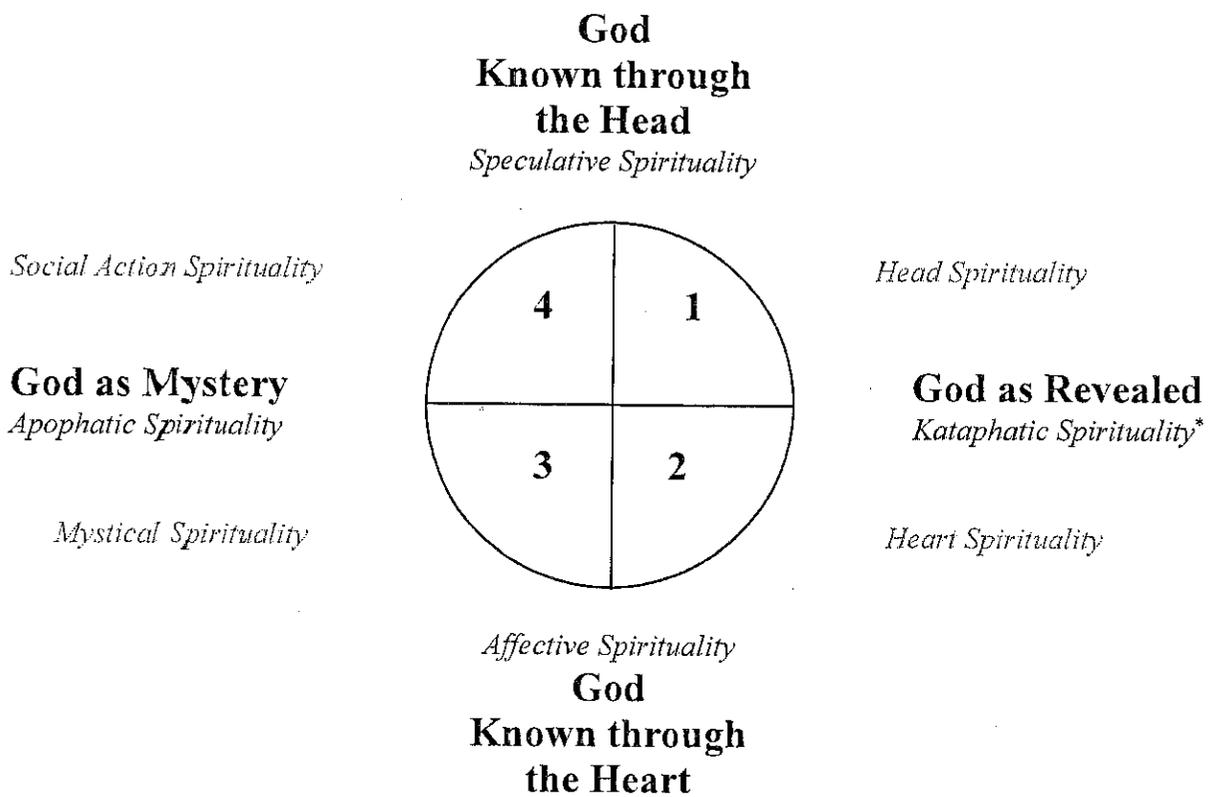
For a lot of the church, worship has become synonymous with singing—but that's just one way that worship expresses itself. True worship happens when our entire life becomes a declaration of trust in God's incredible mercy.

Paul expressed this very idea when he said, "I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship." (Rom. 12:1)

# The Spirituality Wheel©

A Spiritual Type Selector

Corinne D. Ware, D. Min.



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\* Apophatic, or negative spirituality stresses interiority, imagelessness and wordlessness. Kataphatic, or positive spirituality is image-driven and uses analogies to speak of God



## Spiritual Type Explained

### **Type 1 (Head Spirituality) - Danger is Rationalism – Seminary professors, theologians, teachers**

- This is an intellectual “thinking” spirituality that believes strongly in the knowability of God
- It favors the concrete (what it can see, touch and imagine)
- It tends to mistrust mystery and minimize emotions
- This style produces theological reflection and precision in thinking and communication
- People attracted to this form of spirituality tend to be rational and logical, valuing precision in their thinking and speech
- Content is of primary importance to these people
- Faith is belief in certain things
- Congruence of thought, and thought and action, are important
- Tend to look to the sermon and scriptures for spiritual guidance
- Tend to be people of the Word and people of words
- Prayer tends to be language or word-based
- Spiritual danger is rationalism – an over intellectualization of one’s spiritual life with a consequent loss of feeling and inner conviction
  - Includes Disciple classes, Christian Believer.

### **Type 2 (Heart Spirituality) – Danger is Emotionalism – Billy Graham, the image is The ceiling of the Sistine Chapel with the hand of God reaching for the hand of humankind.**

- Here God is still understood to be knowable, but more through the heart than the head
- If God is love, assumption is that he must be known through love, not simply known through ideas
- Spirituality is not, therefore, a head trip – it’s all heart
- Theology still important and Scriptures seen to be the source of our knowing of God
- But our response to knowing God is expected to involve heart, not just head
- Result is a more charismatic spirituality whose aim is to achieve holiness of life
- Personal holiness is the goal of spirituality
- Prayer is made with words but words may be used less formally and prayer is often extemporaneous, spontaneous and even exuberant
- Of primary importance is experience
- Spiritual danger is excessive emotionalism and the belief that emotion is the test of the validity of a person’s spiritual experience
- Another danger is an exclusive spirituality that results in an “us against the world” mentality that fails to recognize the spiritual experience of those in other spiritual traditions
  - Includes Walk to Emmaus, Mega Worship Events, Discipleship retreats, just for fun retreats, mission trips that are evangelistic in nature, Financial Peace study...

**Type 3 (Mystical Spirituality) – Danger is Reclusivity. Might include: Julian of Norwich, Anthony de Mello, Thomas Merton, Teresa of Avila, Hildegard of Bingen.**

- This is a mystical spirituality that emphasizes the mystery of faith and the ultimate un-knowability of God
- Emphasizes that our thoughts about God are always imperfect reflections as God is “wholly other”, unnameable, beyond our comprehension and containment
- Emphasizes hearing from God over speaking to him
- Goal of spirituality is understood as union with God
- People attracted to this type of spirituality are often contemplative and intuitive, tending to be focused on an inner world that is as real to them as the external one
- Renewal of the inner life is at the core of their understanding of spirituality
- Emphasize the process of spirituality (favorite metaphor of the journey)
- Spiritual danger is reclusivity – an exaggerated retreat from reality and from interaction with the world, associated with passivity
  - Included Labyrinth, Taize, spiritual retreats, Companions in Christ, Healing Service...

**Type 4 (Social Justice Spirituality) – Danger is Moralism. Might include John Wesley, Jeremiah, Martin Luther King, Jr.**

- Mystical experience is here coupled with an intellectual mode of gathering data
- Result is an active visionary who is single-minded with a deeply focused, almost crusading, type of spirituality
- People of this type often minimize importance (or value) of denominational affiliation (or even affiliation with organized religion)
- Goal is simply to obey God and in so doing, transform society by contributing to the establishment of God’s Kingdom
- These people equate prayer and theology with action
- They have strong vision and ideals, but are not content to live with ideas – ideas always translate into action
- Spiritual danger lies in a moralistic and unrelenting tunnel-vision that excludes or judges others who do not share their passion
  - Includes: Mission Building trips, building Habitat Houses, one-week studies, Support groups for children, youth or adults (in grief or transition), ESL Classes...

## Neighboring<sup>29</sup>

Genesis 1: 27

God created humanity in God's own image, in the divine image God created them...

Matt 22: 37-39

He replied, *"You must love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your being, and with all your mind. This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: You must love your neighbor as you love yourself."*

Neighboring is opening yourself to speaking to people you don't know to establish relationships with those that live around you, work around you, or just happen to be physically or spiritually in the space around you. As you meet people and share conversations, learning names and a little about "the people in your neighborhood" you can ask God: where is the divine spark in this one? What was in your heart when you called this person into being? Neighboring invites us to listen to the Spirit as we share time with neighbors on front porches or in driveway moments or in the checkout line, to listen for what gifts this person brings to the community. And as stories are shared and gifts are discovered, neighboring invites us to connect neighbors to each other – to introduce people with similar or complementary gifts or interests to each other and release the outcome of this connection to the work of the Holy Spirit.

An important word of caution: the practice of neighboring is a practice of opening your awareness to the presence of beloved and unique creations of God all around you. This practice is not a trendy technique to fill your worship service up with new people next week– it is a slow work of listening and chatting and sharing stories and cups of sugar. Developing human relationships is an inherent good – and knowing more of and about the people around you will open your heart up to what stories and hopes and worries are at work in your community. The work of neighboring is not sales – the only thing you are looking for is to build relationships and pay attention to the Spirit. If the Spirit has ministry for you to do among the neighbors, you will be open to it, but your orientation must be to listen and to serve. Some tips for getting started:

- Hold a little extra time in your schedule for stopping and talking with people you see out in your neighborhood while you do whatever you usually do. Maybe it's walking the dog or stopping to speak to the neighbor who is always working in their yard. Don't just hurry away, but ask an open ended question or two and really listen to what they share.
- Learn your neighbors' names and enough about them to know how to pray for them. Then pray for them daily.
- Spend some time at the local gathering spot. Maybe it's the Waffle House, the Bojangles, the coffee shop, or the local ballfield. Just be present and chat with people. If you don't know how to start a conversation with someone new, you can always say "Hi. My name is \_\_\_\_\_ and I'm not sure we've had a chance to meet yet."

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<sup>29</sup> Anjie and Andy Woodworth. "based on the teaching of Matthew Johnson, Neighborhood Animator at SoCe Life"

Some resources to learn more:

- Check out [neighboringmovement.org](http://neighboringmovement.org) to learn more about the ministry and work of neighboring that's happening through SoCe Life in Wichita, KS. You can sign up for a weekly neighboring tip as well!
- Read [The Art of Neighboring: Building Genuine Relationships Right Outside Your Door](#) by Jay Pathak & Dave Runyon.

Don't ask what the world needs.  
Ask what makes you come alive,  
and go do it. Because what the  
world needs is people who have  
come alive.

Community cannot for long feed  
on itself; it can only flourish with  
the coming of others from  
beyond, their unknown and  
undiscovered brothers.

Howard Thurmond 1899-1981

## Care of the Earth

A relationship with God's creation and a ministry of caring for and healing the earth are integral to what it means to be a United Methodist.

The following is an excerpt from the *Social Principles: The Natural World*:

"All creation is the Lord's, and we are responsible for the ways in which we use and abuse it. Water, air, soil, minerals, energy resources, plants, animal life, and space are to be valued and conserved because they are God's creation and not solely because they are useful to human beings. God has granted us stewardship of creation. We should meet these stewardship duties through acts of loving care and respect."<sup>30</sup>

From The Book of Discipline:<sup>31</sup> Economic, political, social, and technological developments have increased our human numbers, and lengthened and enriched our lives. However, these developments have led to regional defoliation, dramatic extinction of species, massive human suffering, overpopulation, and misuse and overconsumption of natural and nonrenewable resources, particularly by industrialized societies. This continued course of action jeopardizes the natural heritage that God has entrusted to all generations. Therefore, let us recognize the responsibility of the church and its members to place a high priority on changes in economic, political, social, and technological lifestyles to support a more ecologically equitable and sustainable world leading to a higher quality of life for all of God's creation.

### Water, Air, Soil, Minerals, Plants

We support and encourage social policies that serve to reduce and control the creation of industrial byproducts and waste; facilitate the safe processing and disposal of toxic and nuclear waste and move toward the elimination of both; encourage reduction of municipal waste; provide for appropriate recycling and disposal of municipal waste; and assist the cleanup of polluted air, water, and soil. We call for the preservation of old-growth forests and other irreplaceable natural treasures, as well as preservation of endangered plant species. We support measures designed to maintain and restore natural ecosystems. We support policies that develop alternatives to chemicals used for growing, processing, and preserving food, and we strongly urge adequate research into their effects upon God's creation prior to utilization. We urge development of international agreements concerning equitable utilization of the world's resources for human benefit so long as the integrity of the earth is maintained. We are deeply concerned about the privatization of water resources, the bottling of water to be sold as a commodity for profit, and the resources that go into packaging bottled water. We urge all municipalities and other governmental organizations to develop processes for determining sustainability of water

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<sup>30</sup> From *Social Principles: The Natural World in The Book of Discipline of The United Methodist Church*. © 2016 by The United Methodist Publishing House.

<sup>31</sup> From *The Book of Discipline of The United Methodist Church - 2016*. Copyright 2016 by The United Methodist Publishing House.

resources and to determine the environmental, economic, and social consequences of privatization of water resources prior to the licensing and approval thereof.

### Energy Resources Utilization

The whole earth is God's good creation and as such has inherent value. We are aware that the current utilization of energy resources threatens this creation at its very foundation. As members of The United Methodist Church we are committed to approaching creation, energy production, and especially creation's resources in a responsible, careful and economic way. We call upon all to take measures to save energy. Everybody should adapt his or her lifestyle to the average consumption of energy that respects the limits of the planet earth. We encourage persons to limit CO2 emissions toward the goal of one ton per person annually. We strongly advocate for the priority of the development of renewable energies. The deposits of carbon, oil, and gas resources are limited and their continuous utilization accelerates global warming. The use of nuclear power is no solution for avoiding CO2 emissions. Nuclear power plants are vulnerable, unsafe, and potential health risks. A safe, permanent storage of nuclear waste cannot be guaranteed. It is therefore not responsible to future generations to operate them. The production of agricultural fuels and the use of biomass plants rank lower than the provision of safe food supplies and the continued existence for small farming businesses.

### Animal Life

We support regulations that protect and conserve the life and health of animals, including those ensuring the humane treatment of pets, domesticated animals, animals used in research, wildlife, and the painless slaughtering of meat animals, fish, and fowl. We recognize unmanaged and managed commercial, multinational, and corporate exploitation of wildlife and the destruction of the ecosystems on which they depend threatens the balance of natural systems, compromises biodiversity, reduces resilience, and threatens ecosystem services. We encourage commitment to effective implementation of national and international governmental and business regulations and guidelines for the conservation of all animal species with particular support to safeguard those threatened with extinction.

### Global Climate Stewardship

We acknowledge the global impact of humanity's disregard for God's creation. Rampant industrialization and the corresponding increase in the use of fossil fuels have led to a buildup of pollutants in the earth's atmosphere. These "greenhouse gas" emissions threaten to alter dramatically the earth's climate for generations to come with severe environmental, economic, and social implications. The adverse impacts of global climate change disproportionately affect individuals and nations least responsible for the emissions. We therefore support efforts of all governments to require mandatory reductions in greenhouse gas emissions and call on individuals, congregations, businesses, industries, and communities to reduce their emissions.

### Space

The universe, known and unknown, is the creation of God and is due the respect we are called to give the earth. We therefore reject any nation's efforts to weaponize space and urge that all nations pursue the peaceful and collaborative development of space technologies and of outer space itself.

## Science and Technology

We recognize science as a legitimate interpretation of God's natural world. We affirm the validity of the claims of science in describing the natural world and in determining what is scientific. We preclude science from making authoritative claims about theological issues and theology from making authoritative claims about scientific issues. We find that science's descriptions of cosmological, geological, and biological evolution are not in conflict with theology. We recognize medical, technical, and scientific technologies as legitimate uses of God's natural world when such use enhances human life and enables all of God's children to develop their God-given creative potential without violating our ethical convictions about the relationship of humanity to the natural world. We reexamine our ethical convictions as our understanding of the natural world increases. We find that as science expands human understanding of the natural world, our understanding of the mysteries of God's creation and word are enhanced.

In acknowledging the important roles of science and technology, however, we also believe that theological understandings of human experience are crucial to a full understanding of the place of humanity in the universe. Science and theology are complementary rather than mutually incompatible. We therefore encourage dialogue between the scientific and theological communities and seek the kind of participation that will enable humanity to sustain life on earth and, by God's grace, increase the quality of our common lives together.

## Food Safety

We support policies that protect the food supply and that ensure the public's right to know the content of the foods they are eating. We call for rigorous inspections and controls on the biological safety of all foodstuffs intended for human consumption. We urge independent testing for chemical residues in food, and the removal from the market of foods contaminated with potentially hazardous levels of pesticides, herbicides, or fungicides; drug residues from animal antibiotics, steroids, or hormones; contaminants due to pollution that are carried by air, soil, or water from incinerator plants or other industrial operations. We call for clear labeling of all processed, genetically created, or genetically altered foods, with premarket safety testing required. We oppose weakening the standards for organic foods. We call for policies that encourage and support a gradual transition to sustainable and organic agriculture.

## Food Justice

We support policies that increase access to quality food, particularly for those with the fewest resources. We affirm local, sustainable, and small-scale agriculture opportunities that allow communities to feed themselves. We decry policies that make food inaccessible to the communities where it is grown and the farmworkers involved in its growth.

## Hospitality<sup>32</sup>

Hospitality is a way of loving our neighbor in the same way God has loved us. It begins with God. Hospitality creates a safe, open space where a friend or stranger can enter and experience the welcoming spirit of Christ in another. Parker Palmer describes hospitality as a way of “receiving each other, our struggles, our newborn ideas with openness and care. It means creating an ethos in which the community of truth can be form.”

The early church shaped their life together around the practice of hospitality. In Acts 2: 46-47 we are reminded, “They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people”. Our world desperately needs safe people and safe places. Hospitality is one way we become the presence the presence of God.

Hospitality is not about impressing others with our homes or cooking. It is not just for women. Hospitality at its core is offering the welcome of Jesus to any and all.

“Our hospitality is rooted and grounded in God’s hospitality to us in Christ. Until we know this love deep in the core of our hearts, we will have neither courage nor trust to share hospitality with others in more than superficial ways. Christian hospitality is a risk taken in faith. It is an act of sacrificial joy offered in the full light of the risen Christ, a light that transforms our perspective on everything.

As we learn to receive God’s hospitality to us, we will become more hospitable to God, to each other, and to our fellow creatures. This will make us a different kind of community. Others will see something enticing in us. Perhaps they will even say ‘See how they love one another!’”<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> Calhoun, Adele, A., *Spiritual Disciplines Handbook*, p 161-163.

<sup>33</sup> Thompson, Marjorie, *Soul Feast*, p 143.

## The Examen

The examen is a prayer practice of questioning. It is a regular, structured way of attending to life. It is a searching for the constant, a consistent awareness of living so that we are living more in rhythm with God. Early in the morning, the pilgrim remembers the subject of examination and resolves to attend carefully to that issue. After the noon meal, there is a formal prayer time that begins with an awareness of one's desires—the indicator of the condition of the heart. Ignatius suggests that during this time, one should focus on the consciousness of how one has maintained or separated the connection with God, and on the desire to prevent any future separation. The prayer is then repeated after supper, reviewing the afternoon hours.

Ignatius' strategies seem simple enough. Becoming aware of a habit and being conscious of the habit will speed the process. Our attempts grow cumulatively as we deal with the habit or desired change.

The following outline, developed by Timothy Gallagher, is based on *The Spiritual Exercises* (no. 43).<sup>34</sup> Though this is a process the pilgrim would use during the period of time of the exercises, the examen can be consistently prayed as a daily spiritual discipline. When it is used daily, often the prayer is prayed only at the conclusion of the day.

Transition: I become aware of the love with which God looks upon me as I begin this examen.  
Step one: Gratitude. I note the gifts that God's love has given me this day, and I give thanks to God for them.

Step two: Petition. I ask God for an insight and strength that will make this examen a work of grace, fruitful beyond my human capacity.

Step three: Review. With God, I review the day. I look at the stirrings in my heart and the thought that God has given me this day. I look also for those that have not been of God. I review my choices in response to both, and throughout the day in general.

Step four: Forgiveness. I ask for the healing touch of the forgiving God who, with love for me, removes my burdens.

Step Five: Renewal. I look to the day with God and plan to live it in accord with God's loving desire for my life.

Transition: Aware of God's presence with me, I prayerfully conclude the examen.

The conscious examen is not about good or bad actions, but about how God is moving me—in other words, a refined consciousness. The focus is not on me, rather it is on God and how I respond to God's loving initiative. What are the implications of my unique gifts? What do my personality, strengths and weaknesses, likes and dislikes, choices and dilemmas tell me about God's movements in my life? The examen makes me more aware of my inner movements and which movements are spirit-led or inspired. The examen fosters the realization that the present moment, ordinary as it may be, is the fruit of past choices and leads to future ones. The examen also helps us pay attention to how our choices impel us toward necessary consequences, perhaps taking us out of our comfort zone. It moves from a superficial survey of what happened in a day,

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<sup>34</sup> Timothy M. Gallagher, O.M.V., *The Examen Prayer: Ignatian Wisdom for Our Lives Today* (New York: Crossroad, 2006), 25.

to a deeper sense of patterns in one's life. The first step, noticing, needs to be followed by analysis, judgment, and choosing, for as one sees, one judges and acts. The goal of the examen is to develop a discerning heart throughout all of life, finding God in all things. My life moves from "I" toward "we." As the examen is used on a daily basis, a simplified praying of questions can move us into deeper relationship and consciousness. I have found that the simple act of lighting a candle, separates the space from ordinary to special and then I am more quickly moved to prayer.

Where did I meet God today? Where did I miss God today? Or perhaps one of the following suggested by Dennis Linn and others:

For what moment today am I most grateful? For what moment today am I least grateful?

When did I give and receive the most love today? When did I give and receive the least love today?

When did I feel most alive today? When did I most feel life draining out of me?

When today did I have the greatest sense of belonging to myself, others, God and the universe? When did I have the least sense of belonging? <sup>35</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> Dennis Linn, Sheila Fabricant Linn, and Matthew Linn, *Sleeping With Bread: Holding What Gives You Life* (New York: Paulist Press, 1995), 7.

## **Fasting**

Fasting is probably the least practiced of the Wesley's means of grace. Yet it is a discipline widely followed throughout scripture, particularly at times of decision making and struggle. (See Esther 4, Luke 4, Daniel 10, for example).

Jesus assumes that followers practice fasting (Matt. 6:16-18). Fasting's purpose is to help us focus on God. John Wesley stated, "First, let it [fasting] be done unto the Lord with our eye singly fixed on Him. Let our intention herein be this, and this alone, to glorify our Father which is in heaven." Fasting removes distractions that can cloud our ability to hear the word of God in our lives. Rather than weakening us, it strengthens us.

Fasting emphasizes that we are sustained "by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God" (Matt. 4:4). It reminds us from where our true strength comes. Marjorie Thompson, in her book *Soul Feast*, states:

*In a more tangible, visceral way than any other spiritual discipline, fasting reveals our excessive attachments and the assumptions that lie behind them. Food is necessary to life, but we have made it more necessary than God. How often have we neglected to remember God's presence when we would never consider neglecting to eat! Fasting brings us face to face with how we put the material world ahead of its spiritual Source.*

Some of us have health issues that prevent us from fasting, but this is not the case for most people. Take time this week to talk with God and practice some means of fasting. You may begin by skipping a meal, eating a simple meal such as beans and rice, or eliminating unnecessary, unhealthy foods for a day or the week.

### **How to Fast**

There are different types of fasting. A normal fast involves abstaining from food and liquids, except for water. A partial fast is a restriction of the diet, but not total abstention from food (eliminating unnecessary foods or eating a simple diet). An absolute fast requires eliminating both food and water.

If fasting is a new practice for you, work into it gradually. You could begin with a partial fast of 24 hours for example, going from lunch to lunch, consuming only fruit juices and water, thus missing just one supper and one breakfast. If that would be a challenge for you, consider skipping just one meal or eating only simple foods like broth, bread, beans and/or rice. Whatever practice you choose, do it weekly so that your body will adjust. Then if you feel God is calling you to do so, you can move to another stage in your fasting practice. Do not fast if you are sick, traveling or under unusual stress. If you suffer from a chronic or debilitating condition or illness, please only fast with the guidance of your doctor. Any person fasting should try to reduce their activity level while fasting.

Avoid the temptation to eat a large meal prior to a fast, or break a fast with heavy foods. Your meals prior to and ending a fast should consist of mostly fruits, vegetables, and low fat foods.

Like all spiritual disciplines, fasting should be practiced consistently for its greatest benefit. Listen for God's leading in the practice of this discipline. Use the time and energy you would normally spend in food preparation and eating for prayer. Attend to how your body's hunger parallels your spirit's hunger for God.

### **Wesley's Practice of Fasting**

For 65 years, John Wesley followed the fasting practice of the Anglican church, which included fasting on Fridays, during Lent, and a few other select holidays.

A Friday fasting practice paralleled Christ's passion. Wesley would begin his fast after supper on Thursday, in remembrance of the Last Supper and Jesus' experience in the Garden of Gethsemane. He would continue his fast into Friday, in remembrance of Jesus' crucifixion and would break his fast with tea on Friday afternoon. This timing coincided with Jesus' exclamation of "It is finished!" from the cross (as well ensure that he wouldn't miss the British practice of afternoon tea!).

Wesley was certain to ensure that his practice of fasting did not jeopardize his health. He was clear that his practice offered a period of greater devotion to prayer rather than a rejection of the needs of the body. His diary indicates that he would drink water, tea, and broth as necessary for this health during his times of fasting.

### **Fasting Beyond Food**

While many of us could greatly benefit from fasting from food, fasting from other things or habits may be equally beneficial.

It is important for us to consider what things get in the way of our relationship with God and with others. These have been called "junk habits." Do we watch too much TV? Spend too much time on the computer? Spend too much time and money shopping? During this month, identify and plan a fast from your "junk habits."

Though more difficult to pin down, one can also practice fasting from unhealthy attitudes. Do you tend to judge others (or yourself) too harshly? Do you tend to focus too much on material needs and not enough on spiritual ones? Spend some time in reflection (perhaps during a food fast) to discern what attitudes and practices inhibit your attentiveness to God's presence and leading.

In one sense, the commandment to keep the Sabbath is a commandment to a type of fasting – fasting from work, fasting from the idea that the world cannot survive without us. Sabbath provides an opportunity for us to get back in touch with God, with each other, and the natural

world. If you have gotten out of the practice of Sabbath keeping, begin by practicing Sabbath for a morning or an afternoon once a week. It does not have to be on Sunday. You can also try to have small periods of Sabbath each day. Some people find it helpful to have a “Sabbath box,” a designated place where they put their car keys, TV remotes, cell phones, etc. to symbolize the things they are going to leave behind during their time of Sabbath.<sup>36</sup>

“Be who God meant you to  
be and you will set the world  
on fire.”

Catherine of Sienna 1347-1380

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<sup>36</sup> Church Hill United Methodist Church, Norwell, MA.

## Fixed Hour Prayer or The Daily Office or The Liturgy of the Hours

*The Liturgy of the Hours*, *The Divine Office*, and *The Work of God* are all names of virtually the same thing. They are rooted in the Old Testament and the worship of the Hebrew people. The psalmist sings in Psalm 119:164, “Seven times a day I praise You,” reminding us the divine office is biblically rooted. “The practice of this continuous life of worship was so central to the Hebrews’ individual and collective life with God that four thousand years later, they were still teaching it and performing it and leaning it and perfecting it when the Messiah actually came among them,” writes Robert Benson.<sup>37</sup> For us the grace of common prayer is a knowledge that we are not alone. We are present to all who pray, in all places and in all languages.

This daily prayer that continued into the earliest Christian communities had been an intense experience—lifeblood, if you will—for the disciples, and I don’t imagine they stopped, even for a day. Throughout the scriptures, the disciples are pulling apart and pulling together for prayer. It was this sort of praying that was the most natural behavior in the world for Benedict to expect of the monks. But in his orderly fashion, Benedict taught with more detail when and how to pray. He taught this in a time of great illiteracy, so the words became a part of the monks. It provides a way of remembering God throughout the day. It is through doing this that we are reminded of God’s constant presence within and among us. Benedictine communities still gather to pray this way. Interestingly, Ignatius adamantly refused for the Jesuits priests to chant the hours; he insisted they carefully moderate their time so as not to interfere with direct training for ministry.

Those of us not living monastic life can still pray the Divine Office or an abbreviated office. “The root word office comes from the Latin word *opus*, as does offering. Liturgy literally means ‘the work of the people.’ Aha! When we pray, we are offering our work, our prayers, to God!”<sup>38</sup> Benedict really had two rules for the communities: pray always and work. Chittister writes, “There is to be no time, no thing, that absorbs us so much that we lose contact with the God of life; no stress so tension producing, no burden so complex, no work so exhausting that God is not our greatest agenda, our greatest companion, our rest and our refuge.”<sup>39</sup>

We can pray four times a day: morning, noon, evening, and night, though some contemporaries pray only the morning and evening prayer, or even one or the other. It is called an hour not because it takes an hour, but rather it usually starts on the hour with the chiming of the bell. For me, it can begin with the lighting of incense.

There are many patterns for praying the hours. Most denominational hymnals provide a pattern for morning and evening prayer, and there are countless prayer books one can purchase. I prefer a small, very simple book that I came across at an Episcopal book store in Manhattan. The book is called *Hour by Hour* and was published by Forward Movement Publications. The rituals are simple, which I really appreciate early in the morning and late at night. When I need to hear

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<sup>38</sup> Robert Benson, *In Constant Prayer* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2008), 21.

<sup>39</sup> Joan Chittister, O.S.B, *The Rule of Benedict: A Spirituality for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century* (New York, Crossroad, 2010), 121.

more words and use a bit more complicated form, I use *A Traveler's Prayer Book* that a friend who is a priest gave me. My family would tell you I have more than that. And yes, to be sure, I do. I have even made a prayer book using Macrina Wiederkehr's *Seven Sacred Pauses*.

I most prefer a simple version that begins with an opening sentence, which is often taken from the Psalms. This morning, I prayed, "This is the day that the Lord has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it," from Psalm 118 :24. I followed this with the *venite*, or a psalm of invitation, and then the *Gloria*. I then read a longer Psalm, whole or in part, and read slowly, savoring each word. One can even sing the Psalms as they were intended. A brief lesson from the New Testament is then followed by The Lord's Prayer. I then offer a collect—a collection of prayers for the people. The morning prayer then closes with a word of benediction: The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with us all evermore. Amen.

All in all, it takes less than 10 minutes. Ten minutes of offering myself to God. Ten minutes of focusing on the Lord of the universe. Ten minutes. How often do 10 minutes slip away from me? So if I pray these prayers four times a day, it is less than an hour of my day that was given to me as a gift in which I return thanks and acknowledge the Giver of Life. The other hours are a virtual replication of morning prayer. There are delicious words and prayers that I have often forgotten in my busyness. Prayers like: "Guide us waking, O Lord, and guard us sleeping; that awake we may watch with Christ, and asleep we may rest in peace." I heard it once on retreat and loved it right away—I especially love hearing it in Hebrew. Ordinary words made extraordinary—that is the essence of the hours.

When I pray the hours, I am more mindful of finding God in all things. I am more aware of my life. I think that others might know when I have been keeping the hours, because they can tell for certain when I don't! I don't keep the hours every day. I try to keep them most days and am encouraged by St. Benedict's words, "Always we begin again." It gives me hope, that in my life filled with my needs, our needs, and the needs of others, I can simply begin again to do the thing that brings it all back to focus. Chittister puts it this way:

There is nothing more important in our own list of important things to do in life than to stop at regular times, in regular ways to remember what life is really about, where it came from, why we have it, what we are to do with it, and for whom we are to live it. No matter how tired we are or how busy we are or how impossible we think it is to do it, Benedictine spirituality says, Stop. Now. A spiritual life without a regular prayer life and an integrated community consciousness is pure illusion.<sup>40</sup>

The liturgy of the hours can be practiced alone (as alone as we can be in the communion of Saints), or we can keep the hours in community. Many who have gone before advise that if we determine we are keeping the hours individually, we should tell a friend who will hold us accountable to our continued praying.

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<sup>40</sup> Chittister, 199.

## Lectio Divina

“Approaching a text for the sake of a transforming encounter with God. Listening to Scripture to develop a friendship with Christ.” These are the words of Adele Calhoun about Lectio.<sup>41</sup>

A life steeped in prayer is the desire of most clergy and yet for most, it is the first thing to go when a calendar becomes too crowded. Though the prayer takes shape in different forms, it is nonetheless a strong part of the personal and community lives of both our saints. The historical Lectio Divina is the primary avenue of prayer used today by modern Benedictines. It is also the centerpiece of the liturgy of the hours. This is prayer that can be a part of our individual lives and the community’s life. It is a practiced prayer. This prayer provides a space for us apart from the worlds’ distractions and the distractions that are within. Lectio is prayer that is regularly part of community life and work. It is a prayer that is a deep part of one’s personal life and witness—a prayer that is simple, contemplative, deep, repetitive, and centering. Though Benedict gives us Lectio, Ignatius—in more than 14 of the numbered steps of the *Exercises*—uses Lectio as a tool.

Joan Chittister writes in the forward of *Praying with the Benedictines*:

Prayer is what links the religious and the spiritual, the inner and the outer dimensions of life. Every spiritual tradition on earth forms a person in some kind of regular practice designed to focus the mind and the spirit. Regular prayer reminds us that life is punctuated by God, awash in God, encircled by God. To interrupt the day with prayer—with any centering activity that draws us beyond the present to the consciousness of eternal truth—is to remind ourselves of the timelessness of eternity. Prayer and regular spiritual practices serve as a link between this life and the next. They remind us of what we are doing and why we’re doing it and where our lives are going. They give us the strength of heart to sustain us on the way. When life goes dry, only the memory of God makes life bearable again. Then we remember that whatever is has purpose.<sup>42</sup>

From the *Prologue to The Rule of St. Benedict*: “This, then, is the beginning of my advice: make prayer the first step in anything worthwhile that you attempt. Persevere and do not weaken in that prayer. Pray with confidence, because God, in his love and forgiveness, has counted us as his own sons and daughters.” So why is it that modern clergy allow this thread to move from their daily lives?

Benedict gave us the practice of Lectio Divina, Holy Reading. It is based on the conviction that prayer is rooted in scripture. Traditionally, the movements are:

### Sacred Reading – Lectio

This first element refers to the gathering of the Scripture and securing of the word that will be God’s word to and for us. Read the passage slowly, aloud if possible. Stay with words or phrases that speak to your heart. Listen to the word with your heart and be willing to stay with portions of the text that address you in a special way. Read it again out loud.

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<sup>41</sup> Calhoun, Adele A; *Spiritual Disciplines Handbook* (IVP Books,2015), p 333.

<sup>42</sup> Gueric DeBona, O.S.B.; *Praying With the Benedictines: A Window on the Cloister* (New York: Paulist Press, 2007), vii.

### Sacred Meditation – Meditatio – Ruminatio

This is where we allow the word to break open and shape us. Meditation is the mulling of the word over and over until it permeates our soul. Allow the scripture passage to interact with your memories, hopes, and concerns.

### Sacred Silence – Silencia

Enter into a time of silence, a time of sacred listening to the voice of the Holy.

### Sacred Prayer – Oratio

This is our response to the ongoing meditation. It is appropriate to journal, offer prayers of thanksgiving, praise, petition, anger, hope, despair, and fear. Give God your deepest longings and concerns. Allow dialogue to take place as you respond to God who already addressed you through the inspired word.

### Sacred Being – Contemplatio

When you are ready, simply rest—abide—silently in the presence of God without words.

As we listen to the Word (lectio), a word, a phrase, or a sentence may well strike us. Let it reverberate within, opening and expanding, forming and shaping, (meditation), listening to God in the silence (silencio), calling forth varied responses (oratio), until finally we simply rest in the reality to which it all leads (contemplation). Again, I find the process more satisfying when I journal what I have heard and learned.

Contemporary words for the Lectio have been provided by Eugene Peterson: read, think, pray, and live.<sup>43</sup> This is not a weakening of the discipline, but a simplifying of the language. Each element has a purpose, but the elements weave and warp into each other creating a whole practice. It is a gentler way for modern clergy to begin the discipline. I have found that once in the practice, the clergy will move toward the more classical form of holy reading. Following is Peterson's outline for reading taken from the Introduction to *The Message*.

Read: Thoughtfully, leisurely faithfully, aloud, slowly.

Think: Peterson writes, "Each subtle, significant, powerful word of Scripture is meant for you. One word may speak today and another tomorrow...so listen."<sup>44</sup> (Remember, "listen" is the very first word that Benedict writes in the Rule!)

Pray: Rest in God. Sit, journal, pray aloud, pray silent, pray with the scripture, dance, listen.

Live: Unless we live in God's word, we miss the whole point.

### Group Lectio Divina or Holy Reading of Scripture

1. Begin with a few moments of silent prayer.
2. Have someone read the scripture slowly. Luke 10:25-37.
3. Each member should think about a word or phrase that caught their attention.
4. Ask another member of the group to read the scripture slowly...listen deeply.
5. Take turns sharing that word or phrase.

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<sup>43</sup> Eugene Peterson, *The Message// Remix: Solo* (Colorado Springs: NavPress, 2007), Introduction to Solo.

6. Read the scripture again, slowly.
7. Each member makes an “I” statement about the phrase that spoke to them. (there should be no teaching or elaborating on this and others should not respond to the I statement)
8. Have someone else read the scripture again slowly.
9. Each member should reflect on what the scripture is asking them to do or change in their life. When the group is ready, each member should share. This should also begin with an “I” statement. Others should not comment. It is ok to pass if it feels too risky or personal to share.
10. A final reading of the scripture should take place.
11. Pray for each other. When the group is ready, stand, hold hands, prayer one at a time for the person on the right. It can be a spoken prayer or silent prayer. Be sure to ask for the person’s name if you are unsure. When your prayer is over, squeeze the person’s hand so they will know it is their turn.
12. When all have finished, we will share collectively.

## Visio Divina

“Holy Seeing” is a way to pray with the eyes. For centuries, the church has used icons, the cross, stained glass, mosaics, art and statues as invitations to pray with the eyes.

Find a piece of art to use. Search online for famous paintings – most of the great masters painted religious scenes (Rembrandt, Michelangelo, etc). Or, find a stained glass window that is meaningful to you. If the art piece depicts a scene from the Bible, take a few minutes to read the passage before you begin.

**1) Prepare:** Close your eyes, breathe, clear your mind, and ask God to enter into this time of prayer with you. Ask God to speak to you through this image.

**2) Lectio (read):** Open your eyes and scan the image. Note what draws your interest, but continue to scan the whole image. Close and rest your eyes a minute.

**3) Mediatio (meditate):** Open your eyes and let your eyes be led. Focus on just the part of the image that caught your eyes and name it. Close your eyes, seeing that piece of the image in your mind.

**4) Oratio (pray):** Open your eyes and look again at the piece of the image that caught your eye. Allow it to bring forth a word, image, or emotion. Close and rest your eyes.

**5) Contemplatio (contemplation):** Open your eyes and gaze at the whole image. What is God speaking to you today through this image? How will you respond to Him? Spend time processing that with God. Pray or journal about it.

You might begin with Rembrandt’s “[The Storm on the Sea of Galilee.](#)” Journal your experience. If you need help experiencing Visio Divina with this painting, follow this [Guided Visio Divina at SoulShepherding.org.](#)

## Spoken Word<sup>45</sup>

Spoken word poetry could be described as a genre-bending iteration of the literary arts. Rooted in an oral performance tradition, it is often experienced as part poetry and part dramatic monologue - containing elements of hip-hop and storytelling, jazz, rock, and blues, as well as, gospel and folk music. It also exhibits traditional elements of poetry such as the elaborate use of metaphors, repetition and rhyme, and improvisational performance. Grounded in contemplative musings that explore issues such as spirituality and politics, race and socio-economics, and interpersonal relationships with both humanity and the Divine, spoken word poetry has a resonance that posits it as a modern-day iteration of the Psalms. And through these modern-day musings, humanity's timeless wrestling with ideals related to salvation, good and evil, and human thriving can be experienced through contemporary voices.

Spoken word poets infuse themes of social justice, equality, concern for political and economic conditions, and spirituality from a Christian perspective because, in the world of spoken word poetry, addressing these themes are part of the expectation. The work of spoken word poets – centered in a Christian orientation – finds a home in the laments, supplications, and prayers for deliverance and justice found in the Psalms. The Passion for Christ Movement (PC4M) based out of Los Angeles, California and Poets in Autumn (represented by Kingdom Entertainment of Orlando, Florida), are helping to build this genre within the genre of poetry through ministry events around the country. PC4M's international worship gathering Rhetoric,[1] a spoken word poetry and music which had over 3500 attendees in both 2014 and 2015, and Poets in Autumn's annual tours – which has evolved into an annual thirty-one city tour in the U.S. and Canada[2] – are increasing spoken word poetry's impact on music, worship, and proclamation in the church. Additionally, PC4M has leveraged social media and the internet to spread their unique brands of music, worship, and proclamation. Their official YouTube channel has garnered nearly 175,000 subscribers and the YouTube views of the poets, who are their core members, have reached well over twenty million views.[3] The impact of the diverse expressions of music, worship, and proclamation suggests the occurrence of a dynamic evolution in ways the gospel of Jesus Christ is being spread.<sup>46</sup>

As modern and traditional forms of music and worship such as praise and worship, traditional and contemporary Gospel, hymns and spirituals, contemporary Christian music and the subgenres of Gospel oriented hip-hop and spoken word poetry, fill spaces where the Christ message needs to be heard, an expanded orb of expression through music, worship, and proclamation is rising. This evolution will become even more profound within, and outside of,

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<sup>45</sup> Written by Tavares Stephens.

<sup>46</sup> [1] Kingdom Promotions. <https://www.kingdomtickets.com/poets-in-autumn>

the walls of the Church. It will continue as these genres begin to cross pollinate, fuse, and express the gospel message through music, worship, and proclamation that spreads a message about the all-encompassing hope of salvation that includes but is not limited to adoration of God, piety, justice, deliverance, equality, liberation, hope, divine healing, and divine love. For life in Christ entails stories connected to every one of these elements; and these are the stories that music, worship, and proclamation in the church are called to tell – in prophetic and life changing ways. As such, spoken word poetry will serve as another divinely oriented tool used to proclaim the life-giving and salvific story of what life in Christ offers for those who believe in and receive God's gift of grace.

## Labyrinth<sup>47</sup>



### A Brief Guide to the Labyrinth

“You show me the path of life. In your presence there is fullness of joy; in your right hand are pleasures forevermore.” Psalm 16:11

The labyrinth is an archetype, a divine imprint, found in all religious traditions in various forms around the world. This labyrinth is a replica of the one in the floor of Chartres Cathedral built around 1220 outside of Paris, France.

The labyrinth is an ancient prayer tool...a sacred path if you will. Some think of it as a holy place, like waiting in God’s heart.

The labyrinth pattern has one concentric, circular path with no dead ends. It is made of twelve concentric circles enclosing eleven circuits. A single path leads a circuitous route through the eleven circuits, turning seven times in each quadrant plus six times at the entrance paths for a total of thirty-four turns. The center contains six petals. There are ten back-to-back turns, often called “labryses” because of their resemblance to the double-headed as of ancient Minoan culture. The location of the labryses on the horizontal and vertical axes gives a cruciform appearance to the labyrinth. Around the perimeter are 113 lunations, so called because they form a lunar calendar used to determine the date of Easter.

When walking our canvas labyrinth the following guidelines may be helpful to you:

- Take off your shoes and put on the white sox found in the basket.
- Take a moment to mentally prepare yourself to enter the labyrinth. Then find the entrance, pause a moment and enter.
- Find the pace your body wants to go by paying attention to your breath and focusing on the path.
- There is no right or wrong way to walk the labyrinth. Do what feels natural.
- Experience your experience by observing and welcoming whoever comes to you. Be prepared for the labyrinth to both touch your sorrows and release your joys.
- Enjoy other people on the labyrinth as part of your own journey.
- If you become confused or lost, begin again at any place you choose.
- There are 3 moves to the walk – moving inward, centering, and moving outward: each may have a different meaning for you.

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<sup>47</sup> The following handouts on the Labyrinth were given to me by The Rev. Beth Cook, now deceased. Beth did much to share her love the labyrinth with all who were willing to learn.

- You may stop to rest or to pray on the labyrns; when you reach the center, you may stay there for as long as you like.
- You may begin or end by walking around the circumference of the labyrinth in any direction as many times as you wish, or you may walk the labyrinth again.
- When you are finished, pause to reflect on or make some notes about your walk and give thanks for it.
- Everything that happens on a labyrinth can be seen as a metaphor for your life.

Adapted from Rev. Dr. Canon Lauren Artress

## **Commonly Asked Questions About the Labyrinth**

### **What is a labyrinth?**

The labyrinth is a pattern, usually in the form of a circle. There is a path meandering through the circle that takes you to the center.

### **Is this a pagan symbol?**

The labyrinth is found in many faith traditions across history. Examples include those found on the island of Crete, in Gothic cathedrals, in China, in Native American cultures, in Egypt, in Africa and all across Europe.

### **Does walking the labyrinth “heal”?**

Walking the labyrinth allows great self-clarity. It helps you know what to do next in your own healing process. Psycho-spiritual healing does happen on the labyrinth.

### **Where is Jesus in the labyrinth?**

Jesus dwells within you. You walk with Jesus on the path. You often find Jesus in the center of the labyrinth.

### **Is this experience “new age”?**

As a spiritual tool, our labyrinth dates back to the Middle Ages. It speaks to the present age also because it is an universal, inclusive tool. Other labyrinths date back even further in time. Remember, those practicing “new age” spirituality are usually very sincere spiritual seekers. Try not to be judgmental.

### **What if I get lost?**

You can't get lost in a labyrinth. If you lose your way you will either return to the center or you will return to the entrance.

### **I walked the labyrinth and nothing happened. What did I do wrong?**

You received something. Walk the labyrinth again or take time to reflect on your experience. It may be several days before you begin to understand your experience.

### **What does the labyrinth symbolize?**

The labyrinth symbolizes the journey to the center or to self, the life journey or the path of life, or the spiritual journey – our walk with God. It is also said to represent the ongoing cycle of birth, life, death, rebirth and the process of transformation and healing.

### **Why are you using a labyrinth?**

The labyrinth facilitates movement. You can face whatever YOU need to face there. It is not doctrinal or dogmatic. The only dogma you will meet in the labyrinth is your own.

### **What is the future of labyrinths?**

The labyrinth is re-entering our collective conscious. Hopefully, it will be a tool for global healing, spiritual renewal and community building.

## Walking the Labyrinth by Hand

Use your finger or a pen to follow the pathway from the entrance into the center and back out. Notice what you perceive as you experience the labyrinth in this way.

### Fingering

Follow the pathway of the labyrinth with each of your fingers on the hand you use most naturally. Then follow the pathway with each of the fingers on the other hand.

### Coloring

Using crayons, markers or colored pencils, color a paper labyrinth. Do not feel any compulsion to stay within the lines! Take as much time as you need using as many colors as you desire. Use a custom-designed labyrinth as a visual aid for prayer, or in any other way your creativity suggests.

### Walking and resting

Walk the labyrinth pathway with your fingers. When your fingers reach the center, let your body assume a posture that feels relaxing. Rest for at least five minutes; twenty is much more beneficial. Relish each moment of relaxation. Enjoy the feelings of renewal which come. When you are ready, walk the labyrinth path out with your fingers.

### Tuning In

Choose a song, hymn or tune which is particularly meaningful to you. Sing it or hum it over and over as you walk the labyrinth. Let it inform and shape your reality.

### Interceding for Others

Bring into your consciousness people for whom you would like to pray. At the mouth of the labyrinth name them, one by one, placing their needs into divine care. Walk the labyrinth paying attention to the longings on their behalf which fill your heart. Notice how your understanding, hopes, and feelings shift and develop. When you return to the mouth of the labyrinth, name them once more. Express gratitude for divine care.

### Walking Into Answers

At the threshold of the labyrinth embrace the words, "This is my opportunity." Ask yourself, "Do I have the courage to move on?" Step into the answer.

### When You Have Time

Enter the labyrinth. Whenever you feel you would like to take a moment to reflect, rest, or pray, stop and do so. When you are ready continue on your way. When you feel you would like to reflect, or pray, or rest more, stop and do so. Continue this process all the way in and out of the labyrinth.



Finger Labyrinth

## **Other Disciplines**

We have scratched the surface with our definitions of spiritual discipline, what Wesley would call means of grace. When we practice these disciplines, we place our self on the path to experience the life deepening transformation that can happen with regular practice. Some disciplines you might want to further experience include:

Sabbath Keeping  
Developing a Rule of Life  
The practice of Spiritual Direction  
Holy Communion  
Celebration  
Retreat  
Mentoring  
Sobriety  
Silence  
Iconography  
Journaling  
Breath Prayer  
Centering Prayer  
Welcoming Prayer  
Solitude

The list is endless. My prayer is that as you journey, you will find new ways of being present with God who desires unhurried alone time with each of us.

May you seek the God who is seeking you.

## Resource List

Thompson, Marjorie J.; *Soul Feast, An Invitation to the Christian Spiritual Life*; Westminster John Knox Press, 2005.

Calhoun, Adele A.; *Spiritual Disciplines Handbook, Practices that Transform Us*; IVP Books, 2005.

Blythe, Teresa A.; *50 Ways to Pray, Practices from Many Traditions and Times*; Abingdon Press, 2006.

Ware, Corrine; *Discover your Spiritual Type, A Guide to Individual and Congregational Growth*; Alban Institute, 2000.

Ellison 11, Gregory C.; *Fearless Dialogues, A New Movement for Justice*; Westminster John Knox Press, 2017.

Shepard, Ellen; *A River in the Desert*, Abingdon, 2001.

Claiborne, Shane, Jonathan Wilson-Hartgrove and Enuma Okoro. *Common Prayer: A Liturgy for Ordinary Radicals*, Zondervan, 2010.

Foster, Richard J. *Celebration of Discipline: The Path to Spiritual Growth*, Harper Collins, 1988.

Mueller, Wayne; *Sabbath - Finding Rest, Renewal, and Delight In Our Busy Lives*, 1999.

Heschel, Rabbi Abraham Joshua; *The Sabbath*; Farrar, Straus, Giroux, 1951.

## Presenters

### in order of presentation

**The Rev. Dr. Ellen Shepard** is the senior pastor of Stone Mountain First UMC and the Director of Women, Theology and Ministry at Candler School of Theology at Emory University. She teaches in Practical Theology. Ellen has been married to Kelly for 42 years and they have three grown children and six grandchildren. An “intellectual mystic”, she loves experiencing the life of faith through the eyes of children.

**Rev. Gregory C. Ellison II, Ph.D.** is an associate Professor of Pastoral Care and Counseling at Emory University Candler School of Theology. His teaching draws primarily from his work with Fearless Dialogues, a grassroots community empowerment initiative he co-founded, that creates unique spaces for young people and community to have hard, heartfelt conversations on taboo subjects like racism, classism, and community violence. He is the author of *Cut Dead But Still Alive: Caring for African American Young Men* and *Fearless Dialogues: A New Movement for Justice*. He is an ordained Baptist minister who has served in Methodist and Presbyterian churches.

**The Rev. Anjie Woodworth & The Rev. Andy Woodworth** spend a lot of time together! They work together as co-pastors of Neighborhood Church, a new church in the Candler Park neighborhood of Atlanta, they are married to each other, and they get to be the parents to three awesome kids: Abby (9), Camron (8), and Charlie (7). It’s a good thing they really like each other. Anjie likes making crafty projects and Andy likes chasing Pokémon—someday he’ll catch them all! They love Jesus and are passionate about growing things and helping other people grow things: relationships with new people and relationships with God. Andy lives that out in gardening, too. They love meeting new people and can’t wait to meet you!

**Ms. Lahronda Little**, recent graduate of Candler School of Theology with a Master of Divinity, leads programs in spiritual formation, women's ministry, and health in church and community. In the fall, she will engage PhD studies in religion and health at the Laney Graduate School of Emory University. She is a wife and a mother of 2 handsome, adolescent boys.

**The Rev. Julie Boone** is an elder currently serving as the pastor of McKendree United Methodist Church. She is in her final year of Doctor of Ministry studies at Candler School of Theology at Emory University. Julie is married and is the mother of two young adult sons. Julie is passionate about keeping the liturgy of the hours and can often be found with her Benedictine prayer book in hand.

**The Rev. Millie Kim** is an elder serving at Second Avenue United Methodist Church in Rome. She is married and is the mother of two young children. Millie is currently pursuing her Doctor of Ministry at Wesley Theological Seminary in Washington D.C. Millie has a heart for connecting to those new to ministry.

**Mr. Tavares Stephens** will begin serving as Assistant Pastor at Saint James United Methodist Church in Alpharetta, Georgia in June of 2018. He is a former Teacher of the Year, was a recipient of Turner Broadcasting's Teacher Appreciation Award, the United Methodist Church Global Board of Higher Education Ministry Rising Senior Award, and the Candler School of Theology's John Owen Smith Award for Preaching. He will also be featured in By Faith magazine's July-August 2018 edition as a Harry Hoosier Spirit Award honoree for his diverse ways in proclaiming the gospel. He is the creator of the spoken word cd, "Lend Me Your Ear," the author of Soulfood Café, a book of poetry, and Reading Revolution, a book of biographies covering important contributions made to civilization by people of African descent. He is also the writer and producer of the Ascension Project, a gospel music project that fuses praise and worship and spoken word poetry. Tavares also co-founded of VerbalEYZE, a non-profit specializing in the professional development of youth and young adult writers and he serves as a lead animator with the ground breaking non-profit Fearless Dialogues – a group dedicated to helping those both in and outside the church grasp the ways in which ideals such as "radical hospitality" and "seeing those who are unseen" serve to promote pursuit of the greater good in human relationships. Tavares graduated with a Master of Divinity from Candler School of Theology at Emory University in May of 2018.

