

Connecting, Centering and Dwelling in the Word — A Missional Practice

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

Purpose: For various congregation teams or groups to begin their meetings by supporting one another, being aware of God's presence, and focusing on Christ's mission. Integrated in this missional practice are ways for slowing down and centering prayer on God, learning to be comfortable with silence, deepening personal relationships, and sensing God's direction in scripture. Hopefully, this missional practice (or one like it) becomes a norm for congregations to discern and live the concerns and passion of Christ.

Steps:

1. Take time to greet and listen to one another. (For example: *"Let's check in with one another. Are there any concerns or joys to share? Let's pray for one another."*)
2. The leader transitions the team to participate in a form of Centering Prayer and Dwelling in the Word. (For example: *"I will now lead you in steps to center ourselves on God's presence, for moments of silence, and reading of scripture."*)
3. The leader invites each one to be receptive to God's presence. (For example: *"Let's ready ourselves to be receptive to God's presence. Find your relaxed sitting position. This may be having both feet on the floor, hands opened on lap, head bowed or lifted, and eyes opened or closed."*)
4. The leader asks each person to offer a brief silent prayer to be open to God's presence. (For example: *"As you relax offer a quiet prayer, such as "God, I want to be fully awake to you. Empty me of inner noise and distractions. Allow me to be aware of and find rest in your presence."*)
5. The leader reminds participants that breath is a tool in centering prayer to God. (For example: *"Breath is a tool you can use in your prayer now. Use your breath to create a sense of peace and letting go into God. Starting with several deep breaths, breathe deeply, slowly, and calmly. Focus on your breathing to feel calm and centered."*)
6. Allow time for silence.
7. After a time for silence, the leader asks participants to listen or to read along silently to the scripture passage. (For example: *"The passage of scripture for us to read and hear for cultivating new understandings, ways of being and living Christ's mission is Luke 24:13-33 (NRSV). As you listen or read with me, listen to hear or feel what God may be bringing to you. Listen for or sense a word, phrase, idea or image that God may be*

drawing you to. Do not be concerned if you do not feel drawn to anything. Allow the Spirit to breathe in you. I will now read the passage of scripture followed by a silent time for meditation.”

8. After time for silence, the leader invites participants to listen to the scripture for a second time and then reads the scripture. (For example: *“As the scripture is read a second time, continue to listen for or sense a word, phrase, idea, or image that God might be leading you to explore. Do not struggle for the word, phrase, idea or image. Trust something will arise as you continue to be still and open. If it does not arise, no problem or concern. Relax and trust God’s leading. Something may emerge later when we share our personal reflections with one another. I will now read the scripture followed by time for silence to collect any thoughts or impressions.”*)
9. After time for silence, the leader invites participants to share their reflections. (For example: *“Now is our time to share personal reflections, rather than a discussion about scripture. This is a time to listen to one another and sense God’s Spirit. Remember that silence is good. No one should feel rushed or compelled to share. This is a community experience with one another and the Holy Spirit. It takes time, quiet, and one another to encounter, more fully, God and Christ’s purposes. Here’s our first question for reflection: “As you were listening to the scripture, what word, emotion, feeling, phrase, idea, or image do you sense God drawing you to?”*) When the leader senses a readiness, the leader asks a second question. (For example: *“What do you sense God is leading you to explore or to give attention to?”*)
10. The leader offers (or asks someone) a prayer of gratitude for the time shared together.

Tips for the Process: Remember, in LCM, we are encouraging all of us to slow down, to take time to know one another more deeply, and to be encountered by God and God’s purpose. We are learning new behaviors. We need to learn to not jump to complete our agendas. We need to learn to be relaxed, rather than anxious, with “not always doing something” or “saying nothing” or “not having an answer” when we meet to discern and live Christ’s mission. It is more than ok to stop, listen and be together in God’s presence, especially in our initial and formative time in LCM.