

Generously Receiving and Sharing the Invitation



Community of Christ

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A Twelve Week Study Guide

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Receive the Invitation.....	of faith as boats were sinking with an unbelievable catch of fish. In recognizing his own poverty of faith and vision he could <i>make room</i> for a life changing encounter and invitation. he would soon share with others. 6
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Share the Invitation.....	In this story and so many others Mission Begins with Encounter! It continues with a heart-pounding, exciting, and disruptive impulse to then share out of our newly found abundance with others! As we intentionally make room to receive, embody, and share Christ's peace with others we " <i>free the full capacity of Christ's mission through generosity that imitates God's generosity</i> " in all its dimensions (time, talent, treasure). Christ's mission of peace and justice is only liberated when we <i>risk something new</i> by generously sharing our lives, ministry, and resources with others!..... 20
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Each of these below:

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Receive: We receive by our willingness to risk spiritual and relational transformation—an encounter with the living Christ in relationship with one another! Jesus shared this invitation as "come."²

³ Luke 18:22

forms of the church). Share the invitation to journey together with Christ!

Essential Question: *How do I authentically invite others into a new awareness, loving community, and life changing relationship with the living Christ?*

Suggested Practices: Sharing in the Round, Holy Curiosity for the Other, Sharing My Story, Walking the Neighborhood, Third Place Ministry, Making Room

The need has never been greater to move beyond our fears, make room for Christ's peace, and extend Christ's hospitality to the stranger.

Receiving, embodying, and sharing Christ's hospitality is at the heart of creating space for others to receive Christ's invitation. Henri Nouwen in his book *Reaching Out: Three Movements of the Spiritual Life* describes the centrality of the ancient practice of hospitality (pg. 71):

“Hospitality, therefore, means primarily the creation of a free space where the stranger can enter and become a friend instead of an enemy. Hospitality is not to change people, but to offer them space where change can take place. It is not to bring men and women over to our side, but to offer them freedom not disturbed by dividing lines. It is not to lead our neighbor into a corner where there are no alternatives left, but to open a wide spectrum of options for choice and commitment.”

Although we have a tendency to think of invitation as something we do *to others*, our willingness to enter more deeply into relationships will reveal our mutual need for healing and wholeness.

CHRIST

Using This Resource

Sharing and Prayer

The following twelve explorations are designed for small group study of the three dimensions of Christ's invitation – *Receive, Embody, and Share*. Each exploration will include *Do It With and Give Thanks in the Word*, an essential element of God's Sabbath and a practice. These sessions can be utilized as a small group experience on the Sunday morning worship experience. Please plan on 60 – 90 minutes for each session.

The proposed practice each week is a central component of this experience. Commit as a group to try the practice and then come back and share what is emerging in your daily experience. Although this is designed as 12-week experience, you may use your needs and availability to create many small group in this text? experience profound joy as receive, embody, and share Christ's peace in relationship with one another and your neighbors.

Focus Thoughts:

Receiving Christ's invitation begins with our willingness to risk something new a relationship with the One who seeks to be present with us. What a marvelous possibility to encounter a love beyond words and hope beyond our greatest dreams.

A Word about Missional Practices

Missional practices are intentional and repetitive patterns of individual and community actions. They lead to encounters where God's activity and God's invitation to Christ's mission are discovered. They lead us into relationships with God, the Living Christ, and the Holy Spirit that result in relationships of healing and wholeness with others. Awareness of the deeply relational and communal nature of God leads us to new levels of generosity in our engagement and hospitality with our neighbors.

Questions for Discussion:

How am I making room daily to receive Christ's invitation to a relationship, new way of being, and new way of seeing?

Practice:

Receive the presence of Christ by observing 5 minutes of silence at morning, at midday, and in the evening.

Prayer of Sending Forth

Let us this coming

Being Known

Sharing and your prior work

Dwelling in (NRSV)

O LORD, you lead me
2 You know my thoughts
you discern my heart
3 You search me and are acquainted with me
4 Even before I speak O LORD, you know what I am doing
5 You hem me in and lay your hands upon me
6 Such knowledge of me is so high that I cannot reach it
7 Where can I go from your Spirit? Or where can I flee from you?
8 If I ascend to heaven, you are there; if I make my bed in Sheol, you are there;
9 If I take the wings of the dawn, if I settle on the heights of the sky,
10 even there you will be at my side and your right hand will uphold me.
11 If I say, "I will flee from the Spirit," you will rebuke me and say, "You are my people."
12 even the darkness cannot hide me from you; the night is like the day; for darkness cannot hide from you, and the light cannot be hidden from you.
13 For it was you who knit me together in my mother's womb.
14 I praise you, O LORD, for you are wonderful; that I know you, O LORD, is wonderful to me.
15 My frame is not hidden from you; when I was being formed in the womb, you were already there.
16 Your eyes were upon me, and you were present when I was being formed.

6 Chilcote, Paul Wesley, and Latwale G. Wamati. "Chapter 11"

I come to the end I am still with you.

- *Is there a word or phrase that leads me deeper into the reality of God's love for me?*
- *Am I willing to be known by God, to enter into such a level intimacy?*

Focus Thoughts:

"So what will it take to be successful in this mission? We must start with ourselves. The call of discipleship is the call to attach our lives fully and completely to Jesus Christ. Are we experiencing the peace of Jesus Christ in our heart, mind, and soul? Discipleship must be grounded in intentional spiritual formation that centers us in the presence of God, where we find inner peace. It is out of the depth and overflow of this peace that we find the capacity to cope with life and to extend ourselves in the ministry of Jesus Christ in the world."

—Stephen M. Veazey 2005

Questions for Discussion:

1. Doctrine and Covenants 164:9 challenges us to move beyond our fears of relational and spiritual transformation. What does this mean to you?
2. What would need to occur in our congregations/small groups for us to move beyond our fears to a new place of intimacy with God and one another?

Practice:

Each day during your time of prayer, practice sharing with God something about yourself that is difficult to talk about or that you wished were

respond. Grant us the coura

new and become a bl³³⁻³⁴ "Be generous. Give to the poor. Get peace. Amen.

Exploration 3: Safe safe from embezzlers, a bank you can bank on. It's obvious, isn't it? The place where your treasure, is the place you will most want to be, and end up being.

Sharing and Prayer

Dwelling in the Word: Luke 12:22-34

2-24 He continued this subject with his disciples. "Don't fuss about what you need to let of so you can make table at mealtimes or if the clothes in your closet are in fashion. There is far more to your inner life than the food you put in your stomach, more to your outer appearance than the clothes you hang on your body. Look at the ravens, free and unfettered, not tied down by any description, carefree and so many others. And you count far more than the birds of the air. How is the Spirit inviting you to "relax" and receive "God's giving"?"

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25-28 "Has anyone by fussing ever seen a mirror ever gotten taller or broader or an inch? If fussing can't even do that, why fuss at all? Walk into the fields and see the wildflowers. They don't fuss over their appearance but they are ever seen color and design quite like it? The ten best-dressed men and women in the country look shabby alongside when God gives such attention to the wildflowers, most of them never even seen, don't you think he'll attend to you, take pride in you, do for you?"

29-32 "What I'm trying to do here is get you to relax, not be so preoccupied with getting so you can respond to God's giving. People who don't know God and the way he works fuss over these things, but you know both God and how

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4-7 When he l Simon, "Push your nets ou "Master, we' and haven't (you say so, I' sooner said t straining the waved to the

8-10 Simon Pe knees before sinner and c: Leave me to that catch of Simon and e' same with Ja sons, cowork

10-11 Jesus sa to fear. From men and wo: up on the be and followec

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your fear and push out into the deep.

Focus Thoughts:

The people Jesus invited were no different from you or me today. They had no extraordinary gifts that qualified them for this adventure. Their willingness to risk something new emerged *after* encountering and receiving Christ's peace as life giving and life disrupting presence!

Questions for Discussion:

1. What would it look like for you to follow Christ into the deep?
2. How is God calling our congregation or small group to put aside our agenda and follow Christ into the deep?
3. What fears do we need to overcome in order to respond to the invitation "come and follow me"?

Practice:

Find a public place (i.e. mall, city street, coffee house) and observe the people coming and going for about 30 minutes. Do they seem at peace, stressed, or perplexed? Who is the Spirit inviting you to make room for in your life? Be open to sensing their fears, hopes, and aspirations. In your thoughts hold them in the light of God's love.

Prayer of Sending Forth

God, where will your spirit lead us this coming week? Help us be fully awake and ready to respond. Grant us the courage to risk something new and become a blessing of your love and peace. Amen.

Spaces

Time of Sharing and Prayer *(Remember to share about your prior week's practice)*

Dwelling in the Word: Doctrine and Covenants 163:4a

4 a. God, the Eternal Creator, weeps for the poor, displaced, mistreated, and diseased of the world because of their unnecessary suffering. Such conditions are not God's will. Open your ears to hear the pleading of mothers and fathers in all nations who desperately seek a future of hope for their children. Do not turn away from them. For in their welfare resides your welfare.

- *How is the Spirit prompting us to hear what we have not heard before?*

Focus Thoughts: Dwelling in the Word: Doctrine and Covenants 153:9b

Perhaps our inclination to grasp for quick answers to the perplexing questions of the modern world is symptomatic of a deeper problem – one that is a gateway to the future. *slow down and rediscover* their relationships with God, one another, and their neighbors.

Consider a future dependent on our willingness to *risk* going deeper into relationships that courageously live Christ's love and mission *with* our neighbors.

Questions for Discussion:

specific.

Practice: *(Remember to share about your prior week's practice)*
Refer to **Breathing in the Spaces**, page 18.

Focus on slowing down and intentionally creating spaces to be aware of God's movement throughout your day.

Prayer of Sending Forth

God, where will your spirit lead us this coming week? Help us be fully awake and ready to respond. Grant us the courage to risk something new and become a blessing of your love and peace. Amen.

Exploration 6: Risk New Encounters

with Others

Time of Sharing and Prayer *(Remember to share about your prior week's practice)*

Dwelling in the Word: Doctrine and Covenants 153:9b

My Spirit is reaching out to numerous souls even now and there are many who will respond if you and I affirm a testimony of my love and my desires for all to come upon me.

- *How does this passage invite you into God's movement in the world?*

• *How do we become more awake to God's movement in the world?*

Focus Thoughts:

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share about your prior week's practice)

Dwelling in the Word: Doctrine and Covenants 161:3

3a. Open your hearts and feel the yearnings of your brothers and sisters who are lonely, despised, fearful, neglected, unloved. Reach out in understanding, clasp their hands, and invite all to share in the blessings of community created in the name of the One who suffered on behalf of all.

b. Do not be fearful of one another. Respect each life journey, even in its brokenness and uncertainty, for each person has walked alone at times. Be ready to listen and slow to criticize, lest judgments be unrighteous and unredemptive.

c. Be patient with one another, for creating sacred community is arduous and even painful. But it is to loving community such as this that each is called. Be courageous and visionary, believing in the power of just a few vibrant witnesses to transform the world. Be assured that love will overcome the voices of fear, division, and deceit.

- Are there words, images, or phrases that call you into a deeper understanding of Christ's mission?
- What does it mean to be "ready to listen"?

Focus Thoughts:

To listen is very hard, because it asks of us so much interior stability that we no longer need to prove ourselves by speeches, arguments,

to talk while waiting for a chance to respond. Listening is paying full attention to others and welcoming them into our very beings. The beauty of listening is that, those who are listened to start feeling accepted, start taking their words more seriously and discovering their own true selves. Above all, trust in the slow work of God which is quite naturally impatient in everything to reach the end without delay. We should like to skip the intermediate stages. We are impatient of being on the way to something unknown, something new. And yet it is the law of all progress that it is made by passing through six or seven stages of instability and and understood? Describe the experience you felt.

1. When was a time when you felt fully heard and understood? Describe the experience you felt.
2. How can we practice deep listening with one another?

Practice:

Refer to the practice **god will Holy Curiosity, pages 23-24**. Consider this practice to go deeper with a friend gradually for next week. Think about how this practice might help one fit into a safe space to free others to hear the just, and you risk new relationships of feeling yourself in suspense and incomplete.

Consider trying the practice: **Valuing the Other, page 26** at your next meeting or several meetings when discussing the questions. This will help refine listening skills and shift the focus from speaking to listening.

- How does this poem invite you into a new way of thinking or being?

Prayer of Sending Forth

Focus Thoughts:

God, where will your spirit lead us this coming week? Help us be fully awake and ready to respond. Grant us the courage to persevere and I am aware of your new and become a blessing of joy, but I will call upon my name my Spirit will go before you into whatsoever place you are sent and I will continue to bless

Questions for Discussion

—Henri Nouwen
We are impatient of being on the way to something unknown, something new. And yet it is the law of all progress that it is made by passing through six or seven stages of instability and and understood? Describe the experience you felt. think it is with you. your ideas mature gradually let them grow, let them shape themselves, without undue haste. Don't try to force them on, as though you could be today what time (that is to say, grace and circumstances acting on your own

god will Holy Curiosity, you tomorrow. Only so this practice to go gradually for next week. Think about how this practice might help one fit into a safe space to free others to hear the just, and you risk new relationships of feeling yourself in suspense and incomplete.

—Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, S.J. (1881-1955)

- How does this poem invite you into a new way of thinking or being?

Prayer of Sending Forth

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Exploratic Moments

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Dwelling in Covenants 1

their need to be loved and nurtured as they grow.

b. Be mindful of the changing of life's seasons, of the passage from the springtime of childhood and youth to the winter years of life. Embrace the blessing of your many differences. Be tender and caring. Be reminded once again that the gifts of all are necessary in order that divine purposes may be accomplished.

- *How is the Holy Spirit calling us to be more fully present with one another and our neighbors?*

Focus Thoughts:

Vulnerability is not weakness, and the uncertainty, risk, and emotional exposure we face every day are not optional. Our only choice is a question of engagement. Our willingness to own and engage with our vulnerability determines the depth of our courage and the clarity of our purpose; the level to which we protect ourselves from being vulnerable is a measure of our fear and disconnection.

—Brené Brown, *Daring Greatly*

Entering into the sacred space that exists as two individuals risk diving beneath the surface of superficiality and into the depth of what constitutes their fears, aspirations, and hopes is daring work! When we become fully human and vulnerable to one another the Spirit creates a connection we cannot fully understand. It can only be understood as the relational impulse of Christ reconciling and connecting all living things.

Discussion Questions:

1. How do I authentically invite others into the

Practice:

Christ—but I entered their world and tried to experience things from their

This coming week in point of view. I've become just about to know better for every sort of servant there is in my drink). Share with those I meet into a God-your desire to know saved life. I did all this because of the following questions a message. I didn't just want to talk about

- What's your story; it; I wanted to be *in* on it!
- What are you passionate about?
- If I really knew you, what would I know about you?
Is there a word, phrase, or image that draws you to consider deeper or new ways of living Christ's mission?
- What in your life makes you feel the most fulfilled?
How do we enter the world of another person?
- What in your life do you find the most perplexing?
How is this different from traditional evangelism in the U.S.?
- What's a story of yours that you don't get to tell often enough?

Focus Thoughts:

Remember, you also need to be prepared to share. This is not an interview but a conversation. Connection is why we're here; it is what gives purpose and meaning to our lives.

Prayer of Sending Forth

God, where will your spirit lead us this coming week? Help us be fully awake and ready to respond. Grant us the courage to risk something new and become a blessing of your love and peace. Amen.

—Brené Brown, *Daring Greatly*

Exploration 10: Discover Their World of Experience

When we seek first to understand the experience of another person we convey our deep conviction of their inherent worth as a person.

Time of Sharing and Prayer (Remember to share about your prior week's practice)

By creating safe space for them to be authentically who they are, we free them to rediscover the essence of that they are a beloved child of God. Words alone cannot convey this truth, only a willingness to enter their world without judgment and journey with them in love.

Dwelling in the Word: 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

2. How can *world of* and neighbor
3. What does of someone

Practice:

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Prayer of Se

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Exploratio to Loving

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Dwelling in Covenants 1

b. Generousl ministries, a people can e who heals ar redemptive community. healthy or ri God, others, at the heart

- *How does this passage call for a reordering of our priorities as a congregation or small group?*

Focus Thoughts:

There can be no vulnerability without risk; there can be no community without vulnerability; there can be no peace, and ultimately no life, without community.

—M. Scott Peck

Was it an oversight that the word “church” is nowhere in our name? Is it possible that our name calls us to a much deeper expression of Christ-centered loving community? Is it possible in our modern world that the word “church” has so much baggage attached to it that the word “community” better expresses a movement that seeks to embody and live the very essence of God as a loving community?

Michael Frost reflects, “When we have no impressive buildings and no swollen budgets to sustain our work, often only then do we realize that the best we have to offer this post-Christendom world is the quality of our relationships, the power of our trustworthiness, and the wonder of our generosity.”

- *What if our generous invitation is exactly what they are waiting for?*

Discussion Questions:

1. How can we create opportunities to be in Christ-centered community outside of the traditional church experience?
2. How can we support one another in risking the invitation?
3. How do we make becoming an *invitational community* central to everything we do?

reflect on your living • *What is our name calling us to become? to share and invite when prompted to do?*

Prayer of Sending Forth

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

Focus Thoughts:

God moved toward us in Jesus Christ. We are now called to join God’s movement toward others in Christ. We are called to have a *movement mind-set* that challenges us to discern and follow the disruptive promptings of the Holy Spirit in mission with one another and the stranger. If God is truly moving then we can expect our lives to be disrupted if we are truly following.

Exploration 12: Share Your Invitation to Journey Together with Christ

Time of Sharing and Prayer (Remember to share about your prior week’s practice)

Dwelling in the Word: Mark 16:15 and Doctrine and Covenants 163:1, 2a

¹⁵ And he said to them, “Go into all the world and proclaim the good news to the whole creation.”

As Doctrine and Covenants 164:9 challenges us, “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

1. “Community of Christ, *provision*,” given as a divine blessing, is your identity and calling. If you will discern and embrace its full meaning, you will not only discover your future, you will become a blessing to the whole creation. Do not be afraid to go where it beckons you to go.

2 a. Jesus Christ, the embodiment of God’s shalom, invites all people to come and receive divine peace in the midst of the difficult questions and struggles of life. Follow Christ in the way that leads to God’s peace and discover the blessings of all of the dimensions of salvation.

- *How do these passages lead you into deeper or*

Question for

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Practice:

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Prayer of Se

God, where v... week? Help I... respond. Gra... new and bec... peace. Amen

Purpose: Intentionally and prayerfully record and reflect on your purchases and time spent each week. Seek the Spirit's guidance in what you can eliminate to make room (i.e. increase your capacity) to deepen your ministry and share with others. "It is easy to say no when there is a deeper yes burning within." Richard Foster

Suggested Steps:

1. Begin each week with personal reflection on Luke 12:22-34 from The Mission Prayer book.
2. Find a journal, inexpensive notebook, or simple note taking application on your smartphone.
3. Create two columns. Under the one column write down all our purchases for the week. Under the second column record how you spent your time during the week.
4. Pick a day toward the end of the week and set aside 30 minutes for prayerful reflection. Begin with prayer asking for insight and courage to evaluate your capacity openly and honestly in the presence of God.
5. First review your purchases for the week.
6. Place a check next to purchases that you decide are not necessary.
 - a. Next place a question mark next to purchases you would like to eliminate if you want to or have the will to eliminate.
 - b. Pray over your list and commit to eliminate one purchase in the next week (Doctrine and Covenants 162:2) As you take a moment to reflect on the presence and purposes of God in each place you find yourself, consciously place yourself in the new setting with a prayerful heart, be doing in the lives of people. Over time simply taking a deliberate breath in God's presence and that you want to be alert to God's purposes in the world.
 - c. Share your commitment with a spouse or friend. Determine an alternative where you can be blessed in simple ways by you being aware of the presence of God in each place you find yourself.
7. Second review your time spent during the week.
 - a. Place a check next to time spent that was clearly not useful. (*Remember that finding times for Sabbath rest is useful and renewing for the soul*)
 - b. Next, place a question mark next to time spent that could have potentially been used in better ways.
 - c. Pray over your list and consider replacing one of your activities with one that will increase your capacity for ministry or directly benefit others. Share your commitment with a spouse or friend.
8. End your time with a prayer of thanksgiving.

Consider repeating this practice weekly or several times a month. Invite several friends to join you in this practice and commit to sharing your decisions and experiences together. Support one another in prayer.

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 (PLT),

members and 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.

Suggested Steps:

1. Make a personal commitment to offer this prayer at the beginning of each day.
2. At PLT and LCM team 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 the 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 and builds community, and promotes hospitality and healing by "loving your neighbor" in contexts outside of the congregation. Consider recording your daily experiences and reflections in a journal. Then share your experience with the congregation.

Purpose: Bring people together in meaningful conversation over a relationships. Sharing in the Round is an ancient practice of table fellowship of Christ's mission is significant. There is no place of honor at a round table. Everyone is welcome. Some of the most meaningful ministry by Jesus occurred at tables of hospitality. Good food, friends, and meaningful conversation lead to c

Suggested Steps:

1. Commit to the missional practice of *Sharing in the Round* on a regular basis (once a month) by inviting a person or family to have dinner either at home or at a restaurant for good conversation.
2. Be prayerful for opportunities to invite people around the table. See the Covenants and Promises Section 154 — *My Spirit is reaching out to number you.*
3. Invite people from your congregation as a way of deepening relationships and community.
4. Expand the practice beyond your circle of friends by inviting friends from your neighborhood, work, school, or the store down the street.
5. Be willing during conversation to be vulnerable by sharing something that is important to you. This often opens the pathway of trust for others to share. Balance your attention to the movement of the Holy Spirit in your conversation by listening and prompting you to pray for a concern expressed or to extend an invitation.

Tips for the Process:

Risk something new beyond inviting friends or close associates in mission. Create an invitation list, consider inviting people outside of your comfort level: people from your congregation's neighborhood, people from your workplace, and those you don't know well.

Purpose: Deeply rooted in our enduring principle Worth of All Persons this practice helps us begin to embody the invitation to Christ's peace. This practice is about how we create safe and inviting space in meaningful conversation with others. By risking new and deeper relationships we meet people in the context of their lives and free them to express and even discover the essence of who they are and desire to become in the presence of the Spirit.

Note: *Although this practice emphasizes risking new conversations with those we don't know well or at all, these steps are equally important in going deeper with those we think we know but have never really heard their story.*

Suggested Steps:

As we approach others in meaningful conversation we create safe and inviting space by practicing the following steps:

- **Be Prayerful** – Seek to be fully present with God and the other person. Ask for courage, patience, and insight to cultivate in yourself a holy curiosity that transcends your own needs for affirmation or expression and calls you into full attentiveness and discovery of another person's life and story. This is not a one-time prayer but a posture of prayerful awareness as we discover the essence of God in the other person.

Tip for the Process:

- **Ask Genuine Questions** – Out of genuine curiosity for the other we ask questions that gently lead to deeper sharing. Questions like, "We don't know one another very well, would you be willing to share a little about yourself?", "I would really like to get to know you better, where would be a good place to start?", or in response to a statement "That is interesting, can you share with me what has led you to this place?"

If you sense the relationship has evolved to a place of intimacy and openness you can begin to explore questions of faith. Questions/statements like, "As you shared I could not help but sense about developing (decisions) seem grounded in something beyond yourself – has this been your experience? Can you share more?" or "Where or how did you find peace (or renewal) in the midst of that difficult practice on 'What is your source of inspiration?"

As you can see, when talking with persons we are getting to know or that have a different background we can ask questions that uncover dimensions of their spiritual life with an open and prayerful "religious" or doctrinal language. This is not a trick to work God into the conversation. It is from the genuine desire to explore all dimensions of their story when we sense the time is right. Continue to be prayerful and open with your sole purpose to more deeply understand the essence of God in the other person.

- **Pause and Reflect** – We tend to interpret another person's story through the filters of our own experience. Reflection is about both hearing and understanding the other so they feel they have been heard and understood. When our curiosity is genuine and Spirit led we desire deeper understanding to ensure we are truly stepping inside their story and experiencing things from

our understanding. When the other person feels both heard and understand it frees them and results in a deeper understanding between two people. Like asking practice and inviting space in deeper levels of conversation over time. **Affirm the Other** – It is important to convey to the other person When it is genuine, affirming what you hear by direct eye contact affirmative statement (i.e. I understand or tell me more about attention.

- **Follow the Spirit's Lead** – Entering into conversations of significance the gospel – relationships! We can depend on the Spirit's guidance personal sharing in a conversation can help lead a conversation sharing. Sometimes a willingness to be vulnerable by sharing something significant about our self creates a pathway for the other conversation is more art than science. As we risk new and conversations will mature over time and we will become more of significance.

- Be patient. Remember we live in a transactional world and our that way in many respects. Having conversation for the sake of person is rare and may even feel a bit unsettling at first. Some others not so well. Do not get discouraged. We are charting new kind of community!
- Be prayerfully self-aware. Some of us have difficulty being full Every story experience shared reminds us of a story we were is about developing a holy curiosity for another person so be a you? Can you share Practice on "What is your constructive feedback.

The Spirit moves in our relationships in ways we do not fully comprehend with an open and prayerful space for another to share, transformative encounters. Trust in the Holy Spirit.

Purpose: To contemplate your daily journey with Christ and how you would share that journey when prompted by the Holy Spirit. This practice is about being prepared to share with another person, when prompted, glimpses of your journey with Christ. In conversations it is important to listen and be compassionate, hospitable and genuinely interested in the other. Yet, it is also important to discern and be ready to share meaningful moments from your spiritual journey with Christ. When we are genuine and vulnerable we open the door for others to feel safe and to explore the essence of their spirituality and relationship to the divine.

Through thick and thin, keep your hearts at attention, in adoration before Christ, your Master. Be ready to speak up and tell anyone who asks why you're living the way you are, and always with the utmost courtesy. - 1 Peter 3:15 The Message

Purpose: To deepen conversation and understanding by developing relationships and creating a safe place for people to share their insights and creating a safe place for people to share their insights.

Suggested Steps:

Have an easily seen object such as a rain stick or ball that participant:

Study the following ground rules for group discussion:

Suggested Steps:

1. Take a moment to be calm, centered, and aware of the presence of God.
2. Offer in your own words or mind the spirit of this prayer: "God, help me be fully awake and ready to share meaningful moments in my journey with Christ when I discern openness in the life of another. I need your Spirit to help me see your imprint in the ordinary events of my life and the courage to risk sharing with another when guided to do so. Amen."
3. Take time to reflect on your life experiences over the past several days or weeks. What have you seen, heard, or experienced that may have been the presence of God gently revealing new insights. Be open to the Holy Spirit helping you to identify even the small events or changes that can be significant.
4. Write down specific experiences that on reflection were moments of new awareness, deeper relationships, or an impulse to respond in some way. Consider keeping a journal to recall your experiences and see emerging themes of your journey with Christ.
5. Offer a prayer of thanks and that you may be ready to share your story with others if prompted by the Spirit.

1. When the group discusses a topic or question, the person holding the object listens. Set a time limit for speaking such as three minutes unless more time. Each person is responsible to listen carefully to the speaker.
2. For a person to speak he or she must receive the object from the person speaking, one restates what the person speaking said in their own words. Note: it is important that each person feels heard and understood.
3. Follow these steps for question or topic under discussion.
4. End with discussion about how people felt about the experience. Sometimes we think we are listening carefully but our response was cumbersome.

Tips for the Process:

The discussion leader should be alert to how people are responding to the object. Participants who feel heard before they pass the object to the next person should not only hear but feel what the other person said takes concentration with one another.

Tips for the Process:

- Setting a routine time and place for this practice can be helpful, such as the end of your day or week. Commit to weekly times of reflection, writing, and prayer as you prepare yourself to be ready to share.
- Do not rush—take time. There may be days when you follow each step. Other days, you may want to stay with only one or two steps.
- The key is simplicity and not being constrained by each step.
- Find and follow a pattern that works for you.
- Consider beginning your day with the Mission Prayer then with Sharing My Story before you go to