



Community of Christ

# Receive, Embody and Share the Invitation to Christ's Peace



Lovingly invite others to experience the good news of new life in community with Christ.  
Opportunities abound in your daily lives if you choose to see them.

—Doctrine and Covenants 165:1c



Community of Christ

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

## Receive, Embody, and Share the Invitation to Christ's Peace!

*The intent of this paper is to stimulate conversation and live into ways we receive, embody, and share the invitation to Christ's peace in a changing world. It is not the definitive word but part of an ongoing exploration of how we make the living Word real in every new context.*

In his 2005 World Conference sermon, President Stephen M. Veazey challenged the church to share the peace of Jesus Christ! It was a call to experiential *rediscovery* (i.e. encounter) of Christ as the source of our peace. It was also an invitation to receive, embody, and share all the dimensions of Christ's peace (e.g. our mission initiatives) as our response to the church's historic call to seek to bring forth and establish the cause of Zion.<sup>1</sup> Christ's peace or *Shalom* is about alleviating physical and spiritual suffering (e.g. Doctrine and Covenants 164:9c) and reveals "divine intent for personal, societal, and environmental salvation; a fullness of gospel witness for creation's restoration" (e.g. Doctrine and Covenants 165:1e).

Doctrine and Covenants 163:2 challenged the church to receive, follow (i.e. embody), and invite (i.e. share) others into the fullness of Christ's peace:

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.

b. Generously share the invitation, ministries, and sacraments through which people can encounter the Living Christ who heals and reconciles through redemptive relationships in sacred community. The restoring of persons to healthy or righteous relationships with God, others, themselves, and the earth is at the heart of the purpose of your journey as a people of faith.

As a faith movement rooted in Jesus Christ we have explored the radically relational nature of God as revealed in Christ—the *source* of our peace. Our ongoing encounter with "something not fully explainable but utterly transforming"<sup>2</sup> reveals needless physical and spiritual suffering including our own brokenness. This is the origin of our mission initiatives—Jesus' encounter (i.e. spiritual anointing) and proclamation of mission in Luke Chapter 4.

**Jesus encountered and revealed God's deepest yearnings to "restore persons to healthy or righteous relationships with God, others, themselves, and the earth."<sup>3</sup>**

This relational impulse of Christ continues to move in our world today as the "Spirit reaches out to numerous souls even now"<sup>4</sup>. The sending of God or *Missio Dei* as revealed in Christ expresses God's desire to restore, heal, and reconcile in relationship *with us* for the sake of our world now.

David Bosch, a well-known theologian on the topic of mission, writes,

In attempting to flesh out the *Missio Dei* concept, the following could be said: In the new image mission is not primarily an activity of the church, but an attribute of God. God is a missionary God (cf Aagaard 1973:11-15; Aagaard 1974:423). "It is not the church that has a mission of salvation to

<sup>1</sup> Doctrine and Covenants 6:3a

<sup>2</sup> Share the Peace of Jesus Christ – 2005 WC Sermon

<sup>3</sup> Doctrine and Covenants 163:1b

<sup>4</sup> Doctrine and Covenants 153:9b

fulfill in the world; it is the mission of the Son and the Spirit through the Father that includes the church.” (Moltmann 1977:64). *Mission is thereby seen as a movement from God to the world: the church is viewed as an instrument for that mission (Aagaard 1973:13)*. There is church because there is mission, not vice versa (Aagaard 1974:423). To participate in mission is to participate in the movement of God’s love toward people, since God is a fountain of sending love.<sup>5</sup>

**God moved toward us in Jesus Christ. We are now called to join God’s *movement* toward others in Christ. We are called to discern and follow the disruptive promptings of the Holy Spirit in mission *with* one another and especially the stranger.**

President Stephen M. Veazey, in his April 2012 address, called the church to join God’s movement (i.e. evangelism) toward all people. In this address he defined evangelism as:

*“To bring good news to the poor”* means evangelism in the fullest sense of the term. It means gospel proclamation in word and action, including invitation and extravagant hospitality!

In today’s varied social and economic settings, it means inviting people to Christ to experience the good news of the gospel whether they are poor in substance or poor in spirit. This invitation ALWAYS includes the understanding that people best experience the gospel through the fellowship, ministries, and sacraments of the faith community.

In Luke 5:1-11 Simon Peter, James, and John had an encounter with Jesus on the lake of Gennesaret. Simon Peter in his doubt recognized his own poverty of faith as boats were sinking with an unprecedented catch of fish. It was only in the recognition of his own spiritual poverty and vision that he could make room for a life changing invitation he would soon share with others.

Jesus’ invitation, “Do not be afraid; from now on you will be catching people” was a glimpse of what could be if the disciples would risk entering the depth of people’s lives and *embody* hope and healing. Catching fish would be less risky than getting involved in the messiness of people’s lives. Jesus called the disciples to move beyond their fears and risk something new with him.

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

**The receiving and sharing of Spirit led invitations are entry points through which we move deeper into relationship with God and others, encounter our mutual poverty, and turn toward new life in Christ in community.**

Invitation is *not a one-time event* we work up to but a *collection* of Spirit led events that move us toward encountering all the dimensions of Christ’s peace (i.e. the Kingdom of God come near) in relationship with others and include:

- Invitation to conversations of substance without agenda
- Invitation to tables of abundance where *body and soul* find nourishment
- Invitation to backyards, dinner tables, and ordinary places where people receive and share radical hospitality
- Invitation to safe space where thoughts and feelings can be freely expressed

<sup>5</sup> Bosch, David, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission* (Maryknoll, N.Y.Orbis 1991), 390.

- Invitation to prayer as discovery of Jesus as constant companion
- Invitation to new forms of loving community where no one walks alone
- Invitation to release from unnecessary spiritual and physical suffering
- Invitation to reconciliation as restoring of healthy relationships
- Invitation to responsible choices that lead to wholeness and healing for all
- Invitation to the fullness of Christ's peace as invitation, hospitality, and transformative action
- Invitation to baptism as commitment to walk with the living Christ
- Invitation to confirmation as receiving the Spirit in community with others

When we *receive* and embrace Christ's invitation to be in relationship we risk seeing ourselves and others from a changed perspective. Christ's mission and message is disruptive and once encountered changes everything. When we *embody* (i.e. *live*) and *share* Christ's invitation by risking new relationships we become vulnerable to the unnecessary suffering of others and God's prophetic vision (i.e. imagination) for an alternative future. This leads to unsettledness and a growing conviction to live and embody the fullness of Christ's peace stated in Luke 4:18, 19 and expressed in our mission initiatives. In other words, there is no turning back!

***Invitation is the Entry Point!*** – The invitation is to receive (i.e. encounter) Christ's peace daily and embody and share *all the dimensions* of Christ's peace with others. This is the essence of our first three mission initiatives:



**Invite People to Christ**  
*Christ's mission of evangelism*



**Abolish Poverty, End Suffering**  
*Christ's mission of compassion*



**Pursue Peace on Earth**  
*Christ's mission of justice and peacemaking*

**In practice, the mission initiatives cannot be separated or they don't lead to a fullness of Christ's peace. Inviting people to a *relationship with Christ* is ESSENTIAL because it leads to a change of heart and mind where we see what we could not see and hear what we could not hear before. When we truly experience the fullness of Christ's peace we can do no other than embody and share this peace out of our abundance!**

Doctrine and Covenants 164:5 challenges us to *remember* the essential meaning of our baptism daily:

5 It is imperative to understand that when you are truly baptized into Christ you become part of a new creation. By taking on the life and mind of Christ, you increasingly view yourselves and others from a changed perspective. Former ways of defining people by economic status, social class, sex, gender, or ethnicity no longer are primary. Through the gospel of Christ, a new community of tolerance, reconciliation, unity in diversity, and love is being born as a visible sign of the coming reign of God.

This is only the beginning. Living the meaning of our baptism daily is a commitment to continue to receive the invitation, embody the invitation, and share the invitation to Christ's peace so that together we *Invite People to Christ, Abolish Poverty, End Suffering, and Pursue Peace on and for the Earth*

## **Invite People to Christ — *Invite People into the Fullness of Christ's Peace!***

We have much *internal (i.e. spiritual) and external (i.e. relational)* work to do! Nothing frightens non-Christians and even many Christians more than the “E” word — EVANGELISM. Although historically there are many poor examples of evangelism, there are many compelling stories of lives changed because someone risked spiritual and relational transformation with a stranger.

In Community of Christ we understand our call to evangelism as a call to invite others into a *new relational space* of discovery, purpose, and healing. David Bosch provides a helpful definition of evangelism that incorporates the essence of our mission initiatives:

“In Summary, Evangelism may be defined as that dimension and activity of the church's mission which seeks to offer every person, everywhere, a valid opportunity to be directly challenged by the gospel of explicit faith in Jesus Christ, with a view to embracing him as Savior, becoming a living member of his community, and being enlisted in his service of reconciliation, peace, and justice on earth.”<sup>6</sup>

Returning to the lake of Gennesaret, Jesus, while calling Peter to follow, revealed disturbing but necessary insights into Peter's brokenness and poverty of Spirit. In our modern world that falsely values self-sufficiency and self-determination we must recover our passion for receiving, embodying, and sharing the invitation. This begins by recognizing our poverty of Spirit and increasingly seeing “ourselves and others from a changed perspective.”<sup>7</sup> It continues with a heart-pounding, exciting, and disruptive impulse to then *generously* share out of our newly found abundance with others.

**It is imperative that we *fully explore and live into* what it means to receive, embody, and share the invitation to Christ's peace or we will bypass the spiritual revival essential to sustaining our discipleship and mission.**

David Bosch reminds us of the importance of this central call:

“I have called evangelism the “heart” of mission. If you cut out the heart of the body it becomes a corpse. With evangelism cut out, mission dies; it ceases to be mission.”<sup>8</sup>

Why is evangelism so central? True evangelism at its core is a willingness to follow the divine relational impulse that nudges us toward others. It is how we participate in the movement of God's love towards all people. It moves us toward the *last frontier of mission*— spiritual and relational transformation in community as a visible sign of the coming reign of God.

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<sup>6</sup> Chilcote, Paul Wesley, and Lacey C. Warner. "Chapter 1." *The Study of Evangelism: Exploring a Missional Practice of the Church*. Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Pub., 2008. 17. Print.

<sup>7</sup> Doctrine and Covenants 164:5

<sup>8</sup> Chilcote, Paul Wesley, and Lacey C. Warner. "Chapter 1." *The Study of Evangelism: Exploring a Missional Practice of the Church*. Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Pub., 2008. 10. Print.

Risking new relational space with others *is* the portal through which we discover the many ways God calls us to receive, embody, and share the fullness of Christ's peace with others. This relational space can only be created in the spirit of authentic spiritual friendship. It is in this sacred space where one's deepest yearnings and questions are given voice often for the first time. Diana Butler-Bass challenges us to see the transformative power of true spiritual friendship:

What if we treated all our friendships as the opportunity for the Spirit to show up? What if we encouraged people in our congregations to consider their communal vocation as spiritual companions? What if people of faith took on the task of befriending the postmodern world? What if this sort of friendship spread? What if?<sup>9</sup>

What we are exploring is a radical redefinition of invitation — the heart of evangelism! We are inviting others into mutual spiritual friendship where we encounter the holiest of spaces — the essence of being — and take steps into that transformative future together. Joseph Stewart-Sicking reminds us:

In spiritual friendship, we not only encourage each other toward goodness, we share a solitude in which we feel God's presence as we reveal our deepest thoughts and desires.<sup>10</sup>

Our invitation creates receptive and relational space where the Spirit can reveal what is deep within waiting to find tangible expression. It is in this most vulnerable and Holy space where invitation "to something not fully explainable but utterly transforming" becomes incredibly real. It is in this space where God, as fountain of generous and sending love, overwhelms us with glimpses of what could be. All this is from God. We simply help open the relational space for the Spirit to do its transformative work.

## **Receive, Embody, and Share Christ's Invitation: A Closer Look**

**Receive the Invitation** - Accept Christ's generous invitation to a relationship, new life, wholeness, and a new way of seeing God, yourself, and others. This is where our journey begins. This is where we humbly but hopefully see our own poverty in all its forms. This is where we discover the voice that calls us beyond the limits of our own human pursuits for meaning to a new communion with the One in whose name we serve.

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

*Initial Suggested Practices and Video:* Mission Prayer<sup>11</sup>, Prayer of Examen<sup>12</sup>, Dwelling in the Word<sup>13</sup>, Breathing in the Spaces<sup>14</sup>, **Who is Jesus to Me Video, Risking Something New Video**

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<sup>9</sup> Stewart-Sicking, Joseph A. (2016-03-01). *Spiritual Friendship after Religion: Walking with People while the Rules Are Changing* (Kindle Locations 58-60). Church Publishing Inc.. Kindle Edition.

<sup>10</sup> Stewart-Sicking, Joseph A. (2016-03-01). *Spiritual Friendship after Religion: Walking with People while the Rules Are Changing* (Kindle Locations 478-479). Church Publishing Inc.. Kindle Edition.

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**Embody the Invitation** - Become a *living invitation* for others who are searching for meaning, connection, and healing (i.e. Christ's peace). Slow down, be fully awake and approachable, risk new encounters with others, become welcoming and safe space, listen deeply, cultivate holy curiosity for others, respond to suffering in all its forms, and trust in the slow work of God.

*Essential Question:* How do I live into a life of invitation that creates safe space for others?

*Initial Suggested Practices and Videos:* Mission Prayer<sup>15</sup>, Holy Curiosity for the Other<sup>16</sup>, Walking the Neighborhood<sup>17</sup>, Third Place Ministry<sup>18</sup>, **Nudge Video, The Art of Conversation Video**

**Share the Invitation** - Generously Share!<sup>19</sup> Become increasingly aware of the Spirit's movement — leading us to risk deeper relationships and risk *speaking* the invitation! Share *in* sacred moments of mutual Holy awareness. Share *in* difficult questions and conversations of significance. Share the loving invitation to all the dimensions of Christ's peace. Share the invitation to new forms of loving community (i.e. various forms of the church). Share the invitation to journey together into the future with Christ!

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

*Initial Suggested Practices and Videos:* Sharing in the Round<sup>20</sup>, Holy Curiosity for the Other<sup>21</sup>, Sharing My Story<sup>22</sup>, **Invite Video, Let the Spirit Breathe Video, Community of Christ Video**

The need has never been greater to move beyond our fears and extend Christ's hospitality to the stranger. Receiving, embodying, and sharing Christ's hospitality is at the heart of creating receptive space for others to receive the invitation to Christ's peace.

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 relationship *with others* will reveal our mutual need for healing and wholeness. As we hear the stories of others our invitation is also a commitment to journey *with others* as together we become “living member(s) of his community, and being enlisted in his service of reconciliation, peace, and justice on earth.”<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Page 17 of this document

<sup>17</sup> Page 19 of this document

<sup>18</sup> Page 21 of this document

<sup>19</sup> Doctrine and Covenants 163:2b

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<sup>22</sup> Page 23 of this document

<sup>23</sup> Chilcote, Paul Wesley, and Lacey C. Warner. "Chapter 1." *The Study of Evangelism: Exploring a Missional Practice of the Church*. Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Pub., 2008. 17. Print.

## Essential Questions for Disciples, Priesthood, and Congregations

1. How have you encountered “something not fully explainable but utterly transforming” and how is it disrupting your daily life experience?
2. How are you moving beyond your fears of spiritual and relational transformation?
3. How are you experiencing Christ’s mission as “the movement of God’s love towards people?” What are some ways you can create opportunities in our gatherings, daily practices, and the neighborhood to *encounter and follow* God’s movement of love more fully?
4. When you think of the mission initiative “Invite People to Christ” what words or images might hinder full exploration and experimentation with this mission initiative?
5. Why is *Invite People to Christ* central to our mission? What real or perceived barriers exist that must be addressed to live this critical aspect of mission fully as disciples and congregations?
6. If relationships (i.e. spiritual friendships) are truly the entry point where we receive, embody, and share all the dimensions of Christ’s peace, how do we practice (i.e. take incremental steps) going deeper and risking new relationships? How do we create relational and receptive space for the Spirit to do its transformative work? What does this look like for us individually and in community (i.e. congregations or small groups)?
7. What does it look like to embody and share Christ’s radical hospitality with one another? How can we practice and then support each other as we extend hospitality to strangers?

### ***Our Challenge –***

“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.”<sup>24</sup>

*Lovingly invite others to experience the good news of new life in community with Christ.  
Opportunities about in your daily lives if you choose to see them.  
—Doctrine and Covenants 165*

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<sup>24</sup> Share the Peace of Jesus Christ – 2005 World Conference Sermon – President S. M. Veazey

## ***Suggested Videos***

The following videos are listed in bold on page 8 and provide helpful images and concepts for exploring how we receive, embody, and share Christ's Peace. They can be found at [www.missionalleaders.org](http://www.missionalleaders.org) by typing the name of the video in the search bar.

### ***Receive the Invitation:***

***Who is Jesus to Me?*** – explores what it means to have a relationship with Christ through the testimonies of those who comprise the global church.

***Risking Something New*** – a music video developed especially for Leading Congregations in Mission that explores what living missionally is all about.

### ***Embody the Invitation:***

***Nudge*** – explores the possibility of a world where people risk new and deeper relationships in Christ.

***Art of Conversation*** – explores how our conversation can be superficial at times.

### ***Share the Invitation:***

***Invite*** – explores the many ways simple Spirit-led invitations lead others into a relationship with the living Christ in community.

***Let the Spirit Breathe*** – explores how the Spirit breathes and disrupts our lives with new ways to connect with others.

***Community of Christ*** – explores who we and are becoming as Community of Christ.

## ***Mission Prayer — A Missional Practice***

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

### **Mission Prayer**

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

**Purpose:** For all participants (Congregation Support Ministers, Pastor Leadership Teams, members 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.

### **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.

## ***Prayer of Examen: Receiving Christ's Invitation—A Missional Practice***

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

**Purpose:** to be awake to Christ's invitation in a story of scripture from the four Gospels and reflecting on your life as it unfolds each day. To receive Christ we must know him! This practice is inspired and adapted from the spiritual practice "Prayer of Examen" developed by Ignatius of Loyola.\*

### **Steps:**

1. Become aware of the presence of God and awake to Christ's invitation. Take a moment to become calm and centered.
2. Choose and read a text from the four Gospels in the spirit of prayer, seeking to be closer to the Living Christ.
3. Spend a few moments recalling your day with gratitude and reverence. Let the details, events and conversations drift through your memory. Identify feelings, emotions, insights or times that touched your heart—either enlivening or disheartening.
  - Gratitude reveals what we value and what brings us joy or meaning.
  - Reverence allows us to see the ordinary parts of our day as sacred opportunities.
4. Choose a feeling, emotion, insight or time in your day and pray from it. Ask the Holy Spirit to reveal how this may draw you closer to the Living Christ and his invitation.
5. Look forward to the remainder of the day or toward tomorrow. Talk with Jesus like a friend. Be honest and open. Use everyday language. Leave times for silence to listen. Share your feelings. Ask for his help and wisdom about the questions you have, the desires of your heart and the problems you face.

### **Tips for the Process:**

- Request the Holy Spirit to draw you closer to the Living Christ by remembering his promise to always be with you and his invitation to share life with you.
- 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. There is no particular length—less or longer than 10 – 20 minutes is fine.
- 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 a Prayer of Examen at noon and before you go to bed.

\*See more at Ignatian Spirituality at <http://www.ignatianspirituality.com/ignatian-prayer/the-examen/#sthash.u7RB006Q.dpuf> and Pastors and Leaders Field Guide at <http://www.cofchrist.org/leaders/CL-spiritualpractices.asp#2>

## ***Dwelling in the Word — A Missional Practice***

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

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

### **Steps:**

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

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

Provide a copy of the scripture passage and the questions to allow participants to hear and read them for reflection (see page three for an illustration of a selected scripture and questions).

The person designated to lead:

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

### **Tips for the Process:**

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

## ***Breathing in the Spaces\** — A Missional Practice**

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

**Purpose:** To center ourselves and be more aware of people and God's presence by stopping and consciously taking a breath as we enter various spaces during the day. When you step or move into different spaces, consciously place yourself in the new setting with a desire to be alert to what God might be doing in the lives of people. Overtime simply taking a deliberate breath will remind you that you are in God's presence and that you want to be alert to God's purposes in that setting.

### **Steps:**

Here are simple ways or suggestions on how *to breathe in the spaces* in your daily life:

Start each day with the *Mission Prayer* or a spiritual discipline that helps you to be open to God's blessings and purposes in your life.

In your home, as you enter shared space, pause to take a breath and be aware of how precious this space and the people are (or have been) to you and the gratitude you have for them.

When entering the different spaces in your day (workplace, a colleague's office, a restaurant or place of business, school or places where people meet) pause and take a deliberate breath.

When returning home pause to take a breath. If you share your home with others, be a loving presence.

### **Tips for the Process:**

*Let the Spirit breathe!* (Doctrine and Covenants 162:2) As you take a deep breath, breathe in the goodness of the profound presence and purposes of God in each place you find yourself. Allow yourself to be drawn to people who may be blessed in simple ways by you being aware of them as persons of worth.

\*This missional practice draws on *Centering Prayer—A Missional Practice*<sup>25</sup> and its use of "breath" as a way to breathe in and consciously be aware of the presence of the Holy Spirit. It also draws on the practice *Listening in the Spaces* (see Pastors and Leaders Field Guide). In *Wisdom Distilled from the Daily* (New York: HarperCollins, 1990) by Joan Chittister, she explains how members of the Benedictine community stop outside the chapel for a few minutes before entering for prayer. "The practice of *statio* is meant to center us and make us conscious of what we're about to do and make us present to God who is present to us. *Statio* is the desire to do consciously what I might otherwise do mechanically. *Statio* is the virtue of presence."

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## Centering Prayer — A Missional Practice

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

**Purpose:** To enhance awareness of God's presence and to experience God's Spirit centering, calming, and revitalizing your whole being. This missional practice encourages you to rest and find renewal in God's presence by taking moments for silence, by relaxing your body, by deep and intentionally conscious breathing, and by praying. Centering Prayer is one way to follow Jesus's example for taking time for rest and renewal to be with God and to be faithful to God's purposes.

### Steps:

1. Sit in a relaxed position, comfortable to you. Close your eyes, if this helps you to focus and not be distracted.
2. Offer a brief prayer to ask for help and guidance. (For example: "I'm here, God, waiting, listening, open. Empty me of fear, worry, and inner noise. Allow me to rest and find renewal in the awareness of your presence.")
3. Use your breath to create a sense of peace and letting go into God. Breathe deeply, slowly, calmly, starting with several cleansing breaths that end in an audible sigh. As you fill your lungs and exhale, feel the tension in your muscles and your entire body flow out with the air. Continue to breathe in a regular, natural rhythm from your abdomen rather than your chest.
4. Focus on breathing God in, breathing all else out until you feel calm and centered.
5. Continue paying attention to your breath as you focus your body, mind, and spirit on the reality that God is present and that you are here with the intention of loving and being loved by God.
6. Listen beneath or within your breath for a prayer word (that may express a phrase, feeling or image) that reveals the desires, needs, or concerns of your heart. Don't struggle for the prayer word. Trust that it will arise as you continue to be still and open.
7. When you have been made aware of the prayer word, repeat it silently to yourself in rhythm with your breathing. Example:

(Breathing in)	(Silence)
(Breathing out)	...my neighbor, or peace, or trust, etc.
(Breathing in)	[Silence]
(Breathing out)	...my neighbor, or peace, or trust, etc.
8. When the time for prayer is over, offer a brief word of thanks to God. Take several more deep breaths.
9. If this missional practice is being done with others, become aware of those around you and trust God's presence and blessings as you share with one another.

### Tips for the Process:

Imagine that Jesus is breathing in and through you as he did with his disciples. A helpful scripture to reference is John 20:19–22 NRSV:

*When it was evening on that day, the first day of the week, and the doors of the house where the disciples had met were locked for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you." After he said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples rejoiced when they saw the Lord. Jesus said to them again, "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you." When he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit."*

When distracting thoughts pull you away from centering in God collect yourself with the rhythm of your breathing and your prayer word.

Scale into this missional practice by setting aside 5–10 minutes and then try to achieve this quiet pattern of presence in God for approximately 20 minutes.

Remembering this quote may help you to spontaneously do this missional practice throughout the day in smaller intervals:

*Bidden or unbidden, God is present.* — Desiderius Erasmus Roterodamus

## ***Holy Curiosity for the Other — A Missional Practice***

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

**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.*

**Process:** 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.

***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 your choices (or 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 time?" or "What is your source of inspiration?"

As you can see, when talking with persons we are getting to know or who have little "religious" background we can ask questions that uncover dimensions of their spiritual life without resorting to "religious" or doctrinal language. This is not a trick to work God into the conversation but comes from our 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 their perspective.

The best way to do this is to pause and reflect back with them from time to time what you believe you are hearing. Statements like, "So what I think I heard you share is..." or "I think you shared

something significant — let me make sure I heard you correctly”. This is not about simply repeating back what we heard but processing it in the context of our life experience and then sharing it in our own words to test our understanding.

When the other person feels both heard and understand it frees them to continue to share more deeply and results in a deeper understanding between two people. Like asking good questions this takes practice and will result in deeper levels of conversation over time.

***Affirm the Other*** – It is important to convey to the other person they have your total attention. Genuinely affirm what you hear by making direct eye contact, a nod, or following up with an affirmative statement (i.e. I understand or tell me more about that). These convey genuine interest and attention.

***Follow the Spirit's Lead*** – Entering into conversations of significance take us right to the heart of the gospel — relationships! We can depend on the Spirit's guidance to help us balance how our personal sharing in a conversation can help lead a conversation deeper or limit the other person's sharing. Sometimes a willingness to be vulnerable by sharing a thought or feeling that reveals something significant about our self creates a pathway for the other to follow. It is critical that we maintain prayerful self-awareness so the conversation does not become more about us than the other. Conversation is more art than science. As we risk new and deeper relationships our conversations will mature over time and we will become more skilled at cultivating conversations of significance.

#### **Tips: for the Process:**

- Be patient. Remember we live in a transactional world and our conversations have also become that way in many respects. Having conversation for the sake of truly getting to know another person is rare and may even feel a bit unsettling at first. Some conversations will go well and others not so well. Do not get discouraged. We are charting new path here that will lead to a new kind of community!
- Be prayerfully self-aware. Some of us have difficulty being fully present with another person. Every story or experience shared reminds us of a story we want to share. This particular practice is about developing a holy curiosity for another person so be aware of how much you are sharing your own story.
- Practice on those you know and you will be surprised what you learn! Seek their honest and constructive feedback.

The Spirit moves in our relationships in ways we do not fully comprehend. When we provide safe, inviting, and prayerful space for another to share, transformative encounters with God and one another occur over time. Trust in the Holy Spirit.

## ***Walking the Neighborhood — A Missional Practice***

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

**Purpose:** For people, as individuals or in pairs, to walk their congregational or personal neighborhoods to sense where God is active, enter opportunities for conversation, and offer blessings through silent prayer. By learning to listen and pay attention to what is happening in the lives of people new understandings, ways of being and living Christ's mission are gained. The Worth of All Persons and the Blessings of Community, two of the church's enduring principles help us to understand that our only motive for this missional practice is to be open to God's presence in and desires for any resulting relationship.

### **Steps:**

1. Step out in faith as you offer the *Mission Prayer* and reflect on the counsel found in Doctrine and Covenants 161:3 and 4. (See the following page.)
2. Take a family member or go with a friend and begin walking in your home neighborhood or in the neighborhood around your church. As you walk, pray for God's guidance and offer God's blessing on each home and the people who live there. If people are out in their yards or on their porch, greet them and wish them a good day.
3. As you become a regular presence in the neighborhood, begin conversations with neighbors. Ask God to lead you to the people with whom God wants you to share in conversation. Listen for where God is moving in their lives. Consider offering this prayer: *God, who do you want me to meet and form a caring relationship with today?*

### **Tips for the Process:**

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

### **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.*

### **Doctrine and Covenants 161:3 and 4**

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.

d. Understand that the road to transformation travels both inward and outward. The road to transformation is the path of the disciple.

4a. Do not neglect the smallest among you, for even the least of these are treasures in God's sight. Receive the giftedness and energy of children and youth, listening to understand their questions and their wisdom. Respond to 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.

## ***Third Place Ministry — A Missional Practice***

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

**Purpose:** To learn to listen and pay attention in informal settings to what is happening in the lives of people in your community. This practice will help you and your congregations discern ways to respond to the needs and opportunities that surface when you pay attention to meaningful conversation.

According to Ray Oldenburg, an American sociologist who first coined the term, third places, “Third places are those environments in which people meet to develop friendships, discuss issues, and interact with others.” He points out that home is our first place, our place of employment is a second place, but the place where we most learn what’s going on in the community around us is a third place. Communities of faith have incorporated third place ministry in their missional focus. Here are ideas for disciples or congregations to start a third place ministry.

### **Steps:**

Start by asking, “In our community where do people gather for informal conversation?” Consider some of the following: local coffee shop, bookstore, park, convenience store or other places where people sit and visit. Then go to one of these places regularly with the intent of getting to know the names of clerks and frequent visitors.

After a few visits, take a book you’re reading or your scriptures. Place the books on your table and be open to people engaging in conversation about them. Invite friends to join you and talk about issues or interests going on in life.

Be open to inviting others to join your conversation. Listen to what is important to them. Ask yourself, “What is God doing in their lives?” “What is the invitation from God about their experience?”

### **Suggestions:**

- Visit a local school to talk with the principal or guidance staff about needs they have for their students. Do they need someone to sit and have lunch with the students? Do they need tutorial help? What is the need that God is inviting you and others to be part of in your community?
- If you have a group of people skilled or interested in knitting, do a prayer shawl ministry in a public place like a local coffee shop. This ministry could become an ecumenical ministry where knitters from different faith communities give shawls to local domestic violence shelters, hospitals, assisted living centers, or nursing homes.

### **Tips for the Process:**

This practice requires genuine investment in relationships and time. This practice is not about “inviting people to church.” It is about helping us better understand what God is up to in the lives of people in the community by using an informal setting. If your community doesn’t have a meeting place, that’s an opportunity for the congregation to create and develop a third place experience for the community!

## ***Sharing in the Round — A Missional Practice***

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

**Purpose:** Bring people together in meaningful conversation over a meal to develop and deepen relationships. Sharing in the Round is an ancient practice of table fellowship. The round table as symbol of Christ's mission is significant. There is no place of honor at a round table — all are equal and all are welcome. Some of the most meaningful ministry by Jesus occurred around the table of invitation and hospitality. Good food, friends, and meaningful conversation lead to deeper relationships and community.

### **Steps:**

- Commit to the missional practice of *Sharing in the Round* on a regular basis (every other week or once a month) by inviting a person or family to have dinner either in your home or a place suitable for good conversation.
- Be prayerful for opportunities to invite people around the table. The counsel offered in Doctrine and Covenants Section 154 — *My Spirit is reaching out to numerous souls even now...may guide you.*
- Invite people from your congregation as a way of deepening relationships and building sacred community.
- Expand the practice beyond your circle of friends by inviting friendly strangers from your neighborhood, work, school, or the store down the street.
- Be willing during conversation to be vulnerable by sharing some of what is going on in your life. This often opens the pathway of trust for others to share. Balance sharing with listening. Pay attention to the movement of the Holy Spirit in your conversation. The Holy Spirit may be prompting you to pray for a concern expressed or to extend understanding and compassion.

### **Tips for the Process:**

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

## ***Sharing My Story—A Missional Practice***

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

**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*

### **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 or witness when prompted by the Spirit.

### **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 bed.

