



# CLERGY SPIRITUAL RETREAT

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Jesus went up on a mountainside and called to him those he wanted...  
...and they came to him.  
-Mark 3:13

by Esther Robles

For the past six years, Esther Robles has dedicated her life to the pastoral ministry and knows very well how the ministry can take a toll on God's servants. She advocates spiritual formation and renovation, and believes that not having an intentional, personal plan in these areas, our ministries would be seriously at risk.

Esther Robles is a young, single Disciples of Christ minister for a Spanish-speaking congregation in Brandon, Florida, and is currently completing her M.Div. at Asbury Theological Seminary-Orlando campus. Esther was born in Puerto Rico and was raised in Miami, Florida. Prior to the pastorate, Esther was a financial accountant and a worship director for two Disciples congregations in Miami. She enjoys all kinds of music and is incapable of saying no to brownies with vanilla ice cream!



[www.discipleshomemissions.org](http://www.discipleshomemissions.org)

(888) 346-2631

# Come!

## -Clergy Retreat Guide-

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### ABOUT "COME!" A CLERGY SPIRITUAL RETREAT

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Come! is a two-day self-contained, holistic, and sustaining spiritual retreat model prepared especially for clergy. It has been designed specifically to follow the Mark 3:13-20 portions of Scripture as the layout for the various sections. This scriptural reference has been discussed beautifully as a picture of personal and ministerial formation by Steve Harper in his essay, *A Pastor's Approach to Spiritual Formation*. (See Bibliography) For this retreat, I use the same scriptural reference in order to develop this particular retreat model, and suit the insights of others, and that of my own, regarding our formation as Christ's leaders for His Church. It is my prayer that you will **Come!** to be refreshed and changed by the Spirit of God.

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### SECTIONS OF THE MODEL

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1. **Come Up!** prepares you to meet with God at the start of each day. Jesus is summoning you to come up to the mountainside - He wants you there. This section of the retreat will help you to walk out of the busyness of your life and ministry and come up to be alone with the Master for a while. It will not be easy, as coming up a mountainside

requires effort and a will, but hope awaits you. Will you accept the invitation and come up?

2. **Come away with Me!** emphasizes communion with our Master and with others. It is during this fellowship interlude that our Teacher ushers encouragement, wellness, affirmation for the ministry, and spiritual renewal. It is also a time to look around and see that Jesus also called others to walk alongside you for this journey, whether far or near. The community, thus, is there to bid you harmony and strength. Will you come away with Him?



3. **Come down!** is the last portion of the retreat where the reality of life and ministry is faced earnestly with valor, hope, and power in the Holy Spirit. It is a special section to help you maintain a spiritual formation and wellness after completing your two-day away with Jesus. Will you come down?

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**SUGGESTED RETREAT SCHEDULE**

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The following suggested schedule is for a two-day journey, commencing each officially at 12 noon. Both journeys are different, but the model remains the same in order to suit the needs of all present. Therefore, it can be used for simply a day or two days, as it has been provided.

TIME	EVENT
<b>FIRST JOURNEY</b>	
12:00 noon	<b>The Gathering</b> – lunch and fellowship <i>*As you eat together, share names, backgrounds, and one of your favorite things!</i>
1:00 pm	<b>Come Up!</b>
2:30 pm	<b>Come Away With Me!</b> [Individual and Community Tracks] 2:30-5:00 pm – Alone with Jesus 5:00-6:00 pm - In community with others and Jesus
6:00 pm	<b>Dinner</b>
7:00 pm	<b>Come Away With Me!</b> [Community Track]
9:00 pm	<b>Break [Snacks and fellowship]</b>
9:30 pm	<b>Come Down!</b>
10:00 pm	<b>Bedtime</b>
6:00 am	<b>Arise – Come Up!</b>
7:00 am	<b>Breakfast</b>
8:00 am	<b>Come Away With Me!</b> [Individual and Community Tracks] 8:00 - 10:00 am – Alone with Jesus 10:00 – 11:30 am - In community with others and Jesus
11:30 am	<b>Come Down!</b>
<b>SECOND JOURNEY</b>	
12:00 noon	<b>The Gathering</b> – lunch and fellowship <i>*As you eat together, share names, backgrounds, and another of your favorite things!</i>
	<b><i>Repeat time schedules and events as in FIRST JOURNEY for SECOND JOURNEY</i></b>



## FIRST JOURNEY

Time Schedule: 1:00 pm – 2:30 pm

Materials needed: Bible, Journal or Notebook, Pencil/Pen, Backpack, water for the journey

Dress: Casual wear; sneakers or comfortable shoes for recreational use

Place: Find a solitary place, preferably outdoors, under or near a shade

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*“Jesus went up on a mountainside and called to Him those He wanted...and they came to Him.”*

-Mark 3:13 (NIV)

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### *Imagine...*

You are looking up at the mountain. You see it is steep, somewhat rocky, somewhat green. It stretches far into the sky, and as you make your way along this perhaps precipitous climb, you find yourself wondering what lies beyond the horizon. It probably took a lot of effort to come here. Maybe you did not want to come...you are just too busy to take some time off. Or maybe you are almost at the end of the rope...needy, broken, and longing for restoration, help, comfort, and strength. In whatever condition you find yourself in right now, the invitation is the same. Jesus, your Teacher and Shepherd, has called you. He is up there. And just like the very first disciples, He has chosen you; and, yes, He wants you there. He is inviting you to look up, to stretch out your arms and reach out for His. Suddenly, you look around and realize that you will not be making the climb by yourself. There are others who have been called as well; and, they, too, need to make their way up there. Broken, weary, stressed, they, too, climb up because He is waiting. They realize that without Jesus, the road is long and purposeless. So, take a deep breath, gear up, look up, come up! Your help comes from the Lord.

### *Read...*

Psalm 121 – A Pilgrim Song.

### *Reflect...*

*“I lift up my eyes to the hills...”*

Look up to God. Lift up your eyes, don't look down where the ground is shaky and the sea is tumultuous. The moment has arrived to put aside those things that rob your peace, those who have hurt you, the problems that have torn you apart, or the busy agenda that did not get completed prior to your arrival here. Instead, lift up your eyes, for someone is waiting for you and extends His hand to you.

*“...where does my help come from?”*

This is a question full of anguish, need, and desperation. What are the pressing questions you have for Him? Take out your journal and write them down. As you **Come Up!**, address your questions to Him.

*“My help comes from the Lord, the Maker of heaven and earth.”*

Ahh, a sure affirmation...finally! The Lord comes to our rescue; He is totally trustworthy. Better than a 911 phone call! As you **Come Up!**, confess your trust in the God who is able to rescue you – the One who knows the road, the hill, the storm, the sun, the stars. He is the Maker of all these things.

*“He will not let your foot slip; He who watches over you will not slumber. Indeed, he who watches over Israel will neither slumber nor sleep.”*

As you make your way up to meet with Him, it is very critical that you remember He watches over you. He is not selective in those He watches over. Take time now to thank Him for His loving care. He is not only awaiting your cry but also your praise.

*“The Lord watches over you, the Lord is your shade at your right hand, the sun will not harm you by day, nor the moon by night.”*

Jesus warned us, *“pray that you do not fall into temptation.”* What a strong warning for us (especially ministers) who are tempted to rely on our own intellect, strength, resources, and abilities. We then take our eyes off the goal and get distracted by the successes of others or the constant demands of those we shepherd. As such, we do not watch in prayer. Despite our failings, we have a God who never sleeps; and, as He watches over us, we can delight in the mercy, security, and power of God. God is never distracted by the things that occur in our world. His eyes contemplate your precious life and wants to hear you and walk with you. As you ***Come Up!***, refocus by thanking Him for His faithfulness and protection.

*The Lord will keep you from all harm, he will watch over your life; the Lord will watch over your coming and going both now and forevermore.”*

As you make your way up to meet with Him, set your feet on the ground for the One who watches over you will always be looking for your wellness. In all things, God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to His purpose. And that means you!

### ***Pray...***

As you contemplate your journey for the next day, or couple of days, direct your eyes to the heavens and simply open up your heart to God, your Father. It's okay if you cannot express much or do not know what you ought to pray. Just know that the Spirit is interceding for you right now with groans that words cannot express; He searches and knows your heart, more than you know it yourself. He's glad you are here. He is here.

*Come away with me!*



### **FIRST JOURNEY**

Time Schedule: 2:30 pm – 5:00 pm **[Individual Track]**

Materials needed: Bible, Journal or Notebook, Pencil/Pen, Backpack, water for the journey

Dress: Casual wear; sneakers or comfortable shoes for recreational use

Place: Find a solitary place, preferably outdoors, under or near a shade

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*“He appointed twelve, designating them apostles that they might be with him...and that he might send them out to preach and to have authority to drive out demons.”*

-Mark 3:14-15 (NIV)

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### ***Rest ... [two hours - recreation]***

You have just climbed a hill; you have left behind your cares. So, come, relax, and do the things that relieve your spirit, mind, and body. This is known as the “Individual Track,” for it is you alone with your Teacher and Shepherd as He “makes” you lie down in green pastures and leads you beside quiet waters to restore your soul. Enjoy!

[The following are some solitary activities that can help you relieve stress and improve the quality of your life during this retreat. Adopt the ones that are available or possible in your location.]

Hikes/walking	Fishing
Canoeing	Golfing
Spa/Massages/Facials	Knitting/sewing
Recreational reading (no theology stuff please!)	Skiing
Photography	Writing, listening or playing music
Napping/Simply relaxing	Drawing/crafts
Swimming	Journaling

### ***Fellowship with the Teacher and Shepherd...[half hour-meditation]***

*You are loved: Words of encouragement from Jesus*

As Mark so well spotlights, Jesus called His disciples, “that they might be with him.” Let that phrase sink in for a few minutes. As you are with Him, what words of encouragement is He whispering to you right now? [Open your journal and write the words the Holy Spirit breathes in to you.]

Dr. Steve Harper points out that from the beginning and at the heart of the disciples spiritual formation laid the Great Commission.<sup>1</sup> Mark notes that Jesus designated the disciples to be “apostles,” or those who are *sent out*. Thus, the *being with Him* eventually led to the act of being *sent out* afterward. Harper affirms then that communion and commission go hand in hand. Remember that before Jesus refers to you as His disciple, His apostle, and pastor to His sheep, you are firstly His friend and He is yours. So, what do friends talk about? What are your Friend’s concerns? What are yours? [Include in your journal ideas, dreams, or thoughts that come to mind.]

*You are called: Words of affirmation for ministry*

To be with Jesus is at the heart of worship – to love Him with our heart, mind, soul, and strength. It is impossible to represent Jesus without the fellowship. It is also impossible to do the things He has asked us to do without the daily filling of His presence that anoints us with power to be witnesses for Him. Jesus, Himself, said, “Apart from Me you cannot do anything.” (John 15:5) So, as you close out your time alone with Jesus, remember that Jesus will never give you anything that will not be supported by His presence and power. He is ready to give you more power, strength and grace to be the pastor He’s called you to be.

**FIRST JOURNEY**

Time Schedule: 5:00–6:00 pm [**Community Track**] - 6:00 – 7:00 pm [Break for Dinner] – 7:00-9:00 pm [**Community Track -Come together again to complete the discussion**]

Materials needed: Large newsprint; markers, and questions below to share and explore in community. [Note: Clergy should be divided into teams of no more than five to allow opportunity for all to share. It is suggested that the questions firstly be answered in groups. Later, the entire clergy community is to come together to bring a summary of each of their group’s findings.]

Dress: Casual wear

Place: Find a place for all who registered for the retreat to meet together

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*“These are the twelve He appointed...”*

-Mark 3:16-19 (NIV)

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**Share...**

Steve Harper goes on to say, “Too much pastoral leadership is rooted in an unhealthy individualism and isolation. We have too many Lone Rangers building their kingdoms – too many leaders who believe that to be visionary means they alone have the vision. This must stop. We serve a Master who never acted apart from either a sense of God’s presence or a connection to community.”<sup>2</sup> John Stott adds, “Too many behave as if they believed not in the priesthood of all believers but in the papacy of all pastors. Our model of leadership is often shaped more by culture than by Christ.”<sup>3</sup>

It was on the mountainside that Jesus appointed and designated the twelve disciples (learners) as apostles (servants sent out). And as He called them, they each had to acknowledge one another and recognize that they have one Leader, one Commission, one Fellowship, one Faith, and one Spirit. Based on what has just been noted, share in community your responses to the following questions:

[The questions are in no particular order; however, greater amount of time should be reserved for #3 and #6. Remember to break for dinner and then return to complete your Community Track until 9:00 pm].

1. Share briefly when and how Jesus called and commissioned you for ministry?
2. Are you a Lone Ranger pastor or a Community pastor? What things need to change or improve in order to walk this journey surrounded by a cloud of witnesses?
3. John Stott comments that our model of leadership is often shaped more by culture than by Christ. Take out two large newsprint for writing. On one sheet, list together how leadership is modeled in our present culture, and on the other list how leadership is modeled by Christ. (Support your Christ list with Scripture). What are the similarities and differences? What things discourage and encourage you about these lists?



4. Do you have a mentor? To whom do you go for encouragement and advice? [Optional: this question may be answered personally or in community, but it is one that should be seriously considered by all present.]
5. How can the Body of Christ play an important role in your spiritual formation as a pastor?
6. How can this present body of pastors you are with encourage you and pray for you right now?



### FIRST JOURNEY

Time Schedule: 9:30-10:00 pm

Materials needed: Bible, Journal or Notebook, Pencil/Pen

Place: Back in your room

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*"Jesus came home..."*  
-Mark 3:20 (MSG)

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It is the end of the day. The sun has gone down. You are tired, and, most likely, ready for bed. But just before the lights go out, take 30 minutes to have one last chat with your Teacher and Shepherd. Let Him shepherd you and console you. God has proven that He can be trusted at all times. For that reason, trust Him with your emotions, your hurts, your needs, your challenges, your family, your health, your congregation, your ministry. As you pray, I invite you to bring before God, the Father,

- A word of praise;
- A need (financial, physical, relational, spiritual or ministerial);
- A thing needing to be changed in your life;
- A thing needing to be surrendered to Him;
- A confession;
- A word of thanksgiving.

Prayer also becomes a testing - a testing of our relationship to God.

To what degree do we trust God?

How willing are we to put our lives in God's hands?

-Maxie Dunnam, *Unless We Pray*

"Open your mouth and taste, open your eyes and see how good God is.

Blessed are you who run to him."

Psalm 34:8 (MSG)

Goodnight.



## FIRST JOURNEY

Time Schedule: 6:00 am – 7:00 am

Materials needed: Bible, Journal or Notebook, Pencil/Pen

Place: In your room or a solitary place

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*“Jesus went up on a mountainside and called to Him those He wanted...and they came to Him.”*

-Mark 3:13 (NIV)

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### *Imagine...*

You are looking up at the mountain...again! It usually takes one more day to “detox” from the worries you left behind and find rest and solace in a retreated place: the spouse, the children, the ministry, a certain health issue, a particular financial need, a problem needing resolve, and/or a memory to be healed. But Someone is waiting for you. Will you lift up your eyes and **Come Up!** again?

### *Read...*

Psalm 123 – A Pilgrim Song.

### *Reflect...*

When I consider this pilgrim song, I imagine a people with a mind held captive. They have breathed rejection, shame, and indifference from others. The people of Israel are suffering. As they climb up to the city of Jerusalem to meet the Lord, the people ask for mercy, reaffirming their faith and dependence on God. With a strong voice, Israel cries out,

*I lift up my eyes to you, to you whose throne is in heaven... (v.1)  
...our eyes look to the Lord our God, till he shows us his mercy. (v.2b)*

As you **Come Up!**, there will be moments when your mind will also be held captive. Perhaps you, yourself, have suffered rejection, shame, and indifference from others. You know you have done your best to be a shepherd to God’s flock, perhaps made some mistakes, have been misunderstood or accused. It is impossible at this time to erase the events, the pain these have caused you, and the worry you harbor inside. But that is precisely why He invites you to **Come Up!** His love heals; His presence comforts.

### *Pray...*

While it is our natural tendency to ignore or forget past events and/or persons who have caused us pain, this psalm teaches us that remembering and bringing our situation before God is a precursor to healing. With regard to remembering, Henri Nouwen writes, “What is forgotten cannot be healed and that which cannot be healed easily becomes the cause of greater evil.”<sup>4</sup> Nouwen adds, “When Jesus says, ‘It is not the healthy who need the doctor, but the sick,’ (Mk. 2:17), He affirms that only those who face their wounded condition can be available for healing and so enter into a new way of living.”<sup>5</sup> Therefore, as you **Come Up!**, do as the people sang while they ascended the mountain of the Lord:

*Ask for mercy and reaffirm your faith in God.*

*Confess your pain and the scorn you have endured.*

*Trust that He will show you His love, He will suffer alongside you, and He will be your help.*

*Come away with me!*



### **FIRST JOURNEY**

Time Schedule: 8:00 – 10:00 am **[Individual Track]**

Materials needed: Bible, Journal or Notebook, Pencil/Pen, Backpack, water for the journey

Dress: Casual wear; sneakers or comfortable shoes for recreational use

Place: Find a solitary place, preferably outdoors, under or near a shade

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*“He appointed twelve, designating them apostles that they might be with him...and that he might send them out to preach and to have authority to drive out demons.”*

-Mark 3:14-15 (NIV)

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### ***Rest...[two hours-recreation]***

You have just climbed a hill; you have left behind your cares. So, come, relax, and do the things that relieve your spirit, mind, and body. This is known as the “Individual Track,” for it is you alone with your Teacher and Shepherd as He “makes” you lie down in green pastures and leads you beside quiet waters to restore your soul. Enjoy!

[The following are some solitary activities that can help you relieve stress and improve the quality of your life during this retreat. Adopt the ones that are available or possible in your location.]

Hikes/walking	Fishing
Canoeing	Golfing
Spa/Massages/Facials	Knitting/sewing
Recreational reading (no theology stuff please!)	Skiing
Photography	Writing, listening or playing music
Napping/Simply relaxing	Drawing/crafts

### **FIRST JOURNEY – Conclusion of First Journey Together**

Time Schedule: 10:00 am –11:30 am **[Community Track]**

Materials needed: Bible, Journal/Notebook, Pencil/Pen

Dress: Casual wear

Place: Find a place for all who registered for the retreat to meet together

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*“These are the twelve He appointed...”*

-Mark 3:16-19 (NIV)

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### ***Share...***

Congratulations! You have arrived at the last part of the journey away with Jesus and with others. If you are not continuing this retreat for its second journey, this will be your last opportunity to share with other colleagues and friends in the ministry. As such, we invite you to conclude together by forming a large circle and reading Mark 3:16-20. Once the public reading has been completed, go around the circle and briefly share personal insights to the following questions:

1. Something new you have learned (or re-learned) about God's character and love toward you.
2. How has this retreat given you a greater awareness of God's presence and nearness in your life? What has opened up your eyes and expanded your vision into the majesty and glory of your Lord?
3. What will you do differently as you come down the mountain? [Center your answer in one of the following areas: spiritual, physical, mental, emotional, and/or relational.]



### **FIRST JOURNEY-Conclusion of First Journey Together**

[Note: For those NOT continuing the retreat, this is the ideal conclusion. For those who are continuing the retreat to the second journey, please see alternate conclusion below.]

Time Schedule: 11:30 am-12:00 noon

Communion materials needed: Bread and Wine, Chalice Hymnal

Place: A gathering place for communion

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*"Jesus came home..."*  
-Mark 3:20 (MSG)

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#### ***Meditate...*** [to be read by a volunteer]

It is the end of the journey. You are now coming down the mountain. But the reality of ministry and life remains. Jesus wants you to remember, however, that He's been there before. In fact, when He came down the mountain with His disciples, Mark points out that "...AGAIN [emphasis mine] a crowd gathered, so that he and his disciples were not even able to eat." (Mk 3:20 NIV)

AGAIN you will face the same problems you left behind: the same pressing issues, the same decisions needing to be made; the same demands on you will be ever present. You will be tempted to abandon your plans for wellness, your friendship walks with your Teacher and Shepherd, your prayers for continued strength and wisdom, and your diligence for being filled daily with Spiritual power. But you are simply challenged to keep your eyes on Jesus. It seems elementary, but it is crucial. In fact, it is hard to do. Just ask Peter as he walked on water...just ask him again when he vowed he would never deny Jesus!

What is required of us, perhaps, is a childlike trust. In such a complex world that we live in, simplicity is what God is requiring of us: "Keep your eyes on me." The focus is not on you; it's on Him.

*I lift up my eyes to the hills, where does my help come from?  
My help comes from the Lord, the Maker of heaven and earth. (Ps. 121:1-2)*

***Come down!*** the mountain. Come home to Him. Jesus came home.

#### ***Holy Communion...***

To be performed by volunteer clergy present. [End communion by pronouncing the priestly blessing found in Psalm 134. Then read the following:]

#### **Until We Meet Again**

As a sojourner in this land, oh God, I ask that you bless me and make your glory shine so that...  
*I may lead your church wisely,*

*Bestow strength and wisdom,  
Expand your Kingdom, and  
End this race faithfully.*

And until we meet again, I bless you, oh Servants of the Lord, with

*The victory in Christ,  
The hope in Christ,  
The Joy of Christ,  
The Love of Christ,  
The power of Christ, and,  
The passion for Christ.*

-Esther Robles



**FIRST JOURNEY-Conclusion of First Journey Together**  
[Note: this is the alternate conclusion for those moving on in the journey.]

Time Schedule: 11:30 am-12:00 noon

Materials needed: None

Place: A trail to walk with other clergy staying on for Second Journey

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*"Jesus came home..."*  
-Mark 3:20 (MSG)

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***Meditate...***[to be read by a volunteer]

You have concluded the first part of this journey. Congratulations! You are now ***Coming down!*** the mountain, but not from this particular journey. You will move on with perhaps other disciples who are taking one more day of rest and time alone with Jesus.

- During these 30 minutes, take a stroll with other clergy and as you walk, discuss how this retreat so far has blessed you or equipped you better as a pastor and a servant of God. [Don't be surprised if Jesus meets you along the way to "Emmaus"...]

As you share, note that when Jesus came down the mountain with His disciples, "...AGAIN [emphasis mine] a crowd gathered, so that He and His disciples were not even able to eat." (Mk 3:20 NIV) You may want to discuss together the following questions:

- What implications does the Mark 3:20 statement have for you as a minister?
- What situations do you think will always be present in ministry?
- How can you better deal with them in the future?
- What things do you think Jesus is preparing you for as you pastor His congregation?
- What is your greatest challenge right now?
- How will you handle it from now on?

***Sing a song/hymn of praise together...***

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Jesus went up on a mountainside and called to him those he wanted...  
...and they came to him.  
-Mark 3:13

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**-Second Journey-**

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## SECOND JOURNEY

Time Schedule: 1:00 pm – 2:30 pm

Materials needed: Bible, Journal or Notebook, Pencil/Pen, Backpack, water for the journey

Dress: Casual wear; sneakers or comfortable shoes for recreational use

Place: Find a solitary place, preferably outdoors, under or near a shade

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*“Jesus went up on a mountainside and called to Him those He wanted...and they came to Him.”*

-Mark 3:13 (NIV)

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### ***Imagine...***

You are already on the mountainside, sitting at His feet. You have completed the first part of your journey with your Teacher and Shepherd. But now you realize that the journey will intensify. His words are more profound; His challenges more direct. And His walk? More focused. He wants you near Him because without Him you cannot accomplish much. He knows the demands, the temptations, the suffering you will endure on account of His name as you continue on. So, He invites you to follow Him. In fact, the challenge to follow Him involves three dimensions, as suggested by Alister McGrath: *Remember* all that God has done in the past; *anticipate* all that God has promised to do in the future; *resolve* to deepen the quality of your Christian faith and life in the present.<sup>6</sup>

### ***Read...***

Psalm 126 – A Pilgrim Song.

### ***Reflect...***

#### *Remember*

Henri Nouwen comments, “When Israel remembers God’s great acts of love and compassion, she enters into these great acts themselves. To remember is not simply to look back at past events; more importantly, it is to bring these events into the present and celebrate them here and now. For Israel, remembrance means participation...It is central to the biblical tradition that God’s love for his people should not be forgotten.”<sup>7</sup> What do you need to remember? What do you need to celebrate now?

#### *Anticipate*

Knowing that you have a great God, what do you anticipate He will do today in your life and ministry? E. Dee Freeborn notes that expectation speaks of faith and of hope. Thus anticipate God’s presence as you pray, expect a hearing (know that you WILL be heard!), and anticipate God’s answer.<sup>8</sup>

#### *Resolve*

What will you do to deepen your walk with Christ? How is it already deepening?

### ***Pray...***

Take it to the Lord in prayer: *remember, anticipate, resolve.*

*Come away with me!*



## SECOND JOURNEY

Time Schedule: 2:30 pm – 5:00 pm **[Individual Track]**

Materials needed: Bible, Journal or Notebook, Pencil/Pen, Backpack, water for the journey

Dress: Casual wear; sneakers or comfortable shoes for recreational use

Place: Find a solitary place, preferably outdoors, under or near a shade

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*“He appointed twelve, designating them apostles that they might be with him...and that he might send them out to preach and to have authority to drive out demons.”*

-Mark 3:14-15 (NIV)

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### ***Rest...[two hours - recreation]***

You are invited again to relax and do the things that relieve your spirit, mind, and body. This is known as the “Individual Track” for it is you alone with your Teacher and Shepherd as He “makes” you lie down in green pastures and leads you beside quiet waters to restore your soul. Enjoy!

[The following are some solitary activities that can help you relieve stress and improve the quality of your life during this retreat. Adopt the ones that are available or possible in your location.]

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Recreational reading (no theology stuff please!)	Skiing
Photography	Writing, listening or playing music
Napping/Simply relaxing	Drawing/crafts
Swimming	Journaling

### ***Fellowship with the Teacher and Shepherd...[half hour-meditation]***

*You are loved: Words of encouragement from Jesus*

Laurie Beth Jones wrote, “Every door is built with hinges...perhaps for eternal reasons. As a carpenter, Jesus must have built a lot of doors in his Father’s mansion. He knew that doors once shut could again be opened. Each of his staff members failed him especially when he needed them most. Yet... ‘having loved his own who were in the world he loved them to the end.’” Know that Jesus will still love you, regardless of your mistakes, doubts, and fears. His door is always open. Enter in and experience His love.

*You are called: Words of affirmation for ministry*

Jesus’ overriding message is love. Love is at the core of your ministry and of who you are; it is the road of everything and anything worthwhile. So don’t hold back on your love. Love as you have been loved: “Watch what God does, and then you do it, like children who learn proper behavior from their parents. Mostly what God does is love you. Keep company with him and learn a life of love. Observe how Christ loved us. His love was not cautious but extravagant. He didn’t love in order to get something from us but to give everything of himself to us. Love like that.” (Eph. 5:1-2 MSG)



## SECOND JOURNEY

Time Schedule: 5:00–6:00 pm [**Community Track**] - 6:00 – 7:00 pm [Break for Dinner] – 7:00-9:00 pm  
[**Community Track - come together again to complete the discussion**]

Materials needed: Large newspaper; markers, and questions below to share and explore in community.  
[Note: Clergy should be divided into teams of no more than five to allow opportunity for all to share. It is suggested that the questions firstly be answered in groups. Later, the entire clergy community is to come together to bring a summary of each of their own group's findings.]

Dress: Casual wear

Place: Find a place for all who registered for the retreat to meet together

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*“These are the twelve He appointed...”*

-Mark 3:16-19 (NIV)

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### **Share...**

In his essay entitled, “Everyday Ministry: Magnificent Opportunities for Personal Spiritual Growth,” Neil B. Wiseman suggests that everyday ministry can become fertile ground for the strongest spiritual formation for a pastor. He adds, “What seems ordinary and routine often turns out to be magnificent, even miraculous.”<sup>10</sup> In this Community Track, I provide some of the various pastoral areas Wiseman presents in order to explore how they can help us to grow spiritually and further equip us as His ministers. Clergy should divide into three principal groups to discuss the various recommendations and later come together to share briefly each of the group's findings. It is important to note, however, that more time should be dedicated in groups, not necessarily to produce an answer or a report, but to develop a bond that builds up and nurtures all present.

### **In all the groups, the following are the central points that should be discussed:**

1. Share ideas and things that you have done in your ministry with respect to the subject matter being presented.
2. Share what you need, and gather resources/recommendations/wisdom from the clergy in your group.
3. Bless each other with words of encouragement, joy, praise, and hope.

### **Group 1: How Preaching Helps You to Grow Spiritually**

It is amazing how God has chosen to include humanity in His ministry. He has chosen to speak through human vessels, flawed, with warts and all. Wiseman believes that the process of preparation to preach can help the pastor become a better person and more useful to God and His church.

- Holy Encounter: Studying God's word and wrestling with the text itself is an open window to experiencing God. Wiseman reflects, “Encountered preaching means wrestling with the truth of a passage until the preacher knows exactly what it says and then asking the Father to ‘look me over and see if I am living this trust before I preach it.’”
- Obsession for Christlikeness: Wiseman comments, “Jesus is the first, last, and everything-in-between inspiration for preaching. In this relationship the Lord opened my eyes to see the differences between the urgent and the important, the passing and the lasting, the peripheral and the essential.”
- Accountability to God and People: Because we speak on behalf of Christ to the people, we must take care that the message does not come out warped. Wiseman advises, “...free as possible from religious goofy dust and phony parroting of the latest theological fad.”
- Integrity and Its Satisfaction: Per Wiseman, in preaching, the minister shows authenticity in at least three ways: (1) the preacher must know Christ personally; (2) the preacher must live the

message; (3) the preacher must show from his or her own life a path that others can take. (See Titus 2:7-8; 1 Tim. 4:12)

### **Group 2: How Pastoral Care Helps You to Grow Spiritually**

Pastoral care is at the core of representing the heart and the servant hands of Jesus. It is a ministry taken to the sick, the brokenhearted, the addicted, and the abused. This kind of duty will take us to places we at times will be most uncomfortable: the hospital rooms, the streets, jails, homes, and graves, to name a few.

- **Spiritual Stretch**: Ponder and comment on the following statement by David Fisher: “Pastoral work by its very nature is a work of grace and therefore must be conducted with all the character and beauty of the grace of God.” How does pastoral care stretch you or make you want to quit?
- **Love Matters**: Ministry is much more than a solid education, skills, and degrees. The centrality of the gospel is love. Wiseman comments, “The more love, the more pastor and people trust each other.”
- **Living Examples of Faith**: There’s no better opportunity to challenge our faith than in difficult times. Rev. Jacsaint Francisque is a 53-year old Disciples of Christ Haitian minister living in Florida. Once he expressed to me [E. Robles]: “There is inconsistency in the worship of my people to God; the people are negligent. They don’t come to worship because they need to work, they struggle to pay the rent, and fear deportation. But I have to preach in a positive way. I preach the hope in God. I struggle with these things myself. My congregation does not have much money to pay me either. Socially we have nothing, but we must trust that God can provide!”
- **Dependence and Unique Partnership**: Wiseman comments on the uniqueness of a pastoral visit; “the minister represents the Lord and the combined fellowship of the local church.” This presence reminds me [E. Robles] of a time I was asked to make a pastoral visit to a dying person in a hospital about 50 miles away from my home. I got lost on the way and wondered whether it was worth going. But nothing became as wonderful as walking in that room. I then understood how critical my presence was because I was God’s representative. My irritation was gone and Christ’s compassion took over. The family needed Christ’s comfort; the dying a prayer of mercy. It is in those moments you realize how people depend on Christ’s words and healing touch and you are the closest to Him they’ll ever be.
- **Agape Bonds Forged in Crises**: Wiseman alerts us, “a holy bond often develops between persons suffering deep crises and a pastor who represents the Lord in their dark days.” This fellowship of suffering creates a loving bond difficult to break. Wiseman advises that for the incoming pastor, such relationships should be affirmed and appreciated because they are “living trophies of the spirit of Jesus at work.”

### **Group 3: How Other Expressions of Ministry Help You to Grow Spiritually**

Other tasks of ministry can also add to your spiritual formation. Wiseman regards evangelism and worship as two other expressions that can help you to grow spiritually. As you discuss the two, share ways in which they have personally affected you or how they need to influence you in the future:

- **Evangelism**: A healthy church needs to have a constant flow of new converts who are also discipled. Wiseman highlights how evangelism builds on our spiritual formation as pastors: (1) Sharing your faith with non-believers builds spiritual stamina; (2) Teaching on the spiritual disciplines provides as a refresher course for the pastor; (3) Witnessing the personal transformation of the lives of others is amazingly significant for any minister.
- **Worship**: Wiseman shares his personal spiritual formation in leading worship: (1) Self-examination: “Standing in such a holy place calls for frequent self-examination and for a humble admission of divine enablement.” (2) Clarified Perspective: the act of leading worship brings

perspective on the issues and crisis being faced personally and in the church. (3) God-focused: “That phrase, ‘the kind of worshipers the Father seeks,’ is an enlightening concept that changes worship from self-focus to God-focus-what it is He wants.”



## SECOND JOURNEY

Time Schedule: 9:30-10:00 pm

Materials needed: Bible, Journal or Notebook, Pencil/Pen

Place: Back in your room

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*“Jesus came home...”*

-Mark 3:20 (MSG)

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It is the end of the day. The sun has gone down; you are tired, and most likely ready for bed. But just before the lights go out, take 30 minutes to have one last chat with your Teacher and Shepherd. Let Him shepherd you and console you. You may use the following prayer by Thomas Merton:

*“My Lord God, I have no idea where I am going. I do not see the road ahead of me; I cannot know for certain where it will end. Nor do I really know myself, and the fact that I think I am following your will does not mean that I am actually doing so. But I believe that the desire to please you does in fact please you. And I hope I have that desire in all that I am doing. I hope that I will never do anything apart from that desire. And I know that if I do this you will lead me by the right road, though I may know nothing about it. Therefore, I will trust you always though I may seem to be lost and in the shadow of death. I will not fear, for you are ever with me, and you will never leave me to face my perils alone.”*

Goodnight.



## SECOND JOURNEY

Time Schedule: 6:00 am – 7:00 am

Materials needed: Bible, Journal or Notebook, Pencil/Pen

Place: In your room or a solitary place

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*“Jesus went up on a mountainside and called to Him those He wanted...and they came to Him.”*

-Mark 3:13 (NIV)

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### ***Imagine...***

Jesus bids you once more to ***Come up!*** But remember, He will always be inviting you to come up because you need to know Him more intimately. He wants you to go deeper. So, brace yourself and get ready to come up again. Close your eyes now and visualize the different nature settings found in Psalm 23: sitting beside still waters; lying in green pastures; “right paths” versus “wrong paths”; a dark valley of death; a table with a large feast; a place where you are anointed with oil; the House of the Lord.

- What do you see?
- What feelings/emotions do they evoke?
- What comfort, joy, fear or hope do these places bring?

### ***Read...***

Psalm 125 – A Pilgrim Song.

### ***Reflect...***

What an amazing and edifying moment it must have been for Israel to come up to the holy city together with friends, neighbors, and family, and sing this pilgrim song. As they ascended, they looked at their surroundings – the surrounding hills, the valleys, the rivers, the skies, the beasts of the field – and all of creation served as a living testimony to the people of God’s faithfulness, sovereignty, provision, power, and lovingkindness. How are you getting ready to ***Come up!*** once more? What do your surroundings tell you? Do they point you to trust in God or in itself? Are you conscious that God is waiting for you to worship Him and express your trust in Him?

### ***Pray...***

McGrath expressed, “Worship is the human response to catching a glimpse of God in all his radiance and glory. It is a moment in which words fail us and we fall to our knees in joy, wonder, and amazement: Worship refreshes us precisely because it forces us to raise our eyes upward and appreciate the immensity and grandeur of our maker and redeemer.”<sup>11</sup>

*Come away with me!*



## SECOND JOURNEY

Time Schedule: 8:00 – 10:00 am **[Individual Track]**

Materials needed: Bible, Journal or Notebook, Pencil/Pen, Backpack, water for the journey

Dress: Casual wear; sneakers or comfortable shoes for recreational use

Place: Find a solitary place, preferably outdoors, under or near a shade

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*“He appointed twelve, designating them apostles that they might be with him...and that he might send them out to preach and to have authority to drive out demons.”*

-Mark 3:14-15 (NIV)

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### ***Rest...[two hours-recreation]***

You have just climbed a hill; you have left behind your cares. So, come, relax, and do the things that relieve your spirit, mind, and body. This is known as the “Individual Track,” for it is you alone with your Teacher and Shepherd as He “makes” you lie down in green pastures and leads you beside quiet waters to restore your soul. Enjoy!

[The following are some solitary activities that can help you relieve stress and improve the quality of your life during this retreat. Adopt the ones that are available or possible in your location.]

Hikes/walking	Fishing
Canoeing	Golfing
Spa/Massages/Facials	Knitting/sewing
Recreational reading (no theology stuff please!)	Skiing
Photography	Writing, listening or playing music
Napping/Simply relaxing	Drawing/crafts

## SECOND JOURNEY – Conclusion of Journey

Time Schedule: 10:00am –11:30 am **[Community Track]**

Materials needed: Bible, Journal/Notebook, Pencil/Pen

Dress: Casual wear

Place: Find a place for all who registered for the retreat to meet together

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*“These are the twelve He appointed...”*

-Mark 3:16-19 (NIV)

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### ***Share...***

Congratulations! You have arrived at the last part of the journey away with Jesus and with others. We hope that this experience with Jesus has truly refreshed you and changed you. For the conclusion of this retreat, we invite you to form a large circle to read aloud Psalm 133. Once the public reading has been completed, go around the circle and have all briefly share personal insights to the following questions.

[Note: these are the same questions found in the First Journey; however, the Second Journey insights should be shared instead.]

1. Something new you have learned (or re-learned) about God's character and love toward you.
2. How has this retreat given you a greater awareness of God's presence and nearness in your life? What has opened up your eyes and expanded your vision into the majesty and glory of your Lord?
3. What will you do differently as you come down the mountain? [Center your answer in one of the following areas: spiritually, physically, mentally, emotionally, and/or relationally.]



### SECOND JOURNEY-Conclusion of Journey

Time Schedule: 11:30 am-12:00 noon

Materials needed: Communion materials: Bread and Wine

Place: A gathering place for communion

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*"Jesus came home..."*  
-Mark 3:20 (MSG)

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#### **Meditate...** [to be read by a volunteer]

It is the end of the journey. You are now coming down the mountain. But the reality of ministry and life remains. Mark points out that "...AGAIN [emphasis mine] a crowd gathered, so that he and his disciples were not even able to eat." (Mk 3:20 NIV)

As ministers, Jesus is bidding us to ***Come down!*** the mountain to love and feed His sheep. There is a lot of work to be done. Let us pray for those God will bring your way and for those in need back home.

**Activity of Intercession** <sup>12</sup>: these prayers are to be done silently, but a volunteer is to call out the following instructions:

- **Bow your head and pray** for those in the world who are oppressed. Include those unable to worship freely, those terrorized by more powerful groups, and those who cannot hold their heads high and walk in freedom. [allow a minute or two to pray for this need]
- Now **sit down and pray** for those who are unable to stand, those who have disabilities, and people who are challenged physically, mentally, emotionally, or in other ways. [allow a minute or two to pray for this need]
- Now **kneel (bend down) where you are and pray** for the small people of the world – children. Pray for their hearts to be turned to Jesus, that their parents and other adults will love them, and for their health and education. [allow a minute or two to pray for this need]
- **Put your face as close to the ground as possible and pray** for those who are weak and those who cannot pray for themselves. Pray for the sick, in hospitals, and those unborn. [allow a minute or two to pray for this need]

- **Return to your seat; and, as you sit, thank God** for your life. No matter how frail and imperfect our bodies are, we have been given eternal life in Jesus. Thank God for that. [allow a minute or two to pray for this need]
- Now **stand with your head bowed and thank God** for the freedom you have. Even if you feel oppressed in some part of your life, you have freedom from sin in Christ Jesus. Thank God for His mercy and forgiveness.

***Holy Communion...***

To be performed by volunteer clergy present. [End communion by pronouncing the priestly blessing found in Psalm 134. Then read the following:]

**Until We Meet Again**

As a sojourner in this land, oh God, I ask that you bless me and make your glory shine so that...

*I may lead your church wisely,  
Bestow strength and wisdom,  
Expand your Kingdom, and,  
End this race faithfully.*

And until we meet again, I bless you, oh Servants of the Lord, with,

*The victory in Christ,  
The hope in Christ,  
The Joy of Christ,  
The Love of Christ,  
The power of Christ, and,  
The passion for Christ.*

-Esther Robles

## End Notes

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- <sup>1</sup> Willimon, Mulholland Jr., Harper, et. al. *The Pastor's Guide to Personal Spiritual Formation*, 11.
- <sup>2</sup> Ibid, 14
- <sup>3</sup> Ibid, 14
- <sup>4</sup> Nouwen, Henri J.M. *The Living Reminder*, 17.
- <sup>5</sup> Ibid, 22.
- <sup>6</sup> McGrath, Alister. *The Journey: A Pilgrim in the Lands of the Spirit*, 27.
- <sup>7</sup> Nouwen, Henri J.M. *The Living Reminder*, 38.
- <sup>8</sup> Willimon, Mulholland Jr., Harper, et. al. *The Pastor's Guide to Personal Spiritual Formation*, 50.
- <sup>9</sup> Jones, Laurie Beth. *Jesus CEO-Using Ancient Wisdom for Visionary Leadership*
- <sup>10</sup> Willimon, Mulholland Jr., Harper, et. al. *The Pastor's Guide to Personal Spiritual Formation*, 97-106
- <sup>11</sup> McGrath, Alister. *The Journey: A Pilgrim in the Lands of the Spirit*, 62.
- <sup>12</sup> This prayer activity can be found in its entirety in *Bore No More* by Mike and Amy Nappa, Group Publishing, 1995, 50-51.

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