

Spiritual Formation

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Introduction

Our service to God through the church is a response to our relationship with God. It is that relationship that calls us to service and to be active in mission. When we understand we are truly loved by our God and learn to live as loved people, then we can hear God's call to love and serve others. So spending time to develop our own spiritual life as well as learning about the needs of the world through intentional study are both necessary to bring us to the place where we can be effective in serving as God's missionaries in the world. It is our spirituality that gives us strength and wisdom to do the mission needed.

In this module, you will find resources to assist in preparation for study and worship. We suggest reading through all this material and utilizing the pieces that work for your group. Additional resources related to study and worship covering topics such as culturally diverse worship, the church seasons, and

others are available from Christian Board of Publication. You can order a catalog by calling 1-800-355-3383.

Program Planning

Preparation

The Study Director . . . The Worship Director...

- Attends the regional/district training events and becomes acquainted with the study and worship materials, the support materials available, and the various methods of presentation; becomes knowledgeable about the *New Day* magazine and *Leader's Guide*, available from Christian Board of Publication and the general programs which are available online at www.discipleswomen.org. She also reads the *Annual Manual for Leaders* available from either the regional Disciples Women/Christian Women's Fellowship president or online at www.discipleswomen.org and is aware of regional cabinet members as a resource.
- Contacts members who are interested in developing study or worship programs for the group.
- Develops the agenda for the planning meetings.

The program committee:

- Reads thoroughly the general program and group materials.

The Program Planning Meeting

1. The directors briefly review the theme statement of the year, the content of the general programs and the group study materials.
2. The group discusses the theme and basic contents of the materials.
3. The committee then plans the general program for the year by
 - a. selecting the general programs to be used in the coming year
 - b. taking each selected general program in turn, be sure to

- consider its content;
 - examine the suggested method of presentation;
 - review the resources available of the subject such as books, films, tapes, and persons with special knowledge in the area, in the congregation and in the community.
 - discuss the relevance of worship to each particular study
- c. considering the DW/CWF membership carefully and selecting person(s) to be responsible for planning the general program but not necessarily for its presentation. (While in some congregations this task may belong to the study/worship director alone, it is helpful if she invites others to share in this responsibility.) The study/worship director then contacts the person assigned to each general program and invites them to accept this responsibility.
- Note: It is important to know the exact time allocated for the presentation.*
- d. inviting the total congregation to a general meeting, since some general programs lend themselves very well to an all-congregation event. If this is done, include men and youth along with the women on the planning committee for the program.
- e. considering inviting the men of the congregation to share in some of the general programs or group studies. If this is done, be sure to include men in the planning.

4. Discuss:

- Ways to make this information relevant to the concerns of the women in the group.
- Methods leading to the most lively and helpful discussions. Note: People will discuss areas in which they have a basic knowledge, about which they have strong opinions, or which are controversial.
- Brainstorm for alternative methods of presentation. This can bring out creative suggestions.

- The most appropriate placement of worship in each particular experience. At the beginning of the study as preparation? Or at the end as summary?
5. Include worship in the planning meeting. As the meeting is opened, a prayer for guidance is helpful. A brief experience of worship at the end of the planning meeting can include thanksgiving for the investment and involvement of the women, a request for guidance in the continued development of the programming and individual and corporate commitment to the ongoing work of Jesus Christ. As you plan worship for your group meeting and your general gatherings, consider these things:
 - a. Consider the worship content. Note sources and explanations concerning many of the worship sections. Take care that language used in worship is appropriate for the group (e.g., is the group all women? Are there men and children present?)
 - b. Make plans for incorporating the offering in a meaningful way.
 - c. Develop designs for effective worship centers, remembering that
 - a worship center has one basic message which is apparent at first glance
 - a worship center is relevant to the content of the study material
 - d. Plan for special worship celebrations, e.g., a celebration to center around the dedication of service gifts, to be planned with the service/action director.

After the Planning Meeting

1. Works closely with the worship and service directors, informing them of the decisions of the study committee. Encourages the group study chairpersons to work with the group worship and social action chairpersons, as study and worship provide the foundation for responsible action in mission.
2. Plans future study committee meetings. At the end of the first four months of the program year, the planning committee meets again for review and

- evaluation. By this time one of the group studies and several general programs will have been completed. Review plans for the rest of the program year and make any necessary adjustments or changes.
3. Keep in touch with those leaders who are doing study in groups. Check in with them and see what they need.
 4. Report your evaluation of the programs including both study and worship to your executive committee to assist an incoming study director.

Helpful Hints for Preparing Study¹

“I don’t know how to lead a study.” “I’ve never led a study before.” It is often the first response when a person is asked to teach a class or lead a study. Be reassured that you don’t have to know how to teach; you simply have to be willing to facilitate information to be shared with others.

Points to Consider

1. People want to learn. An enthusiastic study director enables a creative study committee to develop study experiences which challenge learners.
2. A study or program adequately and creatively presented involves the participants in an experience of growth.
3. Curriculum is developed to be used by a wide community of people. When planning a study time use what works for your specific group. The *New Day Leader’s Guide* has a wealth of information from which to choose.
4. Pray.
5. Build a sense of community.
6. Teachers are not required to be experts. If you are using *New Day* make sure you read the entire chapter and review the *Leader’s Guide* for resources and ideas for your group to study.

¹Edited from an article by Louise Sloan Goben, North Hollywood Christian Church.

7. When formulating your lesson plan, begin by establishing some learning goals or objectives—information you think essential to get across. It is more important to uncover something significant about a subject than it is to cover all the details of the subject. If you uncover important ideas or help another person to discover something of great significance to her, you have done your job!
8. Find ways to engage people’s personal involvement in your subject.
 - Ask trivia questions about the subject matter
 - Have a pop quiz with general information
 - As you begin, ask, “Tell me everything you know about _____” (whatever your topic is). Make a list of responses where people can see them. Often people find they know more than they think they did and everyone finds it’s just plain fun to share learning together.

New Day Magazine

The *New Day* magazine was created to be a conversation for women in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) and to be used for personal spiritual development. It is also the core resource for group study.

The creation of study materials for Disciples women is a unique process that begins at the grassroots level. Women have an opportunity to send their response to the current study materials and suggestions for future studies directly to the Office of Disciples Women. *New Day* is designed with core elements and variables. The core elements are those elements that are essential for every session. They are:

- A Welcome that is a centering for each session
- Scripture readings, “A Look at the Scripture”
- Points to Ponder for deeper thought and personal reflection
- Mission Matters, a fresh approach to global issues/concerns and actions
- Intercessory Prayer Ideas, an opportunity to expand one’s prayer life beyond the realm of self

- Can Do's, action ideas for the reader
- A complete service of worship, crafted for both personal or group worship experience
- Spirit Quest, a spirituality element that encourages one's personal walk in the Spirit.

Also variables are woven throughout the magazine, such as recipes from the mission study area, cartoons, and activities.

A *Leader's Guide* is provided for your group study and worship experience. It provides in-depth information, activities and ideas for your group's use. It is essential when you are using the *New Day* for group study. It is important that everyone in your group has a copy of the magazine but only one *Leader's Guide* is necessary.

In the Fullness of Time

An excellent resource for information on the history of the women's organization in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) is *In The Fullness of Time* available from the Office of Disciples Women for \$10.00 plus \$5.00 for shipping and handling. The following is a study guide:²

IN THE FULLNESS OF TIME:

A Guide for Study and Action for Such a Time as This

The early twenty-first century finds women in new roles and professions and facing changing demands. We are faced with opportunities and dilemmas different from those which confronted our Disciples sisters in earlier times. Their stories of passion and devotion are splendidly rehearsed in *In The Fullness of Time: A History of Women in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)*. This is a moving and inspiring story by Fran Craddock, Martha Faw, and Nancy Heimer, who lived much of this account.

If you find reading books a daunting activity, relate to the book as a newspaper. Choose the parts that "reach out and grab you." The important thing is to hear our sisters' call to BE THE CHURCH in our own time and place. When

²Guide prepared by Shirley St. John.

their challenges seemed impossible, they listened more attentively to the Spirit. Their difficulties and challenges were neither less nor more demanding than ours. As we hear their stories, how do we get excited enough to let love lead *us* into action?

Here is one possibility.

Initiate, Publicize, and Recruit

1. Choose your target audience. Many possible groupings come to mind: working women, young mothers, older women available during the day.
2. Decide on a time of day that is possible for the group you choose and find three weeks when that time is not in conflict with major church or community events.
3. Announce the study/action group and recruit individuals whom you feel would profit from this kind of experience. (Write personal notes, make phone calls, talk to folks at church.)
4. Make the book *In The Fullness of Time* available. Be sure anyone who has an interest in the group has a copy.

Clearly, this design leaves room for much creativity on the part of the group. That's the intent. If the women only glimpse the wonder of their history, that would be worthwhile. If they are moved to action, that would be great!

Session 1

Introduce yourselves and tell how you came to be a member of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ).

DO NOT ASK who has read the book. Be sure everyone has access to a book, and then suggest that we all browse through the book for a few minutes and find one of the stories about Disciples women that catches our attention. Take five or ten minutes to read. Then, offer this context.

“These stories about Disciples women who saw their mission and did it are pearls for us to treasure. Let's share three or four of these stories with the group. Keep them brief enough to be interesting, but descriptive enough to encourage us.”

Let's string these stories of women's patience, persistence, vision and courage into a necklace of discipleship which we have been given as our inheritance. (List these stories for future use.)

How could we share this beautiful treasure with others? Example: Make a necklace of colored paper circles with a title for each story you tell in the group. Share the necklace of love and concern with another group, such as a Sunday School class or another women's group.

Session 2

Choose one of the stories from the last week. Imagine each of the following scenes.

1. The woman sees the issue that needs to be dealt with.
2. She discerns what needs to happen. Does she gather a group? How does she do this? If the book is not clear about this, what do you imagine happened?
3. How does she organize for action?
4. What were the obstacles? What kept her going?

Divide into smaller groups and see if you can dance this experience. Or, think about a puppet show that could share the story with children. Think about other art forms that can communicate beyond words. Share these with the whole group next week as a review. Try to capture the feelings of these experiences of women from our past.

Session 3

Review last week by having the smaller groups show the others the art form they created last week. Our history as Disciples women is clearly an essential part of the whole church, both past and future.

In our congregation, what needs do we see? What possibilities are waiting to be actualized? In order for this goal to be achieved, what needs to happen -- spiritually, socially, and economically? What could be our part in this? How would we set about enacting this vision?

How does this conversation make you feel?

And now the real question: What shall we do?

DW/CWF study materials and additional resources for women are available from Christian Board of Publication. They can be ordered by calling 1-800-366-3383 or by visiting www.cbp21.com.

Supplemental materials related to the current year's theme are available on the Cokesbury order form. You can obtain an order form by calling Cokesbury at 1-888-985-8080.

Helpful Hints for Preparing Worship

Elements to Consider

When preparing worship, some elements to consider are:

Theme: Review materials in the *New Day* magazine and *Leader's Guide* that your group will be using.

Space: Decide how much room you need, what your program setting is, if you have a table, where your worship center will be.

Centers: Look for suggestions for creating a worship space in the *New Day* magazine and *Leader's Guide*, use worship cloths in appropriate colors (tablecloths, scarves, fabric, placemats), candles, tea lights, crosses, plants, items from nature, flowers, sculpture, handwork, pictures.

Spoken words: Look in *New Day*, the *Chalice Hymnal*, *Chalice Worship* and the Bible for scriptures, calls to worship, litanies, meditations that speak to the theme of the program.

Music: Look in the *New Day* and *Leader's Guide*, hymnals, and *Chalice Praise* for songs to enhance your worship. If your community is not comfortable singing, look for CDs or tapes that will enhance your worship.

Offering: Make offering an intentional part of the worship experience; share ahead of time where your offering is going.

Communion: Consider offering communion as part of some of your worship experiences. Explore different ways of sharing communion and a variety of choices for elements.

Sensitivity to Language and Culture: Because God is inclusive of all people, our worship needs to reflect that. Resources on inclusive language and culturally diverse worship can be found in the Christian Board of Publication catalog. Ask women to talk with people from different cultural communities about elements of worship that would be appropriate for your gathering.

Color and the Liturgical Year: As you create your worship space, be aware of the liturgical season and consider using these colors. The following is a guide for each season of the liturgical year.

Advent: Blue is used for its references to hope. It originated in Scandinavia, probably because purple dye was too expensive for churches to use. The alternate color for Advent is purple, the royal color of the coming King (note that this is a different meaning than when it is used in Lent; see below).

Christmas: White is used, as a reference to the purity of the newborn Christ, and to our light and joy in him.

Epiphany of Our Lord: White (see Christmas).

Baptism of Our Lord: White (see Christmas).

Sundays after the Epiphany: Green is used for its symbolism of our growth in Christ. Green, in a sense, is a “neutral color,” used when more festive or more somber color is not appointed.

Transfiguration of Our Lord: White (see Christmas).

Ash Wednesday: Black is the preferred color, since it is the color of the ashes to which we will all return. Purple is the alternate color for this first day of Lent.

Lent: Purple is indicated, as the stark color of repentance and solemnity.

Sunday of the Passion: Scarlet is the preferred color of this first day of Holy Week, as it suggests the deep color of blood. (Scarlet is to be distinguished from the brighter color of red, which is appointed for the Day of Pentecost, martyrs’ days, and certain church celebrations). If a parish does not have scarlet vestments, purple may be used.

Days of Holy Week: Scarlet or purple may be used for Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday of Holy Week.

Maundy Thursday: For this fourth day of Holy Week, celebrated as the institution of the Lord's Supper, scarlet or white is used.

Good Friday: No vestments or paraments are used on this day, after the stripping of the altar on Maundy Thursday night.

Vigil of Easter: White as the color of joy in the Resurrection is used on this night.

Easter Day: On this one day of the church year, gold may be used. White is the alternate, perhaps with gold running through it. The gold color indicates that this day is the "queen of feasts," unique in the entire church year.

Sundays of Easter: White (see Vigil of Easter).

Day of Pentecost: Red as the color of fire is used on this day when we remember the tongues of fire descended on the crowd in Jerusalem. In contrast to the color of scarlet, Pentecost's red is a bright color.

Other Sundays after Pentecost: Green is used to indicate our growth in faith as we follow the teachings and ministry of Christ.

About the Chalice

The red chalice bearing the "X-shaped" cross of St. Andrew was adopted as the symbol of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) by the denomination's General Assembly in 1971.

The chalice symbolizes the centrality of the Lord's Supper to Disciples life. The St. Andrew's Cross, the national cross of Scotland, focuses attention on the Scotch³ Presbyterian roots of the church. Thomas and Alexander Campbell both studied in Scotland and were Presbyterians. St. Andrew has been identified with the laity and evangelism, prominent emphases of the Disciples over the years.

The red color of the chalice signifies vitality, spirit, and sacrifice.

³Writing in the mid-1800s, the Campbells referred the Presbyterian Church of Scotland as the "Scotch Presbyterian" church. "Scottish" is the preferred term today.

The chalice and St. Andrew's Cross, symbol of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), adopted by the church's General Assembly in 1971, is a trademark registered with the United States Patent Office.

Making Offerings Worshipful

Plan ahead for the offering. Decide how you will receive the offering prior to worship and make appropriate arrangements.

- Music is an integral part of worship. Arrange for music if available.
- Use offering statements to help motivate giving. Such statements may be short scripture passages, including the teachings of Jesus. Other statements may be found in a hymnal or *Chalice Worship*.
- Dedicate the offering with prayer

Personal Spiritual Development

Encouraging Individuals to Develop a Deeper Spiritual Life

In this age of instant communication, instant replay, and instant potatoes, women are discovering that there is no instant faith. Faith is developed through personal meditation and reading, and experiences of study and worship in groups where opportunities are offered to verbalize doubts and hopes and where persons can join in sharing concerns of the faith journey.

Personal worship is a discipline of leaving the noise and distractions of everyday life and seeking God through Bible reading, prayer, and meditation. It is a time to be quiet and listen to what God's word has to say. This leads to insights, spiritual renewal, and a sense of direction for life. As the individual spiritual life is enriched, the corporate life of the congregation is renewed.

Suggestions for Deepening the Spiritual Life

1. Encourage daily personal meditation or quiet time.
 - Suggest setting aside a special time and place for prayer, allowing time for Scripture reading, prayer and meditation.
 - Suggest resources, such as a daily devotional book.
2. Encourage Bible reading.
 - Suggest spending as much time with the Bible as with the newspaper, TV, and Internet
 - Offer Bible-reading helps.
3. Encourage the formation of prayer groups or prayer partners.
 - Prayer groups might meet weekly for an hour at church or home.
 - Prayer partners might meet at least once a week. On other days they can choose a special time to pray for each other, to keep in touch and share prayer needs.
4. Consider asking DW/CWF members to write meditations to be compiled into a book on special topics, special days, or in relation to the DW/CWF Bible study for the year.
5. Encourage praying about relationships with specific persons, thus opening the door to love and reconciliation.
6. Help DW/CWF members understand that prayer life and action cannot be separated—that prayer empowers witness and service.
7. Consider the possibility of dedicating a room in the church for prayer and meditation.

New Day Spirit Quest

The Spirit Quest page is designed to be used as a resource for personal spiritual development. It includes these elements:

- Sacred space – ideas for creating a worship space in your home
- A look at life to help you see everyday life through God's eyes
- Wisdom Corner – quotes, sayings, poetry, scripture

Seven-Minute Workout

The seven-minute workout is one way of developing devotional time.

Pray – one minute

- Offer to God any part of your life where you need God's presence
- Ask God to show you something new as you read the scripture

Read the Word – five minutes

- Choose a scripture verse for the day. You might look at the lectionary or a devotional book that you might have.
- Ask the questions:
 - What does this passage say about God, Jesus Christ, or the Holy Spirit?
 - What does this passage say about me (or humanity)?
 - What can I do to apply to my life what I have learned from this passage?

Pray – one minute

Thank God for what you have learned

Ask God to help apply to your life what you have learned

Pray for yourself and others

The Practice of *Lectio Divina*⁴

Lectio divina is an ancient Christian practice that can put us in touch with the scriptures.

Step 1: Read the scripture. Identify words or phrases that speak to your heart.

Step 2: Meditation. Read the scripture passage again and meditate on what it might be saying to you personally.

Step 3: Prayer.

⁴Article written by Fr. Luke Dysinger, O.S.B, used by permission.

Step 4: Contemplation. Enjoy the communion with God. Rest silently in the presence of God.

Choose a text of the scriptures that you wish to pray. Many Christians use in their daily *lectio divina* one of the readings from the liturgy for the day; others prefer to slowly work through a particular book of the Bible. It makes no difference which text is chosen, as long as one has no set goal of "covering" a certain amount of text: the amount is in God's hands, not yours.

Place yourself in a comfortable position and allow yourself to become silent. Use whatever method is best for you and allow yourself to enjoy silence for a few moments. Then turn to the text and read it slowly, gently. Savor each portion of the reading, constantly listening for the "still, small voice" of a word or phrase that somehow says, "I am for you today." Do not expect lightning or ecstasies. In *lectio divina* God is teaching us to listen and to seek in silence. God does not reach out and grab us; rather, we are invited ever more deeply into God's presence.

Next take the word or phrase into yourself. Memorize it and slowly repeat it to yourself, allowing it to interact with your inner world of concerns, memories and ideas. Do not be afraid of "distractions." Memories or thoughts are simply parts of yourself which, when they rise up during *lectio divina*, are asking to be given to God along with the rest of your inner self. Allow this inner pondering, this rumination, to invite you into dialogue with God.

Then, speak to God. Whether you use words or ideas or images or all three is not important. Interact with God as you would with one who you know loves and accepts you. And give to God what you have discovered in yourself during your experience of *meditatio*. Experience God using the word or phrase that God has given you as a means of blessing, of transforming the ideas and memories, which your pondering on the Word has awakened. Give to God what you have found within your heart.

Finally, simply rest in God's embrace. And when invited to return to your pondering of the Word or to your inner dialogue with God, do so. Learn to use words when words are helpful, and to let go of words when they no longer are

necessary. Rejoice in the knowledge that God is with you in both words and silence, in spiritual activity and inner receptivity.

"...*lectio divina* has no goal other than that of being in the presence of God by praying the Scriptures."

Sometimes in *Lectio Divina* one will return several times to the printed text, either to savor the literary context of the word or phrase that God has given, or to seek a new word or phrase to ponder. At other times only a single word or phrase will fill the whole time set aside for *lectio divina*. It is not necessary to anxiously assess the quality of one's *lectio divina* as if one were "performing" or seeking some goal: *Lectio divina* has no goal other than that of being in the presence of God by praying the Scriptures.

...In *lectio divina* we discover that there is no place in our hearts, no interior corner or closet that cannot be opened and offered to God. God teaches us in *lectio divina* what it means to be members of the royal priesthood—a people called to consecrate all of our memories, our hopes and our dreams to Christ.