

## Listening to the Word for the Community of Faith

New forms of 'church' have the greatest likelihood of succeeding if they are driven by a clear sense of mission. Christian communities of faith are story-formed communities— formed as the stories of scripture shape the experiences of the community of faith. Therefore, part of the process of discerning the mission of the new form of 'church' into which God is calling you involves discerning which biblical story or stories will be hosted by the new community of faith.

- 1) In each participating community of faith, invite people to reflect on/pray about the questions:
  - a) What is the biblical story that expresses who this community of faith is?
  - b) What is the biblical story into which the new community of faith might live?
  
- 2) At separate gatherings of the participating communities of faith,
  - a) Invite people to share in small groups of 3 or 4 people a biblical story that expresses who they are as a community of faith:
    - i) What is the biblical story?
    - ii) In what ways does that story express the life and work of this community of faith?
    - iii) Share a story from the life and work of the community of faith in which that biblical story 'came alive'.
  
  - b) In the group as a whole,
    - i) List the biblical stories that have been named
    - ii) Listen together to a few of the contemporary stories where the biblical story was lived out in the life and work of the community of faith
    - iii) Reflect together: What is the story at the heart of this community that others need to know? (This should include both a biblical story and the contemporary experience of it in the life and work of the community of faith)
  
  - c) In the group as a whole,
    - i) Invite people to share what they have been discerning in answer to the question: "What is the biblical story in which the new community of faith will live?"
    - ii) List the biblical stories that have been named.
  
- 2) At a joint gathering of the participating communities of faith,
  - a) Invite someone from each community of faith to share the story at their heart of their life as discerned in the separate gatherings. (This should include both a biblical story and the contemporary experience of it in the life and work of the community of faith)
  
  - b) i) Invite each community of faith to share the list of biblical stories gathered in answer to the question, "What is the biblical story in which the new community of faith will live?"
    - ii) Ask participants to identify which stories speak to them most strongly and why
    - iii) Choose a maximum of three of the stories. Invite each community of faith to 'live with' those stories for a few months. They might invite everyone in the congregation to use *lectio divina* with those stories, using a poster/board to gather the insights/themes/words that emerge for them. They might use *Dwelling with the Word* with the stories at committee meetings/group meetings, using a poster/board to gather the insights/themes/words that emerge for them
    - iv) At a future joint gathering of the participating communities of faith, share together the gathered reflections on the stories. Discuss: What might God be saying to us about the mission of the community of faith that develops out of this process? What would be involved in improvising these stories in the current context?