You will need:

Bible
Practicing Our Faith(POF), chapter 13
Living Till We Die (LTWD) Songbook
Video, *Growing in Faith,* cued to segment on Mary Oyer, 44 minutes into video,
CDs of Taize responses,
Handouts:
◊"Ways to Practice Singing Our Lives"
◊"Evaluation Forms"
◊"Commissioning Worship Service: Celebrating the Journey"
◊""Litany for Commitment"
◊"Reflective Readings"

You may need:

A Song To Sing, A Life To Live
Study Guide to *A Song to Sing*
Study Guide, "Singing Our Lives," *Christian Reflection*
Guest musicians to accompany music throughout session and for closing worship
CD - "I Will Sing a Song of Love"
Celtic Prayers of Iona
LTWD Songbook CD

(Handouts and reference information on things you will need can be found in Part Two.)

Faith Practice Six: SINGING OUR LIVES

Background

The faith practice of singing our lives can help us rediscover the joy of living through the power of praise and thanksgiving in music. Music is a gift of God that moves us to a deeper plane of being, drawing us closer to God in ways no other practice can do. This final session may culminate in a worship celebration through music, followed by a meal together. A part of the worship experience could be a commissioning litany weaving together all of the faith practice, enabling participants to see their interrelatedness. Our goal is for all to be challenged to go out with changed lives to practice these new skills and perspectives. Concluding the session (and course) with a meal and breaking bread together is a fitting way to celebrate the time participants have been together.

Focus of session

We experience the gift of song as a way to tell our stories, particularly at the end of life. We sing as a sending forth, being challenged to continue "singing our lives."

Room set-up

Among the greenery and candles on the tables, place cutouts of music notes. Also, arrange smaller musical instruments (rhythm instruments, i.e. drums, wooden blocks, cymbals, recorders - can be used by participants for accompaniment, making a joyful noise). A collection of different hymnbooks and songbooks may be displayed to represent the variety of faith traditions.

Before the session

1. Set up tables/arrangements
2. On Dry Erase Board (or newsprint), write quote for the day:

   "The one who sings, prays twice."

   St. Augustine
3. Cue CD for background music, like, "I Will Sing a Song of Love" and start as people gather
4. Have coffee, drinks ready
5. Have handouts ready

Opening 10 minutes

1. Review: How did it go with practicing "dying well" in your day-to-day lives?
Any insights or further questions?

2. Lead centering prayer, giving one from *Celtic Prayers of Iona* or one or your own. Then select a phrase from the prayer, like "We sing our lives" or "In singing we pray" and have each participant sit quietly and repeat these words in their mind, as they listen for God's insight.

Talking Points 10 minutes

"Singing Through the Ages" *See Part Two, Talking Points.*

This looks at how singing has been a foundation of the Christian community from earliest times.

Activity 15 minutes

"Singing Shapes our Faith" *See Part Two, Talking Points.*

Participants pair up to talk about their favorite hymn or song.

Handout "Ways to Practice Singing Our Lives" is used.

Music 10 minutes

Teach the songs, "Sing, My Soul," #17 and "My Life Flows On," #18 in the *LTWD Songbook.*

Discuss the texts. In many ways, the song "My Life Flows On" has become a theme song for many hospice staff members. Sing the songs with the *LTWD Songbook CD* or on your own. Or choose a song that underscores the idea of our whole lives lived as a song sung to God.

Video/DVD presentation 15 minutes

Meet "Mary Oyer" by showing a segment of the video, cued to begin with Mary Oyer's story 44 minutes into the video. The segment will show how practices are interrelated, as well as highlighting the faith practice of singing as a thread woven throughout.

Evaluation 10 minutes

As you make preparations for the closing worship service, allow participants to fill out evaluation forms for the course. Distribute handout, "Evaluation Forms" or one of you own design.

Commissioning worship service 30 minutes

Lead closing commissioning worship service, using the sample service on handout, "Commissioning Worship Service: Celebrating the Journey" or create one of your own using that as a model. Consider moving to a small chapel, or different worship space for the service.

If not using a commissioning worship service, you may want to have a briefer, closing devotional time together to serve as a conclusion to the course.

Fellowship around the table

Following the closing worship, have a meal together or a time of refreshment and fellowship to bring the course to a close.

"Sharing our songs with others who do not know us is sharing a gift, akin to the sharing of food at a common table."

from POF (p. 181)