



Living Till We Die:

a journey of faith practices

A Study Guide
By
Nancy Blakely



Welcome to the Journey!



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Sincerely,
Nancy

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Finding Your Way:

This study guide is divided into two parts:

PART ONE begins with a section entitled “How to Get Started.” This introduces the course, “*Living Till We Die: a journey of faith practices,*” and offers tips for developing and leading such a course in your own congregation or for personal use.

What follow are the session plans for each of the six faith practices:

- ◇ Honoring the Body
- ◇ Keeping Sabbath
- ◇ Forgiveness
- ◇ Healing
- ◇ Dying Well
- ◇ Singing Our Lives

Each session plan is comprised of these preplanning elements:

- ◇ Background
- ◇ Focus of the session
- ◇ Before the session
- ◇ Room set up
- ◇ You will need...
- ◇ You may need...

And these instructions for leading the session:

- ◇ Opening
- ◇ Suggested Talking Points,
Activities and Music to choose from,
with a time frame for each
- ◇ Closing

PART TWO complements and builds on the session plans. Here you will find the resources you need for the sessions. They are in four sections:

- ◇ Talking Points – outlines for the leader to use in conveying the main points and questions to spark discussion for each of the six faith practices
- ◇ Activities – step-by-step instructions for leading activities mentioned in the session
- ◇ Handouts – photocopy-ready sheets to be distributed to participants
- ◇ Resources – specifics given on resources mentioned in the study guide
 - Print: notes given on books and articles
 - Audio/video: information on CDs/ videos
 - Other: obtaining materials, e.g. finger labyrinth

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PART ONE



Spark for the Journey:

The primary resource for the course is the book, *Practicing Our Faith: A Way of Life for a Searching People*, ed. Dorothy C. Bass, Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1997 (POF). Participants covenant to read the entire book, which outlines 12 different faith practices.

For this course, we explore six of those faith practices through an end-of-life lens. These time-honored spiritual practices have much wisdom to offer from that perspective.

The six practices are:

Honoring the Body



Keeping Sabbath



Forgiveness



Healing



Dying Well



Singing our Lives



The logos of each practice will appear on the page bar to help guide you.

How to Get Started:

Our culture would have us believe that we must do all we can to stay young, cheat death, and not even talk about such a morbid thing as the end of life, for death is viewed as the ultimate defeat. Yet, as people of faith, we are filled with hope, rather than despair. The question becomes, “How does one put that hope into **practice** when preparing for and confronted with death?” Only then can one embrace the possibility of having a good death.

This six-session course is designed to bring a “practices approach” to bear on the significant challenge of facing end of life issues as people of faith. The course opens the door for the conversation to take place in the life of a congregation or other organization. The spiritual practices examined in these sessions are specifically Christian. We welcome believers from other traditions to adapt this course to their own faith practices.

The ministry of hospice offers many resources for this discussion and is the framework for the study. Spiritual care is integral to the philosophy and practice of hospice care. Our premise is that attention to end of life issues can be a change agent for the faith community in affirming that in life and in death we do belong to God.

This study guide has been developed from a pilot course held at Hospice of the Upstate (SC) which was made possible through a grant from the Valparaiso Project on the Education and Formation of People in Faith. The goal of this course is to couple the resources hospice offers with the needs of faith communities in talking about death, and we hope to see this happen in many different settings.

First, our project targets those leaders involved with congregational care and health ministries. Many congregations have Stephen’s Ministers who would also benefit from this course. Other possible audiences for the course would be hospice clinical staff – nurses, counselors, social workers, and chaplains. Hospice organizations across the country can develop similar faith connections in their own communities by offering this course.

Such open conversation can enable hospice to reach out to people sooner, and in a more significant way, offer a wealth of sup-



port for that final journey. If we as people of faith are already practicing what we believe now, there will be a seamless flow as we, in turn, are confronted with death. Great benefits can occur when these conversations begin within the life of the local congregation.

People can take those steps to live each day fully, understanding that one day each one of us will die. We can be a support to each other as a community. By practicing now, from a faith perspective, we can truly live each day of our lives.

The primary resource for the course is the book, *Practicing Our Faith: A Way of Life for a Searching People*, ed. Dorothy C. Bass, Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1997 (POF). (See sidebar opposite page.)

Practicing our Faith represents a refusal to leave our beliefs in the realm of theory, insisting that they can make a difference in how we live our lives. As the book states in the preface, "Reflecting on practices as they have been shaped in the context of Christian faith leads us to encounter the possibility of a faithful way of life, one that is both attuned to present-day needs and taught by ancient wisdom. And here is the really important point: this encounter can change how we live each day." (POF p. xi)

Life... not just existing but flourishing. Thus, the course asks the questions, "Can we flourish in the face of death? Are we able to begin doing that now?" Hospice was founded as an attempt to provide a way to flourish in the face of death. In this course, we affirm that God's gift of faith makes that possible.

Time frame

Our initial six-week course was held on the six successive Fridays during Lent. The season of Lent is a time of introspection and spiritual journeys, setting a definite tone for our study. Echoes of the church year continued, as our course then culminated in a celebration that paralleled the Easter joy of resurrection and new life.

After Easter, the early believers gathered together to wait for the coming of the Spirit at Pentecost that would send them out into the world to share the good news.

This study guide is the embodiment of the Pentecost theme, designed to send out *Living Till We Die: a journey of faith practices*, far and wide. We hope to plant seeds in new and various places, promoting a wider dissemination of faith practices and forging a stronger tie between Hospice and the faith community.

Our group met for about two hours each Friday morning for those six weeks. We often ran out of time and did not cover all the material and activities that are found in the session plans. Leaders will have to pick and choose which activities are most useful and will fit into their allotted time for the course.



Course adaptations:

This six-session course could be adapted for many settings within the life of the local congregation:

- ◇ Sunday School classes
- ◇ women's circles
- ◇ church officer training and development
- ◇ retreats
- ◇ Lenten studies
- ◇ community forums
- ◇ adult Vacation Bible School
- ◇ personal study and devotions
- ◇ youth confirmation classes (It is never too early to learn faith practices that will set the pattern of one's life).

Meeting length:

The length of the meeting times can easily be adjusted according to the activities that are chosen for each session. Suggested times for each activity are given in the session plans.

Also consider that for a one-hour Sunday School class, there could be two sessions devoted to each of the six faith practices, for a total of 12 sessions. With an introductory session this would make a quarter of 13 weeks.

For a retreat setting, the faith practices could be covered in blocks of time from a Friday evening through a Saturday afternoon.

For our group, so much discussion was generated on each of the six faith practices that we could easily have spent six weeks on each one.

NOTE: Though outside the design of this study guide, this demonstrates that it would be

possible to develop a 36-week curriculum or basically three quarters of the Sunday School church year, September to May, to cover these faith practices in greater depth. The additional books that have been published in the Valparaiso series, as well as other books devoted to these specific practices, are great resources for such a study. See the annotated bibliography in Part Two, Resources.

Group participants

Our group consisted of 12 participants drawn from our *Faith in Action* program. Through this program, our hospice organization provides training for volunteers to be the "eyes and ears" of hospice and interpret end-of-life issues to their own local congregations. As a hospice chaplain, I developed the course and led it with assistance from two other hospice staff members. We found the group size of 12 works very well. It may be helpful to consider limiting the size of the group to between 12 and 15 for optimal interaction and discussion.

Each participant was provided with a two-pocket folder in six sections, with page dividers for each of the faith practices, featuring a significant quote from that faith practice. Then blank pages were provided for journaling and taking notes by the participants. Class handouts can be added to these folders, and thus kept in one place.

Room set-up

Paying particular attention to the learning environment is integral to these faith practices, for we honor our bodies by doing so – the first step in this journey. Creating a homey atmosphere (as opposed to the more sterile classroom setting) is important. A church parlor would be an example of a good place to meet. Here are some other considerations for the room environment:

- ◇ soft (but adequate) lighting
- ◇ comfortable chairs



- ◇ tables, either in a “U” shape or solid rectangle to promote easy interaction

- ◇ decorations on the tables for each session

Candles and greenery are constant items each session.

We used yellow pillar candles of various heights and sizes among branches and sprigs of greenery collected from yards. This reflected the color scheme of yellow and green used in our publicity and study materials. Specific items symbolic of each faith practice were changed out each time according to the topic. These are mentioned in session plans that follow.

- ◇ white erase board (or newsprint) on an easel near the leader

- ◇ piano or keyboard

- ◇ CD player at the front of the room for gathering music and session activities

- ◇ side table for resources, books, CDs, session handouts

- ◇ name-tags if participants do not know each other well

- ◇ refreshments (coffee, tea, and water) available each session.

We had a small kitchen adjacent to our meeting room, which was ideal. This came in particularly handy for our last session, which concluded with a covered-dish lunch. You may want to designate someone to be in charge of refreshments for each session.

Music

One of the faith practices in the course is Singing Our Lives. Realizing the power of music to shape and inspire our faith experiences, we incorporated music at the beginning of each session as well as group singing throughout all our sessions. The songs developed the particular faith practice we were considering that session. Songs were also woven into our worship times together.

Close attention was paid to the meaning of the words of the songs to further develop the theme of each week’s faith practice. We spent time learning the tunes of these songs as well as reflecting on the words. That these songs were, for the most part, new to the participants underscored the concept of practicing their faith as we literally practiced these new songs together. Many good songs are being written that have integrity and meaning for what we were practicing in our sessions.

We used a piano in the meeting room for accompaniment, and the course leader played. Having someone other than the leader to do this would be ideal. For two sessions we had guest

Tips for leaders:

There are several good resources available that provide helpful tips for leaders in conducting a class:

- ◇ The book *Teaching Today’s Teachers to Teach*, by Donald L. Griggs, offers excellent suggestions in the areas of promoting discussion, asking questions, encouraging creativity, and offering choices in the lesson plan.

- ◇ The book *Teaching For Faith, A Guide For Teachers of Adult Classes*, by Richard Robert Osmer, has a good chapter on using lecture as a valid teaching method, as well as tips for leading good discussions.

- ◇ Free teaching tools are also offered at www.thethoughtfulchristian.com, a website sponsored by the Presbyterian Church (USA).

- ◇ The Valparaiso Project on the Education and Formation of People in Faith offers a wealth of study guides – one for the book, *Practicing Our Faith*, as a whole, and many for each of the faith practices covered in particular. These can be downloaded from their website: www.practicingourfaith.org.

(Reference information on these tools can be found in Part Two, Resources.)

musicians. For the session on Dying Well, a songwriter/guitarist played a song he had written for his grandmother upon her death at hospice. He also accompanied our other songs that day. For the last session on Singing Our Lives, as part of our commissioning service, a flute player added to our music. Other guest musicians, if available, would add greatly to the practice of Singing Our Lives that flowed throughout all the sessions.

Songbook

We created a songbook for our course, obtaining the proper copyright permission to put it together. In session plans, songs from this resource are indicated with the numbering from the *Living Till We Die Songbook*. A numbered listing of these song titles and information on them can be found in Part Two, Resources.

Many churches purchase annual copyright permission through an agency such as OneLicense which permits members to reprint the songs and form their own songbooks. Check with the music program of your local congregation or research the copyright process online.

You may wish to choose different songs with tunes and texts that speak to your particular situation. Specific theme suggestions are made in each session plan to aid you in selecting songs.

Guest speakers

Several times during the course, local guests came to share their gifts, perspectives, and community resources. For example, for the session on Keeping Sabbath, the president of the local synagogue led us through Sabbath prayers said in Jewish homes. For the session on Healing, the director of the local Parish Nurse Association spoke of the program's health resources for local congregations. For the session on Dying Well, a local singer/songwriter whose grandmother had been a hospice patient sang the song he had composed for her funeral and led us on guitar in our singing that day.

NOTE: These guest speakers need to be invited well in advance of the session, during the planning stages of the course.





Faith Practice One: HONORING THE BODY

Background

The faith practice of honoring the body seeks to transform our troubled relationship with our bodies to one of honor and joy. Many different avenues offer insights to developing this faith practice for day-to-day living. Study of scripture texts leads to a deeper understanding of the wonders of God's creation and the purposes for which he created us as human beings with a physical body.

Therapeutic touch brings a "reconnection" to our bodies, especially when illness, even a terminal illness, has led to feelings of being betrayed by our bodies. Walking a labyrinth (or using a finger labyrinth) is a unique way to bring together body and spirit through movement, for it is often called a body-prayer.

Focus of session

Through the themes of creation, incarnation, and resurrection found in scripture, honoring the body as a spiritual practice will be explored in order to gain insights for approaching illness and the end of life.

Room set-up

On the head table, in front of the leader and among the greenery and candles, place a basket of small bottles of lotion, bath products (sponge, bubble bath, bath gel, etc.), and a finger labyrinth if available (see *Part Two, Resources for ordering information*).

Before the session

1. Set up tables/ arrangements
2. On a Dry Erase Board (or newsprint), write the quote for the day: *"My whole life, in one sense, has been an experiment in how to be a portable sanctuary, learning to practice the presence of God in the midst of the stresses and strains of contemporary life."* —Richard Foster
3. Cue CD for background music, "Gather Us In" or Taize responses from *Songs and Prayers from Taize*, and start as people gather.
4. Have coffee, etc. ready
5. Have folders at each place and handouts ready

You will need:

Bible
Practicing Our Faith (POF), chapter 1
Living Till We Die (LTWD) Songbook
 Handouts:
 ◇ "Further reading"
 ◇ Biographical sketches of the authors (POF)
 ◇ "Labyrinth background information"
 ◇ "Desktop finger labyrinth"
 Small bottles of lotion, one for every 6-7 people

You may need:

Honoring the Body: Meditations on a Christian Practice (HTB)
 Study guide to *Honoring the Body*
Celtic Prayers of Iona
 Folder for each participant (as suggested in *How to Get Started, Group Participants*)
 CDs (specific titles – "Bless the Lord," *Songs and Prayers from Taize*; "Gather Us In," *After the Rain*, Jeanne Cotter
 DVD clip, *The Passion of the Christ*
 Finger labyrinth
 LTWD Songbook CD

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



Opening 15 minutes

1. Introduce yourself and ask participants to introduce themselves if they do not know each other. Describe the goals of this six-session study, giving background information as needed.
2. Distribute handouts, “Further Reading,” and “Biographical Sketches of the Authors (POF).”
3. Teach the song “Gather Us In,” #1 in LTWD Songbook. Sing the song with the *LTWD Songbook CD* or on your own. Or choose a song that underscores the ideas of community and gathering from all different walks of life.
4. Lead a centering prayer, giving one from *Celtic Prayers of Iona* or one of your own. Then select a phrase from the prayer, like “You formed my body and gave it breath” and have each participant sit quietly and repeat these words in their mind, as they listen for God’s insight.

Talking Points 15 minutes

“A Difficult Friendship” See *Part Two, Talking Points*.

This covers material from POF, chapter 1, pp. 13-18 and introduces how difficult it is to honor our bodies.

Activity 15 minutes

“Hand Massage” See *Part Two, Activities*.

Participants will reflect on scripture texts that are being read as they massage each other’s hands.

Music 10 minutes

Teach the song “Before the World Began,” #2 in *LTWD Songbook*.

Discuss the text. Sing the song with the *LTWD Songbook CD* or on your own.

Or choose a song that underscores the idea of creation and the claim that God’s Word was present even before the world began.

Talking Points 15 minutes

“Embodiment” See *Part Two, Talking Points*.

The idea of embodiment is central to the Christian faith and can be seen in the biblical themes of creation, incarnation, and resurrection.

Music 10 minutes

Teach the song “Torn in Two,” #3 in *LTWD Songbook*.

Discuss the text. Sing the song with the *LTWD Songbook CD* or on your own.

Or choose a song that underscores the ideas of the Word made flesh and how God breaks down barriers through that act.

**Talking Points 10 minutes**

“A Suffering Body” See *Part Two, Talking Points*.

This will focus on the practice of honoring our bodies at the times when the body is in pain and at the end of life.

Activity 10 minutes

“Walking the Labyrinth” See, *Part Two, Activities*.

Introduce participants to the labyrinth, its background and use, through a finger labyrinth. Handouts “Labyrinth Background Information” and “Desktop Finger Labyrinth” will be used.

Music 10 minutes

Teach the song “Enemy of Apathy,” #4 in *LTWD Songbook*.

Discuss the text. Sing the song with the *LTWD Songbook CD* or on your own.

Or choose a song that underscores the ideas of the role of the Holy Spirit in God’s on-going creation.

Closing 5 minutes

1. Summarize the main points of the session:

- ◇ Many forces in society seek to dishonor the body.
- ◇ We must remember the sacredness of the body while acknowledging its “creatureliness” or frailty.
- ◇ Embodiment is central to the Christian faith.
- ◇ This is seen in creation, incarnation, and resurrection.
- ◇ We continue honoring the body at the end of life.

2. Make assignments for next time, POF, chapter 6. Alert participants to the assignment for session 5, “Dying Well,” that they will be writing their own obituary.

3. Close with prayer from *Celtic Prayers of Iona*, or one of your own.





You will need:

Bible(s)
Practicing our Faith
 (POF), chapter 6
Living Till We Die
 (LTWD) Songbook
 CD – “Running Just to
 Catch Myself” from *Stories and*
Songs

You may need:

Receiving the Day:
Christian Practices for Opening
the Gift of Time (RTD)
 Study guide to
Receiving the Day
 Study guide to
 “Sabbath,” *Christian Reflection*
 Recordings of songs:
 e.g. “Sunrise, Sunset” and
 “Sabbath Prayer,” from *Fiddler*
on the Roof; “Circle Game,”
 Joni Mitchell; “Time in a Bottle,”
 Jim Croce; “Cat’s in the Cradle,”
 and “All My Life’s a Circle”
 Harry Chapin; “Four Seasons,”
 Vivaldi
Celtic Prayers of Iona
LTWD Songbook CD
 DVD clip from
Groundhog Day
 Guest from local
 synagogue

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

Faith Practice Two: KEEPING SABBATH

Background

The faith practice of keeping Sabbath underscores the rhythm for life that is God-given, restoring the faith-perspective of the natural rhythm of life and death. This helps us – in our families, in our faith communities – say “no” to a society that would lure us to work ourselves to death. “Keeping Sabbath” takes on a whole new meaning if we think in terms of receiving the day as a gift from God and seeing time as holy.

Focus of session

We explore patterns of keeping Sabbath and the broader issue of how we think about time, in order to consider what practices enable us to live each day fully, knowing that we will die.

Room set-up

Among the greenery and candles on the tables place calendars (such as daily phrase calendars), alarm clocks, daytimers, and/or cellphones. You can even begin by taking up an offering of participants’ cellphones and pagers that day — to make a point of letting go of our attachment to them — and then return them at the end of the session.

Before the session

1. Set up tables/arrangements
2. On a Dry Erase Board (or newsprint), write quote for the day:
“When we keep a Sabbath holy, we are practicing, for a day, the freedom that God intends for all people.”

– Dorothy Bass

3. Cue CD for background music, “Sabbath Prayer” from *Fiddler on the Roof*, and start as people gather.
4. Have coffee, drinks ready

**Opening 10 minutes**

1. Review: How did it go with honoring your bodies this past week? Did you do anything differently to pay better attention?

2. Lead centering prayer, giving one from *Celtic Prayers of Iona* or one of your own. Then select a phrase from the prayer, like “A day of new beginnings is given” and have each participant sit quietly and repeat these words in their mind, as they listen for God’s insight.

Discussion 5 minutes

“Sabbath Memories”

Purpose: to evoke participants’ memories of Sabbath and the roots of Sabbath in Judaism.

Ask questions like:

- ◇ What does the word “Sabbath” make you think of?
- ◇ What childhood memories do you have of Sunday observances?
- ◇ How have your patterns of keeping Sabbath changed during the course of your lifetime?
- ◇ How have society’s patterns changed? (i.e. blue laws)
- ◇ What do you know of the Jewish observance of Sabbath?
- ◇ How has the Christian observance evolved from its Jewish roots?

Guest speaker 15 minutes

Have a guest from the local synagogue present the Jewish Sabbath observance and prayers in the home.

Activity 15 minutes

“Lectio Divina, Psalm 90” See *Part Two, Activities*.

Lectio Divina is a meditative practice that will aid participants in reflecting on the words of Psalm 90.

Talking Points 10 minutes

“Our God, Our Help in Ages Past” See *Part Two, Talking Points*.

By looking at the words of this hymn, material is presented that takes a new look at time.

Discussion 10 minutes

Purpose: to examine how we “manage” time

Ask questions like:

- ◇ What are some basic principles of time management?
- ◇ How does the above discussion on Psalm 90 and “Our God, Our Help in Ages Past” lead us to some rethinking about time management?
- ◇ What does the world say about time?
- ◇ What are problems people face regarding time?
- ◇ How do other cultures look at time?
- ◇ Is time ours to manage? If not, how is this notion encouraged by our society? Think of calendars with all those empty boxes to be filled in – by us (RTD p. 2).



Music 10 minutes

Play the song, “Running Just to Catch Myself”

This is a fun song that makes a point. You may want to read the words of the song to the participants, and then ask, “How does this sound like your life?”

Activity 10 minutes

“Manna Time” See *Part Two, Activities*.

This is a reading of the story of manna in the wilderness from Exodus that substitutes the concept of time for that of manna in order to make the point that time is a gift from God.

Talking Points 15 minutes

“Receiving the Day” See *Part Two, Talking Points*.

This sparks a discussion exploring the Hebrew evening/morning sequence that can help us to see the difference between “seizing the day” and “receiving the day.”

Music 10 minutes

Teach the song, “Today I Awake,” #6 in the *LTWD Songbook*.

Discuss the text. Sing the song with the *LTWD Songbook CD* or on your own. Or choose a song that underscores the ideas of waking to a new day and entering into what God is already doing in the world.

Talking Points 15 minutes

“The Sabbath Commandment” See *Part Two, Talking Points*.

This looks at the two versions of the Sabbath commandment found in the Hebrew Scriptures and what this teaches us about the practice of Sabbath keeping.

Music 10 minutes

Play several songs to illustrate that time may be a circle as well as a line:

- ◇ Joni Mitchell “Circle Game”
- ◇ Fiddler on the Roof “Sunrise, Sunset”
- ◇ Jim Croce “Time in a Bottle”
- ◇ Harry Chapin “Cat’s in the Cradle” and “All My Life’s a Circle”
- ◇ Vivaldi “Four Seasons”

Does the idea of time as a circle fit into the notion of receiving the day?

Discuss how we can see time as a circle in our own lives, in the seasons of our faith, the rhythm of worship in the church year with its different seasons of Advent, Christmas, Epiphany, Lent, Easter, and Pentecost.

Closing 5 minutes

1. Summarize the main points of session:
 - ◇ Christian Sabbath has evolved from Jewish roots
 - ◇ Time is made holy by God’s presence
 - ◇ Time is not really ours to manage
 - ◇ For the Hebrews, the day begins at sundown
 - ◇ There are two versions of the Sabbath commandment
 - ◇ Time can be viewed as a circle
2. Make assignments for next time, read POF, chapter 10
3. Close with prayer from *Celtic Prayers of Iona*, or one of your own.





Faith Practice Three: FORGIVENESS

Background

The faith practice of forgiveness encourages the acceptance of God's mercy and enables reconciliation. This becomes a key factor in end of life issues, particularly for family relationships. Forgiveness is actually initiated by God, not by us. We enter into God's forgiving acts. Forgiveness is challenging, for it is a process that we cannot complete once and for all. It was the experience of our group that this session raised more questions than answers.

Focus of session

We examine how forgiveness is a divine gift while taking into account the challenges and obstacles to putting this into practice. Forgiveness is integral to the tasks of dying; forgiveness is nurtured by the faith community.

Room set-up

Among the greenery (include olive branches this time if available) and candles, place dove items and symbols. For example, we made nametags in the shape of doves, wrote "child of God" and then our names, and placed them on yarn to be worn around the neck. Or use other dove representations, for example, dove sun-catchers.

Make paper chains: Cut strips from newspaper articles about violence, paste together in links, but have one broken (ripped) to symbolize "breaking the chain of violence." The broken links could have another significance of representing the breakdown in connection that occurs when forgiveness is not present. Arrange crosses among these items.

Before the session

1. Set up tables/arrangements
2. On Dry Erase Board (or newsprint), write quote for the day:
"In the midst of tragic brokenness, God's forgiveness aims to heal people's lives and re-create communion."
- L. Gregory Jones
3. Cue CD for background music, "Gospel Changes" or similar song and start as people gather.
4. Have coffee, etc. ready.
5. Have handouts ready.

You will need:

Bible(s)
Practicing Our Faith (POF), chapter 10
Living Till We Die (LTWD) Songbook
 Copies of Psalm 51:1-17
 Handouts:
 ◇ "Prayer for Forgiveness/Five Tasks of the Dying"
 ◇ "Exploring Forgiveness in the Bible"
 Essays from "Forgiveness," *Christian Reflection* (CR)

You may need:

CD, "Gospel Changes" by John Denver; Taize responses from *Songs & Prayers from Taize*.
What's So Amazing About Grace?
 Study guide to *What's So Amazing About Grace?*
 Study Guide to "Forgiveness," CR
Embodying Forgiveness, A Theological Analysis
 "A Prayer for Rage" *Prayers from the Heart*
 DVD clip from *Places in the Heart*
Celtic Prayers of Iona
 LTWD Songbook CD

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



Opening 10 minutes

1. Review: How did it go with “receiving the day?” Any questions or reflections from last session?

2. Lead a centering prayer, giving one from *Celtic Prayers of Iona* or one of your own. Then select a phrase, like “Lord have mercy upon me” and have each participant sit quietly and repeat these words in their mind, as they listen for God’s insight.

Talking Points 10 minutes

“Which Way to Forgiveness?” See *Part Two, Talking Points*.

This introduces forgiveness as a faith practice as it highlights how hard it is to put into practice.

Handout “Prayer for Forgiveness/Five Tasks of the Dying” is used.

Activity 15 minutes

“Lectio Divina, Psalm 51” See *Part Two, Activities*.

Lectio Divina is a meditative practice that will aid participants in reflecting on the words to Psalm 51.



Music 10 minutes

1. Teach the sung response, “Create in Me a Clean Heart” #7 in *LTWD Songbook*. Sing the song with the *LTWD Songbook CD* or on your own. Or choose a simple sung response that underscores the petition for God’s cleansing renewal of our spirits. Many are available in the Taize style music.

2. Sing this as a prayerful response after each section of the following prayer:

“A Prayer for Rage,” by Richard Foster – this prayer is in five sections, reflecting the struggle of moving to forgiveness.

-or-

Sing the response with another prayer reflecting the movement to forgiveness.

Discussion 10 minutes

Ask questions like:

- ◇ What are the obstacles to forgiveness?
- ◇ Why is it so hard to forgive?
- ◇ What makes forgiveness an unnatural act? (see *What’s so Amazing About Grace*, chapter 7)
- ◇ What does the book say about the obstacles to forgiveness? (POF, pp. 135-138)

Activity 10 minutes

“Challenges of Forgiveness” See *Part Two, Activities*.

Participants will reflect individually on times in their lives when forgiveness has been difficult.

**Talking Points 10 minutes**

“The Paradox of Forgiveness,” See *Part Two, Talking Points*.

The paradoxes of forgiveness are truth and mercy, justice and peace. These are difficult to hold together, yet they are at the heart of reconciliation.

Activity 15 minutes

“Exploring Forgiveness in the Bible” See *Part Two, Activities*.

Participants will work in groups to explore these 3 themes in the Bible: forgiveness as divine, forgiveness and community, balancing justice and mercy.

Music 10 minutes

Teach these two songs, “For Freedom Christ Has Set Us Free,” #8 from the *LTWD Songbook* and “I’m So Glad” #9 from the *LTWD Songbook*.

Discuss the texts. Sing the songs with the *LTWD Songbook* CD or on your own. Or choose songs that underscore the idea of forgiveness that breaks the chains of bondage.

Talking Points 10 minutes

“Who Deserves Forgiveness?” See *Part Two, Talking Points*.

This asks the hard question, “Is there anyone beyond forgiveness?” and what does scripture tell us?

Closing 5 minutes

1. Summarize the main points of session:

- ◇ The journey of forgiveness lies constantly before us.
- ◇ The obstacles to forgiveness are many.
- ◇ Forgiveness is an unnatural act.
- ◇ Forgiveness is a divine gift, something we live into.

2. Make assignments for next time, read POF, chapter 11.

3. Close with this charge:

“Let us be watchful for the ways in which we can embody the forgiving, transforming, and reconciling power of Easter in a world that all too often seems bent on finding ways to crucify.”

from Embodying Forgiveness, p. 301.

May God increase our faith and grant us the grace to live into forgiveness.





You will need:

Bible(s)
Practicing Our Faith
 (POF), chapter 11
Living Till We Die
 (LTWD) Songbook
 Brightly colored paper,
 pencils, scissors for “Laying on
 of Hands” activity
 “Sadako and the
 Thousand Paper Cranes”
 directions and paper squares
 (wrapping paper is good) to
 make paper cranes
 CD - “He Will Carry Me”
 from *Stories and Songs*
 Handouts:
 ◇ “Jesus’ Healings in the
 Gospels”
 ◇ “Five Kinds of Healing”
 ◇ “How to Fold a Paper
 Crane”
 ◇ “If I Died Today...” (to be
 completed before session five.)
 ◇ “Service for Wholeness”

You may need:

Guest from Parish Nurse
 Association, Order of St. Luke
 or similar organization
 Information on local
 healing ministry programs
 Pictures of Hiroshima
 Peace Park, Oklahoma City
 Memorial, Vietnam Memorial
 “To Touch the Fringe of
 God’s Garment,” *Weavings*
Tuesdays with Morrie
Celtic Prayers of Iona
LTWD Songbook CD

*(Handouts and reference infor-
 mation on things you will need
 can be found in Part Two.)*

Faith Practice Four: HEALING

Background

The faith practice of healing becomes especially important for understanding what wholeness and healing mean even when there is no cure. Healing in this sense draws on the deeper meaning of God’s Shalom, i.e., the peace and wholeness that come from sensing God’s presence. From a faith perspective, death is the ultimate healing. A tie-in for this session with a congregation’s/community’s Parish Nurse Program or Health Ministry is very helpful.

Focus of session

We explore how we can take the faith practice of healing more seriously; broadening our concept of healing to include the Hebrew notion of Shalom, making it possible to speak of healing when there is no hope for a cure.

Room set-up

Among the greenery and candles, place bottles of vitamins and pain medications, a cruet of oil, a stethoscope and other medical items, and origami paper cranes.

Before the session

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

“(Healing is) ... not just fixing up things that are wrong. Real health, from a Christian point of view, is coming to the fullness of your vocation as a child of God.”

- Tilda Norberg

3. Cue CD for gathering music, “He Will Carry Me” from *Stories and Songs*, 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 forgiveness? Any insights or further questions?

2. Lead centering prayer, giving one from *Celtic Prayers of Iona* or one of your own. Then select a phrase from the prayer, like “O best of healers, make me whole” and have each participant sit quietly and repeat these words in their mind, as they listen for God’s insight.

Talking Points 20 minutes

“Faith Healing” See *Part Two, Talking Points*.

This introduces healing as a faith practice and looks at the biblical mandate for healing. Handout “Jesus’ healing in the Gospels” is used.

Activity 10 minutes

“Laying On of Hands” See *Part Two, Activities*.

Participants trace their hands and cut them out to use in a ministry to the sick.

Talking Points 10 minutes

“Shalom—Being Whole I” See *Part Two, Talking Points*.

The Hebrew notion of Shalom, a sense of wholeness and peace, comes from a restored and whole relationship with God.

Music 10 minutes

Teach the song, “We Cannot Measure How You Heal,” #10 in *LTWD Songbook*.

Discuss the text. Sing the song with the *LTWD Songbook* CD or on your own. Or choose a song that underscores the idea of God’s work of healing in our lives.

Guest Speaker 15 minutes

Have a guest from a local Parish Nurse program speak. This program promotes integrating health issues with congregational life through a therapeutic/medical practice/social ministry model.

-or-

Have someone from a community health ministry organization speak about ways that your congregation or organization can integrate health issues into your own program.

Talking Points 10 minutes

“Shalom – Being Whole, II” See *Part Two, Talking Points*.

This continues the discussion of healing through treating the whole person. Handout “Five Kinds of Healing” is used.

Talking Points 10 minutes

Healing When there is No Cure See *Part Two, Talking Points*.

Those diagnosed with a terminal illness often gain a new perspective on life that brings healing. May use the article, *To Touch the Fringes of God’s Garment, Five Woven*.



Activity 15 minutes

“Sadako and the Paper Cranes “

Public places of healing are important. You may want to show pictures/slides of memorial sites like the Hiroshima Peace Park, the Vietnam Memorial, the Oklahoma City Memorial.

Tell Sadako’s story with this activity: Distribute squares of colored paper and the handout, “How to Fold a Paper Crane.” Fold one paper crane as a demonstration to participants. As participants fold their own paper cranes, read the story, Sadako and the Thousand Paper Cranes.

If time is short, you may need to condense the story, telling it in your own words.

Point out how healing enters into Sadako’s story.

Visit the website, www.sadako.com, for further information about Sadako and the Hiroshima Peace Park.

Closing 5 minutes
(Closing section may precede Service for Wholeness)

1. Summarize the main points of session:
 - ◇ Healing is wholeness, Shalom
 - ◇ Healing is part of our Christian vocation
 - ◇ Healing is what God intends for all of creation
 - ◇ Healing is as an art
 - ◇ Healing can happen when there is no hope for a cure
 - ◇ Public memorials are important for the healing of nations

2. Make assignments for next time
Read POF, chapter 11
Distribute handout, “If I Died Today...”
Remind participants to have their obituaries written by next session.

3. Service for Wholeness will have the closing prayer.

Music 5 minutes

Learn the refrain, “My Soul in Stillness Waits,” #12 in *LTWD Songbook*. This refrain may be sung during the concluding Service for Wholeness, at the Intercession for Healing.

Worship 15 minutes

Lead a Service for Wholeness: devise one of your own or follow the model found in *Part Two, Handouts* — distributing the handout to the participants.





Faith Practice Five: DYING WELL

Background

The faith practice of dying well is central to the philosophy and goals of hospice – living fully until we die. Dying well is actually not something we do just as we breathe our last breath. It is a way of living, an on-going practice of seeing our lives as a testimony to our belief that God’s love and God’s life in us are stronger than death. Vital to this practice is the community of faith that carries us, even through the valley of the shadow of death. Through that loving care, we can even experience the joy of God’s grace.

Focus of session

Through the eyes of faith, we explore how it is possible to learn to die well and speak of a “good death,” in a culture that does not want to talk about death and sees death as a defeat.

Room set-up

Among the greenery and candles on the tables place communion chalices (pottery goblets give an earthy connection), large bowl (preferably glass) filled with water to remind us of our baptism, glass votives with white candles, and small wooden churches (available in discount home stores). The idea of community, upholding us in our dying as we die and rise with Christ, is reflected through these symbols.

Before the session

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

“Everyone knows they’re going to die, but nobody believes it. If we did, we would do things differently.”

- Morrie Schwartz
3. Cue CD for gathering music, selected songs from *The Last Journey* collection, or appropriate hymns used for funerals, and start as people gather.
4. Have coffee, drinks ready
5. Have extra copies of handouts ready

You will need:

Bible
Practicing our Faith (POF), chapter 12
Living Till We Die (LTWD) Songbook
Our Greatest Gift
Tuesdays with Morrie
 Handout: “If I Died Today...” have additional copies available, see Part Two, Handouts, Faith Practice Four.

You may need:

Copies of *Five Wishes*
 Copies of *Isn’t It Time We Talk?*
 Copies of the funeral service from your church’s book of worship
 Guest speaker: your pastor, to reflect on funeral services
 Guest musicians to lead/perform songs from *LTWD Songbook* or other music of grief and lament.
 CD — *The Last Journey Final Gifts: Understanding the Special Awareness, Needs, and Communications of the Dying*
Receiving the Day (RTD)
 Recording of a favorite lullaby, perhaps one from *Sleep, Baby, Sleep*
Celtic Prayers of Iona
LTWD Songbook CD

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



Opening 10 minutes

1. Review: How did it go with practicing God's shalom? Any insights or further questions?

2. Lead centering prayer, giving one from *Celtic Prayers of Iona* or one of your own. Then select a phrase, like "At my end and new beginning, the arms of God welcome me" and have each participant sit quietly and repeat these words in their mind, as they listen for God's insight.

Talking Points 15 minutes

"Practicing for a Good Death" See *Part Two, Talking Points*.

This will discuss ways to practice dying well, one example being Morrie's "little bird" approach.

Activity 15 minutes

"If I Died Today..." (assigned ahead of time). See *Part Two, Activities, Faith Practice Four*.

Participants will discuss what it was like to write their own obituaries.

Music 10 minutes

Teach the song, "The Last Journey," #13 in *LTWD Songbook*. Discuss the text. Sing the song with the *LTWD Songbook CD* or on your own. Or choose a song that underscores the idea of God's presence throughout our journey from life through death to new life.



Talking Points 20 minutes

"Isolation versus Community," see *Part Two, Talking Points*.

This discusses how death has been isolated from the flow of daily life and how that might change.

Music 10 minutes

Teach the song "What Wondrous Love Is This?" #19 in *LTWD Songbook* or have guest musicians perform the song for the group.

Talking Points 15 minutes

"The Many Faces of Death" See *Part Two, Talking Points*.

This addresses the complexity of responding to death in its many forms, looking at lament, thanksgiving and hope, judgment, and mercy.

Music 10 minutes

Teach the song, "How Long, O Lord" #14 in *LTWD Songbook* or have guest musicians perform the song for the group. Discuss the text, referring to Psalm 13, and consider your thoughts about lament.

Think about the meaning of this quote:

"When we lament, we acknowledge the truth that God does not remove all the pain and torment of dying, either for the sufferer or for the community."

from *POF* (p. 168).

**Talking Points 10 minutes**

“Good Friday/Easter Tension” See *Part Two, Talking Points*.

This presents the idea that hope for new life first passes through the furnace of suffering, as exemplified by Christ dying on the cross.

Music 10 minutes

Teach the song “Go Silent Friend” #15 in *LTWD Songbook* or have guest musicians perform the song. Discuss the text.

Activity 5 minutes

“Bedtime Ritual” See *Part Two, Activities*.

This explores the idea that learning to go to sleep at night (and teaching our children this) is a surrender that can teach us how to die well.

**Closing/Music 10 minutes**

1. Summarize the main points of session:
 - ◇ Learning how to die means learning how to live.
 - ◇ Through the eyes of faith it is possible to die well
 - ◇ Dying well embraces both lament and hope
 - ◇ Community is vital as we face death
 - ◇ We are not our own, we belong to God
2. Make assignment for next time read POF, chapter 13
3. Remind participants about the meal (if having one - and what to bring if it is to be a covered dish).
4. Teach the response “In Love You Summon” #16 in the *LTWD Songbook*.
5. Have participants turn to POF, p. 177 and read together as a unison reading the last paragraph, at the bottom of the page. Then sing as a response “In Love You Summon.”
6. Close with prayer from *Celtic Prayers of Iona*, or one of your own.





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 infor-
 mation 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 inter-relatedness. 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 of 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 your 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)



PART TWO



- ◇ Talking Points
 - ◇ Activities
 - ◇ Handouts
 - ◇ Resources

TALKING POINTS



Faith Practice One: Honoring the Body

- ◇ A Difficult Friendship
- ◇ Embodiment
- ◇ The Suffering Body



Faith Practice Two: Keeping Sabbath

- ◇ “Our God Our Help in Ages Past”
- ◇ Receiving the Day
- ◇ The Sabbath Commandment



Faith Practice Three: Forgiveness

- ◇ Which Way to Forgiveness?
- ◇ The Paradox of Forgiveness
- ◇ Who Deserves Forgiveness?



Faith Practice Four: Healing

- ◇ Faith Healing
- ◇ Shalom—Being Whole, I
- ◇ Shalom—Being Whole, II
- ◇ Healing When There is No Cure



Faith Practice Five: Dying Well

- ◇ Practicing for a Good Death
- ◇ Isolation versus Community
- ◇ The Many Faces of Death
- ◇ Good Friday/Easter Tension



Faith Practice Six: Singing Our Lives

- ◇ Singing Through the Ages



Faith Practice One: HONORING THE BODY

“A Difficult Friendship” 15 minutes

This covers material from POF, chapter 1, pp. 13-18.

You may also want to read additional material in *Honoring the Body* (HTB) book, pp. 16-25.

1. Read this quote from the book:

“The poet Jane Kenyon speaks of our ‘long struggle to be at home in the body, this difficult friendship.’ (POF, p. 15)

Often this struggle is between “having” a body and “being” a body (HTB, pp. 16-20). This tension exists in religious traditions as well and often moves back and forth between the two.

2. State these two distinct ways of understanding the body:

- ◇ A body is something we have – the essence of who we are is merely encased, temporarily in a body.
- ◇ We are our bodies – what is essential about human beings cannot be separated from our bodies.

So many forces in our society today dishonor the body:

- ◇ Commercials create dissatisfaction with the way we look
- ◇ Some bodies are held up as perfect and desirable while others are despised (HTB, p. 4)
- ◇ Suspicion of the goodness of sexuality is found, especially in religion
- ◇ Make reference to “Retrieving an Ambiguous Legacy” (POF, pp. 16-18)

3. Read this quote from the book:

“If we are unable to shape a way of life that honors the body in every moment, we will lose something vital to human flourishing.”

(POF, p. 18)

Sacred yet Vulnerable

Make these points:

- ◇ To hold a newborn child is to know both the sacredness and the vulnerability of the body.
- ◇ We see this connection at death as well.
- ◇ Our challenge is to remember the sacredness of the body in every moment of our lives.
- ◇ We cannot do this alone, for it is a shared practice: “Because our bodies are vulnerable, we need each other to protect and care for them.” (POF, p. 15)

Hopefully, through considering “honoring the body” as a faith practice, this will transform our troubled relationship with our bodies to one of honor and joy.

Discuss questions like the following:

- ◇ What are some of the ways we dishonor our bodies?
- ◇ Where can we turn for help?
- ◇ Why did early Christians mortify the flesh? Are there remnants of this idea today? (e.g., DaVinci Code and Opus Dei)
- ◇ To what religious traditions do we turn for wisdom about the body?
- ◇ How are we to celebrate the body’s pleasures and protect the body’s vulnerabilities in a world that seems confused about both? (HTB, p. xiii)
- ◇ How can we choose reverence over exploitation and anxiety?



**“Embodiment” 15 minutes**

Embodiment as a central theme to the Christian Faith is explored in this segment. Material about this can be found in book POF, pp. 16 ff.

Themes of embodiment found in scriptures:

- ◇ Creation
- ◇ Incarnation
- ◇ Resurrection

Creation

For Jews and Christians alike, the body reflects God’s own goodness.

Every body is made in the image of God.

Incarnation

In Christianity this affirmation is supplemented by the belief that God was somehow fully present in a particular human body that lived in a particular time and place, the body of Jesus of Nazareth.

God was incarnate – enfleshed in a body that ate and drank, slept and woke, touched and received touch.

This body also suffered a death as painful and degrading as any human beings have devised. You may want to make reference to Mel Gibson’s movie, *Passion of the Christ*.

Resurrection

Early Christian testimony that this body also lived again after death shapes a profound Christian hope that undergirds the practice of honoring the body.

Whatever else it means, the resurrection of Jesus tells us that bodies matter to God. And they ought to matter to us, too. (HTB, p. 8)

Creation, incarnation, resurrection hold the body at the center of Christian life. They influence how we worship, how we understand ourselves, individually and as a community.

NOTE – The Early Christians, the early church, thought of themselves as the “body of Christ.” They didn’t call themselves the “spirit of Christ.” They took up the work of Christ with their own hands and feet, heads and hearts – with their bodies.

The words of Jesus at the Last Supper were – “This is my body, This is my blood.” God offers us food and drink.

Touchstones for contemporary Christian practice of honoring the body:

- ◇ God created our bodies good; we are made in the image of God’s own goodness.
- ◇ Our bodies are “a temple of the Holy Spirit.” (I Corinthians 6:19)
- ◇ God dwelled fully in a vulnerable human body.
- ◇ God gathers us up in death – body and all.
- ◇ Through our bodies we participate in God’s activity in the world. When we do anything to the least of these, we do it to Christ. (cf. Matthew 25:31-46)
- ◇ Our bodies are worthy of care and blessing and ought never to be degraded or exploited – when we honor the bodies of others, we honor Christ; when we dishonor the bodies of others, we dishonor him.
- ◇ Through the needs of the body, we are invited into relationship with God.





“The Suffering Body” 10 minutes

The book *Honoring the Body*, has a chapter devoted to honoring the suffering body, pp. 165 – 180. The material found there may be helpful for the following discussion, though it is not necessary.

To focus more pointedly on practicing honoring our bodies from an end of life perspective, ask these or similar questions:

- ◇ How does one care for a suffering body?
- ◇ How do we keep the sacredness of the body in view even in the midst of suffering?
- ◇ How can touch be healing when we are ill?
- ◇ Can bodily suffering draw us near to God? (refer to the apostle Paul’s experience of the “thorn in the flesh” and how he could conclude that “when I am weak, then I am strong,” II Corinthians 12:8-10).
- ◇ Are there things we can be doing now that will better prepare us for when our bodies are in pain? (e.g. “trying to honor our bodies and the bodies of others in the midst of everyday life, attending to the sacredness of the body when we bathe and dress, eat and drink, run and rest and love,” HTB, pp. 177, 178)
- ◇ What is your understanding of this quote of John Koenig:

“When we are very ill, we are brought to the place where life and death meet. For Christians, this place is the cross. Yet in the central mystery of our faith, the cross is also a prelude to new life.” (HTB, pp. 178, 179)



Faith Practice Two: KEEPING SABBATH

“Our God Our Help in Ages Past” 10 minutes

The hymn, “Our God, Our Help in Ages Past,” is based on Psalm 90.

1. Read these particular words from the hymn:
*“Time, like an ever-rolling stream,
soon bears us all away/We fly forgotten, as
a dream dies at the opening day.”*

Ask: How does the hymn writer help us to see we don’t have all the time in the world?

2. Sing the hymn, “Our God, Our Help in Ages Past,” #20 in the *LTWD Songbook* and found in most hymnals.
3. Present these focal ideas:
 - ◇ God as “our shelter from the stormy blast, our eternal home”
 - ◇ God present both “in ages past” and “in years to come”
4. Ask these questions:
 - ◇ Why do you think this hymn is used at funerals?
 - ◇ What do you think it says about a faith perspective of time? [“...it shows us a God who exists beyond time, a God who promises that when we are in God’s keeping the waves of time can no longer buffet us about.” (RTD p. 10)]
5. Suggest these ideas:
 - ◇ It is not that we flee from time, but that we are seeking something better.
 - ◇ It is within time itself that God meets us. This is central to the Christian theology of incarnation, the idea that God comes to humanity in a specific time and place.



- ◇ Time is not our enemy, is rather a meeting place with God.
- ◇ Time itself is made holy by the presence of God.



“Receiving the Day” 15 minutes

Purpose: to explore the evening/morning sequence in Hebrew thought

Ask questions like:

- ◇ When does a day begin? You may want to show or tell about the scene from the movie, *Groundhog Day*. (See the reference to this in RTD, p. 17)
- ◇ What have we lost when we think the day starts with us, when we get up in the morning?

Discuss these focal ideas:

◇ In Hebrew Scriptures, the day begins at sundown, as in the Genesis account of creation. The Hebrew evening/morning sequence conditions us to the rhythm of grace – we go to sleep as God begins his work. Thus, morning becomes a time to join in the labors already begun. We enter into what God is already doing. Each day God continues the work of new creation. We are “invited to enter, both as ones who stand in need of this divine work and as partners in it.” (RTD p. 18)

This shifts the center of our activity from us to God.

◇ Keeping Sabbath helps to restore God’s intended rhythm, teaching us about grace, about dependence on God, about the world going on without us for a day. Practices for ending the day: Sit down with children and as you go over the events of the day, ask, “Where did you meet God today?”

Ask these questions:

- ◇ What is the difference between “seizing

the day” and “receiving the day?”

◇ Ultimately, what makes us free to receive this day as a gift? [“It is the confidence that in baptism we have died the only death that matters.” (RTD, p. 43)]

Brainstorm together on the board:

◇ What hymn, prayer, or other act could help start your day at dusk?

“Sabbath Commandment” 15 minutes

Read the two versions of the Sabbath commandment as found in the Hebrew Scriptures: Exodus 20:8-11, Deuteronomy 5:12-15 (POF, pp. 78, 79)

Look for the particular emphases of each passage:

- ◇ Deuteronomy 5 – creation, humanity in God’s image, holiness
- ◇ Exodus 20 – exodus, people liberated from captivity, social justice

Ask: Why do you think both versions are important to the meaning of Sabbath?

The two versions are like “two songs of Sabbath.”

One points to Sabbath keeping as a remembrance and perpetuation of God’s liberation of an enslaved people (Exodus 20). It pushes us to ask, “How might keeping Sabbath resist various forms of enslavement today for ourselves and others?”

The other points to Sabbath keeping as rooted in God’s creation of the world (Deuteronomy 5). It pushes us to ask, “How does our society’s keeping Sabbath (or lack thereof) express our relation to the created world?”



“Sabbath Commandment” cont. ...

These two require the same behavior, but sing different songs. God is the generous creator who sanctifies time and the liberator who requires human beings to deal mercifully with one another. One song emphasizes the goodness of God’s creation - the other emphasizes social justice. (RTD, p. 46ff.)

These are important as we face the challenges of our modern day culture:

Society challenges Sabbath. Sabbath challenges society by nourishing an alternative vision of how things could be.

Discuss this quote:

“The solution of mankind’s most vexing problems will not be found in renouncing technical civilization, but in attaining some degree of independence from it ...”

- Abraham Heschel (POF, p. 88)

Ask how can Sabbath keeping teach us that independence?

Dorothy Bass gives us this warning, “If we are not mindful (of Sabbath as a gift), the culture will not be mindful for us.” (RTD, p. 59)

Discuss the quote written on the board:

“When we keep a Sabbath holy, we are practicing, for a day, the freedom that God intends for all people.” (RTD, p. 63)

She goes on to say: “We are practicing independence from the forces of injustice.”

Discuss.

Faith Practice Three: FORGIVENESS

“Which Way to Forgiveness?”

10 minutes

Introduce forgiveness as a faith practice.

This may be more difficult to put into words than the previous two faith practices; harder to put into practice as well.

This is demonstrated in the prayer mentioned by Caroline Simon in her essay, “Which Way to Forgiveness?” (CR, p. 85) – a prayer written by an unknown prisoner in Ravensbruck concentration camp and left on the body of a dead child.

Hand out copies and lead participants in “Prayer for Forgiveness”

“O Lord, remember not only the men and women of good will, but also those of ill will. But do not remember all the suffering they have inflicted on us; remember the fruits we have bought, thanks to this suffering – our comradeship, our loyalty, our humility, our courage, our generosity, the greatness of heart which has grown out of all this, and when they come to judgment let all the fruits which we have borne be their forgiveness.”

Simon asks in her article, “How could I grow into someone who could pray such a prayer – not just over petty affronts but also over matters of monstrous harm?”

Ask: “What would it take for one of us to grow into someone who could pray such a prayer?”

Make these points::

◇ As Christians, one of our clearest





directives is to forgive.

- ◇ Forgiveness is important for end-of-life issues, as can be seen in the “Five Tasks of the Dying” ; Refer to handout and read these five tasks.
- ◇ We are grateful that God forgives us.
- ◇ We must look at how we, in turn, forgive others.

Ask: What can help us to forgive?

How do we enter into the dance of forgiveness – “a beautiful, if sometimes awkward, dance.” (POF, pp. 138ff.)

These steps of the dance are outlined there:

- ◇ We become willing to speak truthfully and patiently about the conflicts that have arisen.
- ◇ We acknowledge both the existence of anger and bitterness and a desire to overcome them.
- ◇ We summon up a concern for the well-being of the other as a child of God.
- ◇ We recognize our own complicity in conflict, remember that we have been forgiven in the past, and take the step of repentance.
- ◇ We make a commitment to struggle to change whatever caused and continues to perpetuate our conflicts.
- ◇ We confess our yearning for the possibility of reconciliation.



“The Paradox of Forgiveness”

10 minutes

Forgiveness involves the paradoxes of truth and mercy; justice and peace.

The material from the article “The Heart of Reconciliation” (CR, pp. 83-84) presents these ideas:

- ◇ Psalm 85:10 says essentially that “truth and mercy have met together, justice and peace

have kissed.” (p. 83)

◇ “The Psalmist personifies truth, mercy, justice, and peace – as if each were a living voice, energy, or presence.” (p. 83)

“... with any level of human conflict ... it is precisely these four voices that are hard to hold together.” (p. 84)

◇ “It’s not easy to connect the voice of mercy with the voice of truth. ... In the context of conflict, the truth is oriented towards saying, ‘What actually did happen?’ Whereas mercy is saying, ‘There has been failure, but we have to provide a new start.’” (p. 84)

◇ “The same is true with justice and peace. Justice says, ‘How are we going to make right what was wrong?’ ... Justice requires that wrongdoing be accounted for. Peace, on the other hand, is about reconstituting the well-being of the community in the form of harmonious, proper relationships.” (p. 84)

◇ “These paradoxes are at the heart of reconciliation in its deepest sense.” (p. 84)

Ask participants, “How do these thoughts resonate with your experiences?”

Read and discuss the following quote from the study guide to *What’s So Amazing about Grace?* by Philip Yancey:

“... In the final analysis, forgiveness is an act of faith. By forgiving another, I am trusting that God is a better justice-maker than I am. By forgiving, I release my own right to get even and leave all issues of fairness for God to work out. I leave in God’s hands the scales that must balance justice and mercy.” (p. 44).





“Who Deserves Forgiveness?”

10 minutes

Forgiveness as a faith practice challenges us to face some hard issues.

Discuss any of the following:

◊ Is there anyone who is beyond forgiveness? Read the story of Jeffrey Dahmer, p. 95 in Yancey’s book, and discuss the idea of unforgivable sin as presented in scripture, Mark.3:29, Matthew 12:32

◊ Must we expect someone to repent before we forgive? Read the story of Will Campbell, p. 141 in Yancey’s book.

◊ What does scripture tell us?

Read:

◊ The Lord’s Prayer, Matthew 6:15

◊ The Parable of the unforgiving servant, Matthew 18:21-35

Typically the question is: Do I have to forgive her if she doesn’t repent? The better question is: Can she repent if I don’t forgive?

Talk about the final scene from the movie, *Places in the Heart*: a poignant expression of forgiveness, when everyone is gathered in church partaking in the Lord’s Supper – even one who had been an “enemy,” killed earlier in the movie. If possible, view the movie in its entirety. If time does not allow, there is a good description of this scene in the article, “See How They Love One Another,” CR, pp. 9,10.

Read this quote:

“We experience ... (forgiveness) only here and there, but it is a foretaste of what is already true about us in Christ. We can even try to work at forgiveness in our lives, not because we can achieve it, but because it has already been achieved for

us, given to us freely, and we can participate in that gift of the spirit.”

Tom Long (CR, p. 34)

-or-

Read the story on the following pages of the article of a dying man asking his pastor for forgiveness.

Ask: “Is Forgiveness human or divine?”

Mention these resources for further study and reflection:

◊ *Embodying Forgiveness, A Theological Analysis*

◊ essays on “Forgiveness” *Christian Reflection*, and its website.

Faith Practice

Four:

HEALING



“Faith Healing” 20 minutes

Purpose: to explore healing as a faith practice

Write on the board the words “faith healing.” Ask, “What word associations come to mind?” Listen for any negative associations such as suspicions that many ‘faith cures’ are phony or the idea that modern medicine holds the only approach to healing .

Ask, “How can we get beyond bad connotations in order to understand healing as a practice of faith?”

Read Tilda Norberg’s quote of the day about “real health.”

“(Healing is)... not just fixing up things that are wrong. Real health, from a Christian point of view, is coming to the fullness of your vocation as a child of God.”



Summarize how real health can be seen from a Christian point of view as coming to the fullness of your vocation as a child of God? Our book says "It means becoming Christ-like." (POF, p. 161.)

Ask one or more of these questions:

- ◇ How does this speak to you?
- ◇ What is this vocation in terms of healing?
- ◇ What is the biblical commission? See James 5:14-15
- ◇ Was healing just for early disciples? See Luke 9:1-2.

Distribute handout "Jesus' Healings in the Gospels."

Read one of the healing stories.

Ask one or more of these questions:

- ◇ Do we take seriously the commission to carry on Jesus' ministry of healing?
- ◇ Do we really believe we are empowered by God to heal as Jesus healed?
- ◇ How do you as a congregation respond to the command of Jesus to heal the sick?

Ask what do we learn from the interesting history of Christian healing as presented in the book? (POF, pp. 152-154)

Discuss how the group sees the inter-relatedness of the faith practices – of healing especially to honoring the body and forgiveness.

Ask: "Where in your life does the practice of healing take place?"

Possible suggestions: medical facilities most obviously, but what about congregations, even homes?

Recipe

(For a Church Cookbook)

By J. Barrie Shepherd

Nourishment must be more than merely fuel for running on, fodder for the furnace that consumes our hours in furious haste. There is an art to eating, old as breaking of a loaf, the sharing of a deep, refreshing cup. Each meal, if touched with light imagination, a modicum of care, can lead to miracles of more than multiplying fish and bread, transforming water into wine, can bring about the forming and re-forming of that sacred circle shaped in trust and sealed by eyes and hands across a table where the grace, once said, is then revealed in every morsel, fragment, sip or swallow savored in the feast that feeds and heals our days.

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You may choose to read the above poem and discuss. (See shaded box).





“Shalom – Being Whole, I”

10 minutes

Purpose: to explore the idea of healing as wholeness

Talk about the following ideas:

◇ The Hebrew notion of Shalom: a sense of wholeness, peace, connectedness that comes from a restored and whole relationship with God.

◇ Healing is an indispensable part of the coming wholeness that God intends for all creation; God is at work, reconciling the world, and healing is central to God’s activity.

Read the quote,

“Healing events are daily signs of the divine mercy that is surging through our world and guiding it toward its final perfection. This is true whether they take place by the sharing of chicken soup, the performance of delicate surgery, or the laying on of hands in a service of worship.” (POF p. 150)

“Shalom – Being Whole, II”

10 minutes

Purpose: To continue to explore the ideas of treating the whole person

Talk about the following ideas from, *Prayer: Finding the Heart’s True Home*, the chapter on Healing Prayer, p. 204:

◇ Distinction between priest, psychologist and physician is of recent vintage. Always before, the physician of the body, the physician of the mind, the physician of the spirit were the same person.

◇ Ancient Hebrews saw persons as a unity – it would be unthinkable to minister to the body without ministering to the spirit .

◇ Healing is an art - as well as a science.

Discuss the following faith affirmations:

◇ the healing ministry of Jesus continues in the community of faith.

◇ healing includes the whole person – spiritual, physical, and emotional.

◇ God wills our wholeness and is actively involved in our growth.

- Tilda Norberg, POF, p. 160

Healing may happen in many different ways. Distribute the handout, “Five Kinds of Healing.” Read each of the five kinds and emphasize the point that God always grants one of them.

If you want to follow up on any of this, you may want to:

◇ Look into the Order of St. Luke’s, a Christian healing ministry – information about this organization could be a good resource for congregations. Contact www.orderofstluke.org to find out more.

◇ Visit a healing and wholeness service at a local congregation.

“Healing When There Is No Cure”

10 minutes

Read these lines:

*“In the godforsaken,
obscene quicksand of life,
there is a deafening alleluia
rising from the souls of those who weep, and
of those who weep with those who weep. If you
watch, you will see the hand of God
putting the stars back in their skies
one by one.”*

(from *Psalms of Lament*, Ann Weems, Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1995, p xvii. Used by permission.)



Ann Weems lives with an unfinished, unanswered grief for her son, Todd, who died in a car accident when he was 21. She writes that on that day “the stars fell from my sky.”

Healing, for Ann Weems, as she says in her preface, is “the hand of God putting the stars back in their skies one by one.”

Discuss these points:

An illness can be that time when the stars fall from our sky. When there is no hope for a cure, how does healing enter in? Normally we think about healing as “cure.” Can we even speak of healing without falling into denial?

Yet many, when faced with a terminal diagnosis, suddenly realize how precious life is and seem to gain a new strength, a new life-giving purpose they didn't have when they were well.

Give illustrations from those you know about
-or-

the story of Jean Blomquist, diagnosed with lupus – “To Touch the Fringe of God's Garment,” *Weavings*, pp. 30,31.

-or-

perhaps the story of Morrie Schwartz, *Tuesdays with Morrie*.

Ask one or more of these questions:

◇ Do we need to wait until we have a terminal diagnosis to gain this perspective?

◇ What are some ways we can practice healing now?

◇ What will aid us when we come to our own “end”?

◇ Do you see this as a goal of hospice — to enable people to live fully until they die? (this leads into the next session on dying well)



Faith Practice Five: DYING WELL

“Practicing for a Good Death” 20 minutes

Discuss the quote for the day from *Tuesdays with Morrie*:

“Everyone knows they're going to die, ... but nobody believes it. If we did, we would do things differently.” p. 81

Ask, “Is there a better approach?”

Discuss Morrie's suggestion:

“To know you're going to die, and to be prepared for it at any time. That's better. That way you can actually be more involved in your life while you're living.” p. 81

Ask, How do we do this? See Morrie's suggestion: Borrow a practice from Buddhism;

“Do what the Buddhists do. Every day, have a little bird on your shoulder that asks, ‘Is today the day? Am I ready? Am I doing all I need to do? Am I being the person I want to be?’” (He turned his head to his shoulder as if the bird were there now. “Is today the day I die?” he said.) p. 81.

Is this something you could practice each day?

Discuss Morrie's bottom line:

“The truth is, once you learn how to die, you learn how to live.”



“Practicing for a Good Death” cont. ...

Invite participants to discuss what ideas they may have on ways we can be better prepared for our end.

Suggest the following verse as a mantra for facing our own mortality, for dying well:

“So teach us to count our days that we may gain a wise heart.” (Psalm 90:12)



“Isolation vs. Community”

20 minutes

Purpose: to explore how death has been isolated from the flow of daily life.

Read Amy Plantinga Pauw’s provocative thoughts in POF, p. 165:

“Our society ... isolates death and dying from the flow of daily life unlike almost every other society in history...In modern Western society, the two institutions that have had the most influence on how people face death – hospitals and funeral homes – have altered the communal practices that once surrounded this life passage.”

Discuss her ideas and ask about the group’s experiences of hospitals, funeral homes.

Discuss how hospice care may be responding to the need.

Discuss the importance of community.

Talk about what we learn from faith:
What we learn about dying well from a Christian faith practice point of view is that death is not

something we are alone in, separate in, despite what society says.

Read this quote from *Our Greatest Gift: A Meditation on Dying and Caring* by Henri Nouwen, and discuss:

“How can death create unity instead of separation? Isn’t death the ultimate separation? It is, if we live by the norms of a competitive society always concerned with the question, who is the strongest? But when we claim our divine childhood and learn to trust that we belonged to God before we were born and will belong to God after we have died, then we experience that all people on this planet are our brothers and sisters, and we are all making the journey together through birth and death to new life.” (p. 27)

Read this quote from the same book and discuss:

“Reminding people in their agony of their divine childhood is not something we can do on our own It is the community of care that reminds the dying person of his or her belovedness.”

(pp. 62,63)

Reflect on the symbols on the tables

◇ Churches – symbols of the faith community of care in our dying

◇ Votive candles – the Church’s community of memory, for we light candles in memory of loved ones

◇ Chalice – a symbol, reminder of the ultimate price paid for us – we are not our own, we belong to God, we have been bought with a



price, Jesus drank the bitter cup of death for our sake.

Read Romans 14:7-9 :

"We do not live to ourselves, and we do not die to ourselves. If we live, we live to the Lord, and if we die, we die to the Lord; so then, whether we live or whether we die, we are the Lord's. For to this end Christ died and lived again, so that he might be Lord of both the dead and the living."

Talk about what the faith community of memory looks like and how this may be better than what neighbors, co-workers, especially funeral homes can do.

Hospice remembrance celebrations are provided as occasions to gather and remember a loved one who was cared for by hospice.

Refer participants to the resource, *Final Gifts: Understanding the Special Awareness, Needs, and Communications of the Dying*, by Maggie Callanan and Patricia Kelley, for many inspiring stories about dying with dignity and a good death.



"The Many Faces of Death"

15 minutes

Faith practices can teach us about "dying well," and how this can be possible.

Talk about the complexity of responding to death in its many forms: "When Christian practices are healthy, dying well embraces both lament and hope, and both a sense of divine judgment and an awareness of divine mercy." (POF, p. 167)

Present material from section "The Many Faces of Death" (POF, pp. 166-176):

- ◇ lament
- ◇ thanksgiving and hope
- ◇ judgment
- ◇ mercy

Choose one of the following options:

Read through the funeral service in your church's book of worship and identify some of the above themes.

-or-

invite your pastor to come and discuss the funeral service and its themes.

Look at the music that is played and sung at funerals and reflect on the themes found there. Consider other options for music, especially the songs from *The Last Journey*, John Bell.

Read together Psalm 88:3-7, a Psalm of lament. Other Psalms of lament are: Psalms 17, 28, 38, 42-43, 56, 64, 69, 74, 79, 86, 109, 141, 142.

Discuss how Psalms of lament "bring before God the raw intensity of the emotions evoked by death. When we pray these psalms, we expose our emotions instead of hiding them as some Christians do when they mistakenly imagine that God will be offended by their bitterness and outrage." (POF, pp. 167, 168)

Reflect on Jesus' anguish on the cross, crying the bitter lament of Psalm 22, "My God, my God why have you forsaken me? (Matthew 27:46).





“Good Friday/Easter Tension”

10 minutes

Discuss the thought: Hope for new life first passes through the furnace of suffering.

Ask the group: How can Good Friday be called good?

Reflect on the irony of turning a cross, a symbol of torture, into an item for jewelry, for beautification.

Ask if anyone has ever experienced a Holy Saturday Vigil. Few congregations observe this faith tradition – which is observed the night before Easter. We do not sit long enough with this vigil, for we move too easily to Easter and resurrection.

Reflect on how difficult it was for the first disciples to comprehend the death and resurrection of Christ.



Faith Practice Six: SINGING OUR LIVES

“Singing Through the Ages”

10 minutes

Faith is born and lives in song

Make these points:

◇ From its origins, the Christian community sang.

◇ In the New Testament, we hear doxologies (II Peter 3:18), hymn fragments, (Philippians 2:6-11), and references to the practice of singing in worshipping assemblies, (Colossians 3:16).

◇ “The Christian Church was born singing the songs of ancient Israel, the synagogue, and Greco-Roman world.” (POF p. 183)

◇ We sing not alone, but in union with the whole creation and with our brothers and sisters through the ages.

Play once again the song, “I Will Sing A Song of Love,” if available and discuss the words.

-or-

Play a song of your choosing that speaks of God’s gift of song to the worshipping community.



ACTIVITIES



Faith Practice One—Honoring the Body

- ◇ Hand Massage
- ◇ Walking the Labyrinth



Faith Practice Two—Keeping Sabbath

- ◇ Lectio Divina, Psalm 90
- ◇ Manna Time



Faith Practice Three—Forgiveness

- ◇ Lectio Divina, Psalm 51
- ◇ Exploring Forgiveness in the Bible



Faith Practice Four—Healing

- ◇ Laying On of Hands



Faith Practice Five—Dying Well

- ◇ If I Died Today...
- ◇ Bedtime Ritual



Faith Practice Six—Singing Our Lives

- ◇ Singing Shapes Our Faith



Faith Practice One: HONORING THE BODY

“Hand Massage” 15 minutes

Participants will take turns massaging each other's hands with lotion while the leader reads scripture texts. These texts underscore the importance of the human body in God's good created order and invite us to reflect. Create a meditative mood as instructions are given to participants.

Leader may start by massaging the hands of the person to the right and to the left, to demonstrate, and start a small bottle of lotion down each side.

NOTE: You may want to determine ahead of time if anyone is sensitive to scented lotion and have an unscented bottle on hand.

Scripture texts to read (or those of your own choosing):

Genesis 1:1-5, 26-31
Psalm 103:1-14
Psalm 139: 1-6, 13-18
Jeremiah 1: 4-10
James 5:14
John 1:1-5, 14, 16-18

These scripture references could be written on the board so participants could make notes for their own reference.



“Walking the Labyrinth”

10 minutes

The labyrinth is a devotional tool, often called a body prayer, connecting kinetic activity with meditation.

Introduce participants to the labyrinth through a hand labyrinth if one can be obtained, pictures of labyrinths, or printed diagram found on website. Distribute handout “Labyrinth Background Information” and highlight its uses and three-fold approach of releasing, receiving and reviewing.

Demonstrate how hand-held (or printed diagram) labyrinths are used. Distribute handout “Desktop Finger Labyrinth” and invite participants to trace with their finger as they reflect.

Indicate if there is a labyrinth nearby (e.g. at a nearby church, cathedral, college, university, or seminary) and encourage participants to walk a labyrinth. You may want to arrange to do this as a group activity outside of session time.



Faith Practice Two KEEPING SABBATH

“Lectio Divina, Psalm 90”

15 minutes

Distribute copies of Psalm 90, or have participants turn to the passage in Bibles available in the same translation. To make a copy of the Psalm, you may download it from www.devotions.net/bible.

Leader will read the passage through once while participants listen.

Participants will then prayerfully read the passage to themselves.

Read these instructions to participants before beginning:



“Read the passage slowly and thoughtfully until you are attracted by a particular phrase, sentence, or longer section when you sense unusual power, beauty, or truth there.

Stop reading and sit quietly for a moment. Read that passage over, slowly, again and again.

Do not reason about the text. Do not analyze it. Just listen to the words and meaning. Let it do its work in you.

Stay with those words as long as they hold your attention. When this section of the passage has finished with you, simply resume reading.”

(from *Receiving the Day* study guide)



“Manna time” 10 minutes

Days are like manna: once they’re gone, you can’t get them back. And you also can’t hoard them. They arrive fresh and new each morning, a gift.

Read Exodus 16:4-31, the story of how God provided the Israelites with manna in the wilderness. Then, wherever the word **manna** appears, substitute the word **time**, as in the following excerpt:

“Then the Lord said to Moses, I am going to rain hours, time from heaven for you, and each day the people shall rise up and have time enough for that day On the sixth day, when they gather up time, it will be twice as much as they gather on other days. Then Moses said to Aaron,

“Say to the whole congregation of the Israelites, ‘Draw near to the Lord, who has heard your complaining about lack of time ... ’” The Lord spoke to Moses and said, “At twilight you shall eat with plenty of time, and in the morning you shall have your fill of time stretching out before you; then you shall know that I am the Lord your God.” In the evening time came up and covered the camp, and in the morning there was a layer of time upon the camp. When the Israelites saw it, they said to one another, “What is it?”

Moses said to them, “It is the time that the Lord has given you. This is what the Lord has given you. This is what the Lord has commanded: ‘Take as much time as you need for the day.’” Those who had too much time on their hands measured it in hours and had nothing left over, and those who had little time discovered as much as each of them needed. And Moses said to them, “Let no one leave any of the time over until morning.” But they did not listen to Moses; some used up the hours of the night until morning, and the time became to them foul; for they were tired and irritable. The house of Israel called it “time”; it was a new gift every day. [Adapted from Exodus 16:4-31]”

- from *Receiving the Day* study guide





Faith Practice Three: FORGIVENESS

“Lectio Divina, Psalm 51” 15 minutes

Distribute copies of Psalm 51:1-17, or have participants turn to passage in Bibles available in the same translation. To make a copy of the Psalm, you may download it from www.devotions.net/bible.

Leader will read the passage through once while participants listen. Then participants will prayerfully read passage to themselves.

Read these instructions to participants before beginning:

“Read the passage slowly and thoughtfully until you are attracted by a particular phrase, sentence, or longer section when you sense unusual power, beauty, or truth there.

Stop reading and sit quietly for a moment. Read that passage over, slowly, again and again.

Do not reason about the text. Do not analyze it. Just listen to the words and meaning. Let it do its work in you.

Stay with those words as long as they hold your attention. When this section of the passage has finished with you, simply resume reading.”

- from Receiving the Day study guide



“Challenges of Forgiveness” 10 minutes

Most of us have fresh experiences of situations where forgiveness did not happen. Have participants write down a personal experience where forgiveness did not happen. This is to be for their use only.

Then read to the group experiences of author Tom Long — first, with a pastoral care professor, (CR, p.29); then, with an incident on the street. (CR, pp. 30,31)

Read and discuss the quote:

“Part of the problem is that we are often less sure of what and whom we love than we are of what and whom we hate. Indeed, we too often stake our identity on being against some person or group.” (POF, p. 136)

“Exploring Forgiveness in the Bible”

15 minutes

Have participants divide into three groups.

Distribute the handout sheet “Exploring Forgiveness in the Bible.” Assign each group one of these topics.

- ◇ Forgiveness as divine
- ◇ Forgiveness and community
- ◇ Balancing justice and mercy

Have Bibles and resources from “Forgiveness,” *Christian Reflection* available to the groups as they work through their sheet.

Have someone in each group be a recorder to write down insights of the group.

Invite one from each group to share an insight of their group’s work.





Faith Practice Four: HEALING

“Laying On of Hands”

10 minutes

Have materials assembled: brightly colored paper, pencils, scissors

Have participants trace with pencil both of their hands on the colored paper. Then cut out the hands outlines.

Tell this story as they do so:

Bill is an elderly man with cancer. He has had great support from his congregation throughout his treatments. Several members wanted to know what specific things might help him to feel supported during his illness. As Bill pondered this, he happened to be walking through the halls of the church’s educational wing one Sunday. He noticed all the paper cutouts of the children’s hands displayed on the walls. They were bright and cheerful, lifting his spirits. He knew then what would be a meaningful gesture of support. He asked all the members of the church – young and old – to prayerfully make paper cutouts, tracing their hands (writing their names on them). Then they gave them to him, so that when he was having a treatment, or in the hospital, or feeling ill in bed at home, he could spread out those hands over his body and feel the support of the community. People

from far away heard about Bill’s request and began sending him paper cutouts of their hands as well. Members of the church began a ministry to others who were ill and would take paper cut-outs of hands and lay them on those in the ICU, or before surgery, or during rehabilitation as they prayed with them.

You may want to consider such a ministry in your congregation, taking the cutouts you have made and laying them on someone who is ill.



Faith Practice Five: DYING WELL

“If I Died Today...”

20 minutes

Distribute additional copies of handout if needed.

Participants may want to share the obituaries they have written (as this was assigned earlier). This is purely optional, though it can be a very moving experience for all involved.

NOTE: The time allotted for this activity may depend on how many want to share what they have written. What may be more important is to talk about what the process of writing one’s obituary was like.

Ask some of these questions:

- ◇ Was it hard to do?
- ◇ What resistance did you have?
- ◇ What feelings did it stir up?
- ◇ Did it help to reassess your priorities in life?
- ◇ Does what you wrote resemble your



“If I Died Today” cont. ...

pattern of life at present?

- ◇ Is there anything you want to ask God’s help to change in your way of life?

This could lead to a discussion of other questions flowing out of this like:

- ◇ How would you like to die?
- ◇ Whom would you like to have with you, and in what kind of place?
- ◇ What would you like the people most important to you to know, and what would you like them to tell you?
- ◇ How does your faith inform the way you envision this?

As a follow-up to these questions, you may want to distribute to participants copies of “Five Wishes” and “Isn’t It Time We Talk?” These are documents addressing advance directives for the end of life.



“Bedtime Ritual” 5 minutes

Play a recording of a lullaby (e.g. *Sleep Baby Sleep*).

Give the illustration of a mother teaching her daughter how to sleep as preparing to learn how to die. (RTD, p. 42, 43)

Talk about our childhood bedtime prayers (“Now I lay me down to sleep ... If I die before I wake”) and the idea of not fearing the grave more than one’s bed – something we have shied away from, even as we have changed the words to the bedtime prayer.

The mother mentioned in the above illustration believes that by teaching her daughters to sleep, she is teaching them to die. By teaching them to sleep now, she is giving them a gift that she hopes will one day allow them to relax into God’s own care without fear.



Faith Practice Six: SINGING OUR LIVES

“Singing Shapes Our Faith” 15 minutes

Have the group divide into pairs and ask them to talk to each other about their favorite hymn or song. You may want to remind them that new songs touch us as well and to consider them in their conversation.

Come back together and discuss how singing shapes our faith. Point out that the songs that we learn in childhood will stay with us in our old age, even when we cannot put two words together in a sentence because of dementia. Participants may have experienced loved ones being able to sing an entire hymn, even when they could no longer speak at all.

Tunes are just as important as the theology of words in molding us – for they speak to and from the heart.

Write on the board this quote by Dietrich Bonhoeffer:

“It is not you that sings, it is the church that is singing, and you, as a member . . . may share in its song.”

Refer participants to the rest of the quote in POF:

“Thus all singing together that is right must serve to widen our spiritual horizon, make us see our little company as a member of the great Christian church on earth, and help us willingly and gladly to join our singing, be it feeble or good, to the song of the church.” (p. 187).



Discuss the communal nature of song.

Discuss the quote from POF:

“Through this practice, music lends its power to all the other practices that shape and express who we are.” (p. 193)

Distribute the handout, “Ways to Practice Singing Our Lives,” indicating that these are things that participants may want to put into practice.



HANDOUTS



Faith Practice One—Honoring the Body

- ◇ Further Reading
- ◇ Biographical Sketches of Authors in *Practicing Our Faith*
- ◇ Labyrinth Background Information
- ◇ Desktop Finger Labyrinth



Faith Practice Two—Keeping Sabbath

- ◇ No handouts



Faith Practice Three—Forgiveness

- ◇ Prayer for Forgiveness/Five Tasks of the Dying
- ◇ Exploring Forgiveness in the Bible



Faith Practice Four—Healing

- ◇ Jesus' Healings in the Gospels
- ◇ Five Kinds of Healing
- ◇ How to Fold a Paper Crane
- ◇ If I Died Today... (to be completed before Session 5)
- ◇ A Service for Wholeness



Faith Practice Five—Dying Well

- ◇ If I Died Today...(have additional copies available, see Faith Practice Four)



Faith Practice Six—Singing Our Lives

- ◇ Ways to Practice Singing Our Lives
- ◇ Evaluation Forms
- ◇ Commissioning Worship Service: "Celebrating the Journey "
- ◇ Litany for Commitment
- ◇ Reflective Readings



Further Reading:

These suggested resources represent a portion of the great resources out there on the subject of faith practices and end-of-life issues. Many of the resources listed here are available at the library of Hospice of the Upstate, in the Sadler Bereavement and Education Center.

Books

(The) Active Life: Wisdom for Work, Creativity, and Caring, Parker J. Palmer, New York: HarperSanFrancisco, 1990.

Celebration of Discipline: The Path to Spiritual Growth, Richard Foster, New York: HarperSanFrancisco, 1988.

Celtic Benediction: Morning and Night Prayer, J. Philip Newell, Grand Rapids: Wm.B. Eerdmans Publ. Co., 2000.

Celtic Prayers from Iona, J. Philip Newell, New York: Paulist Press, 1997.

(The) Denial of Death, Ernest Becker, New York: The Free Press, 1973.

Dying Well: Peace and Possibilities at the End of Life, Ira Byock, New York: Riverhead Books, 1998.

Embodying Forgiveness, A Theological Analysis, L. Gregory Jones, Grand Rapids, Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1995.

Everyday Grace: Having Hope, Finding Forgiveness, and Making Miracles, Marianne Williamson, New York: Riverhead Press, 2002.

Final Gifts: Understanding the Special Awareness, Needs, and Communications of the Dying, Maggie Callahan and Patricia Kelly, New York: Bantam Books, 1992.

(The) Four Things That Matter Most: A Book About Living, Ira Byock, New York: Free Press, 2004.

From Grim to Green Pastures: Meditations for the Sick and Their Caregivers, Richard L. Morgan, Nashville: Upper Room Books, 1994.

God and Human Suffering: An Exercise in the Theology of the Cross, Douglas John Hall, Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1986.

(The) Grace in Dying: how we are transformed spiritually as we die, Kathleen Dowling Singh, New York, HarperCollins Publishers, 1998.

Honoring the Body: Meditations on a Christian Practice, Stephanie Paulsell, San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 2002.

How We Die: Reflections on Life's Final Chapter, Sherwin B. Nuland.

Keeping the Sabbath Wholly: Ceasing, Resting, Embracing, Feasting, Marva Dawn, Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co, 1989.

Love, Medicine and Miracles: Lessons Learned About Self-Healing from a Surgeon's Experience with Exceptional Patients, Bernie S. Siegel, New York: Harper and Row Publishers, 1986.

(The) Next Place, Warren Hanson, Golden Valley, MN: Waldman House Press, 1997.

On Death and Dying, Elisabeth Kubler-Ross, New York: The Macmillan Company, 1969.

One Foot in Eden: A Celtic View of the Stages of Life, J. Philip Newell, Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1999.

Our Greatest Gift: A Meditation on Dying and Caring, Henri J. M. Nouwen, New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 1994.

Practicing Our Faith: A Way of Life for a Searching People, ed. Dorothy Bass, San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1997.

Prayer: Finding the Heart's True Home, Richard Foster, New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 1992.

Prayers From The Heart, Richard J. Foster, New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 1994.

Praying Twice: The Music and Words of Congregational Song, Brian Wren, Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2000.

Receiving the Day: Christian Practices for Opening the Gift of Time, Dorothy Bass, San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 2000.

(The) Reinvention of Work: A New Vision of Livelihood for Our Time, Matthew Fox, New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 1994.



Remembering Well: Rituals for Celebrating Life and Mourning Death, Sarah York, San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 2000.

(The) Sabbath, Abraham Joshua Heschel, New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1951.

Sabbath: Restoring the Sacred Rhythm of Rest, Wayne Muller, New York, Bantam Books, 1999.

Sabbath Time, Tilden Edwards, Nashville: Upper Room Books, 1992.

Sacred Dying: Creating Rituals for Embracing the End of Life, Megory Anderson, Rocklin, CA: Prima Lifestyles, 2001.

Sadako and the Thousand Paper Cranes, Eleanor Coerr, New York, Dell Publishing, 1977.

(A) Song to Sing, A Life to Live, Don and Emily Saliers, San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 2004.

Sounds of the Eternal: A Celtic Psalter, J. Philip Newell, Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2002.

Teaching for Faith: A Guide for Teachers of Adult Classes, Richard Robert Osmer, Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1992.

Teaching Today's Teachers to Teach, Don Griggs, Nashville, Abingdon Press, 2003.

Tuesdays with Morrie: an old man, a young man, and life's greatest lesson, Mitch Albom, New York: Doubleday, 1997.

Turn My Heart: A Sacred Journey from Brokenness to Healing, Susan Briehl and Marty Haugen, Chicago: GIA Publications, 2004.

Walking A Sacred Path: Rediscovering the Labyrinth as a Spiritual Tool, Lauren Artress, New York: Riverhead Books, 1995.

What Dying People Want: Practical Wisdom for the End of Life, David Kuhl, New York: PublicAffairs, 2002.

What's So Amazing About Grace? Philip Yancey, Grand Rapids, Zondervan Publishing House, 1997.

You Only Die Once: Preparing for the End of Life with Grace and Gusto, Margie Jenkins, Nashville: Integrity Publishers, 2002.

Booklets

Five Wishes, produced by Aging with Dignity, Tallahassee, FL, 2005, www.agingwithdignity.org. Copies may also be purchased by calling 1-888-594-7437. There is also a Five Wishes Video and a Next Steps guide available.

Isn't It Time We Talk? Sponsored by The Carolinas Center for Hospice and End of Life Care, 2002, www.carolinasendoflifecare.org. Copies may also be purchased by calling 800-662-8859.

Articles

"Forgiveness," *Christian Reflection: A Series in Faith and Ethics*, The Center for Christian Ethics at Baylor University, 2001, www.ChristianEthics.ws.

"Practicing Our Faith: A Guide for Conversation, Learning, and Growth," *Practicing Our Faith Series*, 1997, www.practicingourfaith.org.

"Receiving The Day, Christian Practices for Opening the Gift of Time: A Guide for Conversation, Learning, and Growth," *Practicing Our Faith Series*, 2001, www.practicingourfaith.org.

"Sabbath," *Christian Reflection: A Series in Faith and Ethics*, The Center for Christian Ethics at Baylor University, 2002, www.ChristianEthics.ws.



Biographical Sketches of the Authors in *Practicing Our Faith*

Honoring the Body

Stephanie Paulsell

**Associate Dean for Ministry Studies
Harvard Divinity School**

Paulsell is an ordained minister in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ). She received a Ph.D. in religion and literature from the University of Chicago in 1993 and has taught at the University of Chicago Divinity School, Catholic Theological Union, and Valparaiso University.

Paulsell is the author of *Honoring the Body: Meditations on a Christian Practice* and co-editor, with L. Gregory Jones, of *The Scope of Our Art: The Vocation of Theological Teachers*.

Keeping Sabbath

Dorothy C. Bass

Director of the Valparaiso Project

Dorothy worked with an ecumenical and interracial group of authors to develop *Practicing Our Faith: A Way of Life for a Searching People* (1997). This book addresses the contemporary hunger for a way of life that can be lived with integrity amidst the many changes of our time by advocating the retrieval of twelve Christian practices.

Dorothy is also the author of *Receiving the Day: Christian Practices for Opening the Gift of Time* (2000), co-editor of *Practicing Theology: Beliefs and Practices in Christian Life* (2002), co-editor of *Way to Live: Christian Practices for Teens* (2002), and co-editor of *Leading Lives That Matter: What We Should Do and Who We Should Be* (2006). Dorothy serves on the Board of Directors for Holden Village, an ecumenical retreat center in the northern Cascade Mountains. A graduate of Wellesley College, Union Theological Seminary in New York City, and Brown University, Dorothy has taught at several colleges and theological schools. She is the mother of two college students and the wife of Mark Schwehn, who teaches in Christ College at Valparaiso University and is Project Director for the Lilly Fellows Program in Humanities and the Arts.

Dorothy serves on the advisory boards for the Valparaiso Project Practice Grants Program and the Way to Live Challenge Grants Program.

Forgiveness

L. Gregory Jones

Dean of the Divinity School

Professor of Theology

Duke University

Prior to his arrival at Duke, Jones was chair of the theology department at Loyola College in Maryland. An ordained United Methodist minister, Jones is a graduate of the University of Denver (B.A., M.P.A.) and the Divinity School of Duke University (M.Div., Ph.D.).

Jones, a Christian ethicist, is the author of several books, including the acclaimed *Embodying Forgiveness*, *The Scope of Our Art*, co-edited with Stephanie Paulsell, and *Resurrecting Excellence*, co-edited with Kevin Armstrong. Jones writes a regular column, "Faith Matters," for *The Christian Century*, and he is co-editor of the scholarly journal *Modern Theology*. Jones was a contributing author to *Practicing Theology*. With his wife the Reverend Susan Pendleton Jones, Director of Special Programs at Duke Divinity School, Jones parents three children: Nathan, Benjamin, and Sarah.

Healing

John Koenig

Professor of New Testament

General Theological Seminary, Manhattan

Koenig is a priest in the Episcopal Church. Before joining General's faculty, he taught at Princeton and Union Seminaries. Koenig is a graduate of Concordia Senior College (A.B.), Concordia Seminary in St. Louis (B.D.); and Union Theological Seminary in New York City (Th.D.).

Koenig has written six books, all in the broad area of biblical theology and Christian practice. They include: *New Testament Hospitality*, *Rediscovering New Testament Prayer* and, most recently, *The Feast of the World's Redemption*, an inquiry into what Christians can learn for their mission today from the table rituals of the first century churches.

Dying Well

Amy Plantinga Pauw

**Henry P. Mobley, Jr. Professor of Doctrinal Theology
Louisville Presbyterian Seminary**

Pauw is a lay member of the Presbyterian Church (USA). She is a graduate of Calvin College (B.A.), Fuller Seminary (M.Div.), and Yale University (Ph.D.). Her teaching and writing interests span a variety



of movements in contemporary theology as well as the thought of Jonathan Edwards.

Pauw is the author of *The Supreme Harmony of All: The Trinitarian Theology of Jonathan Edwards* and co-author of *Making Time for God: Daily Devotions for Children and Families to Share*.

Singing Our Lives

Don Saliers

**Franklin N. Parker Chair of Theology and Worship
Director, Master of Sacred Music Program**

Emory University

Saliers was educated at Ohio Wesleyan (B.A.), Yale University (B.D., Ph.D.) and Cambridge University. Prior to his positions at Emory University, Saliers taught at Yale University. Widely known in ecumenical circles, Saliers is author of several books on worship and liturgy, including *Soul in Paraphrase: Prayer and Religious Affections* (1980, 1991), *Worship and Spirituality* (1984), *Worship As Theology* (1994), and *Worship Come To Its Senses* (1996).

A United Methodist minister, Saliers composes choral church music and serves as organist/choirmaster for Emory's University worship community.

Saliers and his daughter Emily, a member of the Grammy award-winning Indigo Girls, collaborated in writing *A Song to Sing, A Life to Live: Reflections on Music as Spiritual Practice* (2005).

(Sketches from Valparaiso Project on the Education and Formation of People in Faith, www.practicingourfaith.org)



LABYRINTHS



Labyrinths are found in many cultures dating back as much as 3,500 years. Unlike a maze, the labyrinth is unicursal, having a single path leading to the center with no loops, cul-de-sacs or forks. They all share the basic features of an entrance or mouth, a single circuitous path and a center or goal. Labyrinths are described by how many concentric circuits or paths they contain. They can be a few inches or a few hundred feet in width.

The two most common types of Labyrinths are the Chartres and Classic-7. However, there are many variations, including custom labyrinths created by modern labyrinth-makers such as the 8-circuit Renewal or 7-circuit Triune Labyrinth.

The Chartres, 11-circuit Labyrinth was constructed around 1201 AD in the stone floor of Chartres Cathedral, France. Its distinguishing features are; 11 circuits, the turns arranged in four quadrants, lunations or teeth around the perimeter, and a 6-petal rosette in the center. Medieval Christians visited Chartres (and other cathedrals) and walked the labyrinth instead of taking a hazardous pilgrimage to Jerusalem to walk in the "foot steps of Christ." Modern "pilgrims" walk the labyrinthine path as one of many tools to enhance prayer, contemplation, meditation, and/or personal growth.

The Classic-7 Labyrinth is a simpler design that is often called the 'Cretan' referring to the design found on ancient coins on the Island of Crete. It is also the oldest style found in many cultures as early as 1500 BC. Actual usage theories vary depending on the time and culture. Its distinguishing features are; 7 circuits, an egg-like shape and the turns in the lower part of the labyrinth.

WALKING A LABYRINTH

Many community organizations, churches and retreat centers are making labyrinth walks available for public use for prayer, meditation, contemplation or personal growth. The labyrinth walk is popular with a growing number of people because of its simplicity and the ability to approach its paths on your own terms.

1) Environment: Begin by setting the environment for the experience. At organized walks, your host prepares by adjusting lighting, selecting music, controlling air conditioners, and saying opening prayers. Set your personal environment by dropping your 'physical baggage' such as key-chains and cell-phones. We suggest you remove watches to remove the temptation to measure your progress chronologically. On an indoor labyrinth you may be asked to remove your shoes and walk in your socks. Outdoors, enjoy the sounds of nature; experience a barefoot walk on a grass or stone labyrinth!

The Walk: There is not a "required way" to walk the labyrinth. The beauty of the labyrinth is that people can approach the experience on their own terms. However, as a guideline, we break the 'walk' down into these stages.

2) Entering: (releasing.) During this stage you walk the path toward the center, and should try to acquire a relaxed, peaceful state, temporarily release concerns and quiet the mind.

3) Illumination: (receiving) The time in the center. This is a time of openness and peacefulness; you experience, learn or receive what this unique moment offers. Take your time.

4) Union: (reviewing) The journey outward. You choose when to leave the center, following the same path. This is a time to review and consider what occurred in the center and how it may be applied in your life.

5) Implementation: This stage represents your life outside the labyrinth; the world where your experience or illumination is carried into and affects your everyday life.

Other ways to walk include: Intentional walks: where you address a specific intention, issue or concern as you walk.

Intercessory walks: offer prayer for a different person at each turn on the path. Meditative walks: meditate on a specific word or passage, or pray repeating the Jesus prayer (Lord have mercy,) or the prayer for world peace. (Let peace Prevail on Earth!)

For more information:

visit www.labyrinths.org or www.paxworks.com



**Eagles Crest Labyrinth
(C) Paxworks 2003**



Faith Practice Three: Forgiveness

A Prayer for Forgiveness

Prayer for Forgiveness

"O Lord, remember not only the men and women of good will, but also those of ill will. But do not remember all the suffering they have inflicted upon us; remember the fruits we have bought, thanks to this suffering – our comradeship, our loyalty, our humility, our courage, our generosity, the greatness of heart which has grown out of all this, and when they come to judgement let all the fruits which we have borne be their forgiveness."

- written by an unknown prisoner in Ravensbruck concentration camp and left on the body of a dead child

(from "Forgiveness," *Christian Reflection: A Series in Faith and Ethics*, The Center for Christian Ethics at Baylor University, 2001, p. 85, www.ChristianEthics.ws.)

Five Tasks of the Dying

Steps to be addressed in completing relationships between the dying person and their loved ones:

I FORGIVE YOU

FORGIVE ME

THANK YOU

I LOVE YOU

GOOD-BYE

(From *Dying Well: Peace and Possibilities at the End of Life*, Ira Byock, New York: Riverhead Books, 1998, p. 140)



Exploring Forgiveness in the Bible

Have participants form three groups to research and discuss these three areas:

Group 1: Forgiveness as divine

- ◇ Forgiveness is actually from God; we join in what God is at work doing.
- ◇ Discuss this concept: “We are not called to create forgiveness.” (See Tom Long’s article)
- ◇ It is impossible for us to bring about restoration of wholeness and open trust (the goal of true forgiveness) – we are called instead to participate in a forgiveness given to us as a gift.
- ◇ Find some Biblical references that support this.

Group 2: Balancing justice and mercy

- ◇ Consider the cross as symbol of justice and mercy. It is our model and mandate, for from the cross Jesus prayed, “Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do.”
- ◇ Discuss, “How do we forgive our enemies?”
- ◇ What further Biblical references are there surrounding justice and mercy?

Group 3: Forgiveness and community

- ◇ As communities of faith, do others say of us, “See how they love one another.”?
- ◇ Discuss how churches are to mentor the community in the area of forgiveness when there is brokenness and strife.
- ◇ Discuss how worship may draw us together before God with folks whom we find it difficult to forgive.
- ◇ Consider this quote, “In these arenas of life [families, workplaces, and communities] we learn that the church, for all its faults and foibles, has been providing us all along with practice and conditioning for the hard work of forgiveness and reconciliation.” (“See How They Love One Another,” Dorothy Bass, *Christian Reflection*, pp. 12, 13)
- ◇ Talk about the paper chains on the tables and their dual significance of breaking the bonds of violence, as well as the breakdown in connection when forgiveness is not present.
- ◇ Find some Biblical references that support this.



Faith Practice Four: Healing

Jesus Healings in the Gospels

Healed every disease and sickness
Matthew 4:23

Healed leprosy
Matthew 8:3, Luke 17:12-14

Healed a Centurion's servant
Matthew 8:13, Luke 7:1-10

Healed Peter's mother-in-law of fever
Matthew 8:14-15, Mark 1:29-31, Luke 4:38-39

Healed the demoniac at Gadara
Matthew 8:28-34, Mark 5:1-20

Healed a paralytic
Matthew 9:6-7, Mark 2:1-12, Luke 5:17-26

Healed a bleeding woman
Matthew 9:20-22, Mark 5:24-34, Luke 8:42-48

Healed Jairus' daughter
Matthew 9:23-26, Luke 8:49-56

Gave sight to blind men
Matthew 9:29-30, 20:34, Mark 8:23-25, 10:51-52, John 9:7

Restored a withered hand
Matthew 12:13

Healed Canaanite's daughter
Matthew 15:21-28, Mark 7:24-30

Cured a boy of seizures
Matthew 17:15-18, Mark 9:14-29, Luke 9:37-43

Healed a man with unclean spirit
Mark 1:21-28, Luke 4:31-37

Cured a deaf man who could not speak
Mark 7:32-35

Raised a man from the dead
Luke 7:14-15

Healed a crippled woman
Luke 13:11-13

Healed a man of dropsy
Luke 14:2-4

Healed a man's cut ear
Luke 22:50-51

Healed an official's son
John 4:52-53

Healed a paralyzed man
John 5:8-9

Raised Lazarus from the dead
John 11:43-44



Five Kinds of Healing

This is a wonderful moment to pause and remember that our faith tradition includes belief that there are five kinds of healing, one of which God always grants.

First, there is *instant healing*. This is the miracle God grants least often. I make no pretense to explain how God decides when to choose, nor do I have any ideas why God chooses one and ignores another. But I do give witness to the fact that throughout history, there are times when God does grant instant healing.

Next, there is *normal healing*. This kind of healing is the automatic, uneventful kind. For example, when you cut your finger opening a can, you usually hold it under the cold water faucet, run water over it, and daub a little antiseptic on it. You wrap it with a bandage and forget it. In a few days you remove the bandage and the cut has been healed.

A third kind of healing: *God leads us to a remedy*. I refer often to “the miracles of medicine.” Through doctors, nurses, hospitals, surgeries, medications, rehabilitation programs—and so many other avenues—God leads us to a remedy.

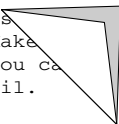
The fourth miracle God grants is *my grace is sufficient*. What a miracle it is to be given the grace to bear something you cannot bear...to withstand something you cannot stand. That is God’s most amazing miracle; to see a human being under grace living with the impossible circumstance.

Fifth, is God’s greatest miracle of healing. It is *the miracle of triumphant crossing*. Many of us have never thought of death as a miracle of healing. We see death as a defeat. Our problem, you see, is that we operate from a very limited perspective. The words of the gospel hymn say it beautifully: “When the trumpet of the Lord shall sound, And time shall be no more, And the morning breaks eternal, bright and fair; When the saved on earth shall gather, Over on the other shore, And the roll is called up yonder, I’ll be there.” Yes, death, going to be with God, entering eternal life with Christ...that is the greatest healing of all!

HOW TO FOLD A PAPER CRANE

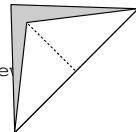
Begin with a square piece of paper — ideally one colored and the other white. Place the colored side up on the table. In all diagrams, the shaded part represents the colored side.

1 Fold diagonally to form a triangle. Be sure the points line up. Make creases very sharp. You can even use your thumbnail.

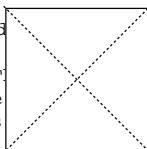


Unfold the paper. (important!)

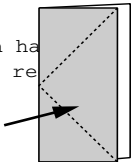
2 Now fold the paper diagonally in opposite direction, forming a new triangle.



Unfold the paper and turn it over so the white side is up. The dotted lines in the diagram are creases you have already made.

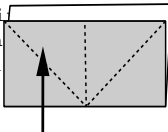


3 Fold the paper in half the "east" to form a rectangle.

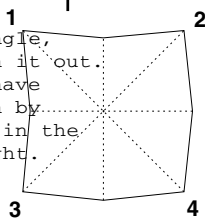


Unfold the paper.

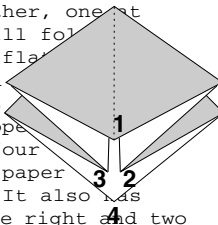
4 Fold the paper in half to the "north" to form a new rectangle.



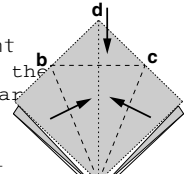
Unfold the rectangle, but don't flatten it out. Your paper will have the creases shown by the dotted lines in the figure on the right.



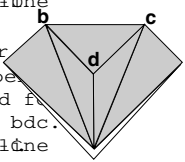
5 Bring all four corners of the paper together, one at a time. This will fold the paper into the shape shown on the right. This square has an open end where all four corners of the paper come together. It also has two flaps on the right and two flaps on the left.



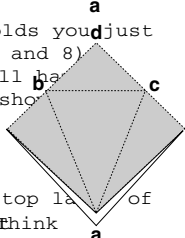
6 Lift the upper right flap, and fold in the direction of the arrow. Crease along line b-c.



7 Lift the upper left flap and fold in the direction of the arrow. Crease along the line a-b.

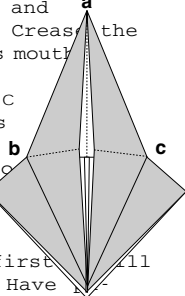


8 Lift the paper point (in the upper right diagram) and fold down the triangle bdc. Crease along the line d-c.



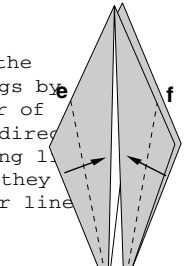
Undo the three folds you just made (steps 6, 7, and 8) and your paper will have the crease lines shown on the right.

9 Lift just the top layer of the paper at point a. Think of this as opening a frog's mouth. Open it up and back to line b-c. Crease the line b-c as if frog's mouth.

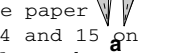


Press on points c to reverse the folds along lines a-b and a-c. The trick is to press the paper to lie in the long diamond shape shown on the right. At first it will seem impossible. Have patience.

10 to 11 Turn the paper over. Repeat Steps 6 to 9 on this side. When you are finished, your paper will look like the diamond below with two "legs" at the bottom.

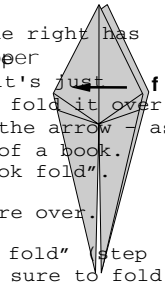


14 & 15 Taper the diamond at its legs by folding the layer of each side in the direction of the arrows along line a-b and a-c so that they meet at the center line.



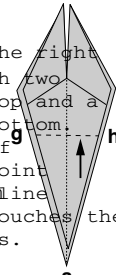
16 & 17 Flip the paper over. Repeat steps 14 and 15 on this side to complete the tapering of the two legs.

18 The figure on the right has two skinny legs. Lift the upper flap at point a (be sure it's just the upper flap), and fold it over in the direction of the arrow — as if turning the page of a book. This is called a "book fold".



Flip the entire figure over.

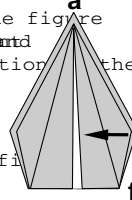
19 Repeat this "book fold" (step 18) on this side. Be sure to fold over only the "page".



20 The figure on the right looks like a fox with two pointy ears at the top and a pointy nose at the bottom. Open the upper layer of the fox's mouth at point a and crease it along line b-c so that fox's nose touches the top of the fox's ears.

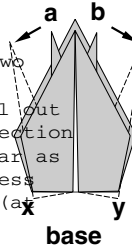
21 Turn the figure over. Repeat step 20 on this side so that all four points touch.

22 Now for another "book fold". Lift the top layer of the figure on the right (at point a) and fold it in the direction of the arrow.

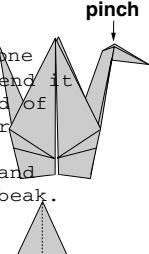


23 Flip the entire figure over. Repeat the "book fold" (step 22) on this side.

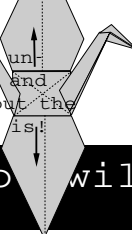
24 & 25 There are two points, a and b, below the upper flap. Pull out each one, in the direction of the arrows, as far as the dotted lines. Press down along the base (at points x and y) to make them stay in place.



26 Take the end of one of the points, and bend it down to make the head of the crane. Using your thumbnail, reverse the crease in the head, and pinch it to form the beak. The other point becomes the tail.



Open the body by blowing into the hole underneath the crane, and then gently pulling out the wings. And there it is!



"I will write 'peace' on your wings, and you will

SADAKO SASAKI



Faith Practice Five: DYING WELL

If I Died Today

Contemplating our own deaths

A revealing exercise is to write your own obituary!

The idea may at first sound morbid, but it can be a positive experience in reassessing our priorities in life.

Write your obituary as you would like to be remembered. What qualities or achievements would you like others to recall in you?

Let your imagination have free rein and include the things you dream of doing in the future, however unlikely they may seem (for example, climbing Pike's Peak at the age of seventy!).

Look back on what you have written and see how closely it resembles your pattern of life at present. Is there anything you want to ask God's help to change in your way of life?

-suggested by Richard J. Foster



Service for Wholeness

OPENING SENTENCES

REMEMBERING OUR BROKENNESS

Call to Confession

Brief silence - for individual reflection and confession

Prayer together

Eternal God,

In your mercy forgive what we have been

help us amend what we are,

and direct what we shall be,

so that we may delight in your will

and walk in your ways,

to the glory of your holy name.

AMEN

Declaration of Forgiveness

SONG

INTERCESSION FOR HEALING

Leader: God, our creator, your will for us and for all your people is health and salvation:

All: have mercy on us.

Leader: Jesus Christ, Son of God, you came that we might have life and have it in abundance:

All: have mercy on us.

Leader: Holy Spirit, dwelling within us, you make us temples of your presence:

All: have mercy on us.

Leader: To the triune God, the source of all love and all life, let us offer our prayers.

For all who are in need of healing,

(silence)

Lord, in your mercy,

All: hear our prayer.

—REFRAIN: For you, O Lord, my soul in stillness waits, truly my hope is in you.—

Leader: For all who are disabled by injury or illness,

(silence)

Lord, in your mercy,



All: *hear our prayer.*

—REFRAIN: *For you, O Lord, my soul in stillness waits, truly my hope is in you.—*

*Leader: For all who are troubled by confusion or pain,
(silence)
Lord, in your mercy,*

All: *hear our prayer.*

— REFRAIN: *For you, O Lord, my soul in stillness waits, truly my hope is in you.—*

*Leader: For all whose increasing years bring weariness,
(silence)
Lord, in your mercy,*

All: *hear our prayer.*

— REFRAIN: *For you, O Lord, my soul in stillness waits, truly my hope is in you.—*

*Leader: For all about to undergo surgery,
(silence)
Lord, in your mercy,*

All: *hear our prayer.*

— REFRAIN: *For you, O Lord, my soul in stillness waits, truly my hope is in you.—*

*Leader: For all who practice the healing arts,
(silence)
Lord, in your mercy,*

All: *hear our prayer.*

— REFRAIN: *For you, O Lord, my soul in stillness waits, truly my hope is in you.—*

(Here petitions for specific needs may be offered by the people.)

*Leader: Into your hands, O God, we commend all for whom we pray, trusting in your mercy;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.*

AMEN

SONG

BLESSING



Faith Practice Six: SINGING OUR LIVES

WAYS TO PRACTICE SINGING OUR LIVES

1. Make a recording to enjoy on trips. Ask each person in your family or small group to contribute at least two favorite songs to a recording you make to enjoy on trips or at times when you are together. Make a new recording occasionally and save old ones for posterity!

2. Offer guitar lessons to teens on Sunday mornings as a special form of Sunday School. Learn about psalms of praise and lament, composing and recording original songs the teens write together during these Sunday sessions.

3. Make a list of sung mealtime graces that you and your family know. Post it where you regularly eat. Sing together one of the graces whenever you gather together for a meal. Add to the list as you learn new ones.

4. Include a music/hymn listening session as part of your regular prayer time. "Pray" the music as you listen. Alternatively, sing your prayers, using favorite hymns, liturgical settings, or the Learn prayers and songs of the Taize Community. Remember Augustine's comment that "whoever sings prays twice."

5. Gather folks in your home for an evening of singing favorite songs, from folk songs to Broadway standards to hymns.

6. Visit a synagogue or church not of your own tradition where singing is a central part of the worship service. How do you perceive music to be shaping this community and sustaining a distinctive kind of spirituality?

7. As a congregation, sponsor a hymn festival for several congregations in your area, asking each to lead others in hymns or songs that char-

acterize their own particular tradition.

8. Learn new hymns and songs in worship by featuring one new hymn each month. Introduce the hymn to children or to the choir first, so people can hear it, then begin using it in worship. Or institute 5-10 minutes of pre-service singing (with a leader) to gather people for worship and at the same time introduce one or two pieces of new music. Using a hymnal companion or Internet resources such as *The Cyber Hymnal*, research stories behind the hymn and its author and/or composer.

9. Construct an entire worship service around one hymn. Derive themes from it for preaching, use its music in a variety of ways and settings, weave its stanzas throughout the service, turn it into a litany, etc.

10. Sponsor a music program for children or teenagers to supplement music education in local schools. Hire a director/leader/teacher, do the publicity, provide rehearsal space.

11. In your group or family, tell stories about your favorite hymns, including how you learned them. What associations do you have with them? Alternatively, sing a song from childhood that is a part of your faith tradition. What is the most powerful memory the song evokes? Look carefully at the words. How has your faith changed since that song first became formative for you?

12. Create a musical last will and testament. If you were planning your funeral/memorial service, what hymns, psalms, and songs would you include? Record your ideas, add to them as you think of others, and let someone know where the list is, sort of like a musical last will and testament.

From www.practicingourfaith.org



Living Till We Die: A Journey of Faith Practices

We want your suggestions for future groups to use! Please fill out the following survey (anonymously) and return it at our last meeting.

1	Poor
2	Fair
3	Good
4	Very Good
5	Excellent

For each item identified below, circle the number to the right that best fits your judgment of its quality. Use the scale above to select the quality number.

Faith Practices	Scale				
1. Honoring the Body--overall	1	2	3	4	5
2. Value of Information	1	2	3	4	5
3. Value of Discussion	1	2	3	4	5
4. Value of music	1	2	3	4	5
5. What was most helpful activity?					
6. What was least helpful activity?					
7. Session too long or too short?					
8. Keeping Sabbath--overall	1	2	3	4	5
9. Value of Information	1	2	3	4	5
10. Value of Discussion	1	2	3	4	5
11. Value of music	1	2	3	4	5
12. What was most helpful activity?					
13. What was least helpful activity?					
14. Session too long or too short?					



15. Forgiveness--overall	1	2	3	4	5
16. Value of Information	1	2	3	4	5
17. Value of Discussion	1	2	3	4	5
18. Value of music	1	2	3	4	5
19. What was most helpful activity?					
20. What was least helpful activity?					
21. Session too long or too short?					
22. Healing--overall	1	2	3	4	5
23. Value of Information	1	2	3	4	5
24. Value of Discussion	1	2	3	4	5
25. Value of music	1	2	3	4	5
26. What was most helpful activity?					
27. What was least helpful activity?					
28. Session too long or too short?					
29. Dying Well	1	2	3	4	5
30. Value of Information	1	2	3	4	5
31. Value of Discussion	1	2	3	4	5
32. Value of music	1	2	3	4	5
33. What was most helpful activity?					
34. What was least helpful activity?					
35. Session too long or too short?					
36. Singing our Lives	1	2	3	4	5
37. Value of Information	1	2	3	4	5
38. Value of Discussion	1	2	3	4	5
39. Value of music	1	2	3	4	5



40. What was most helpful activity?					
41. What was least helpful activity?					
42. Session too long or too short?					
43. Environment	1	2	3	4	5
44. Course too long or too short?					
45. Was the room appropriate?					
46. What other format would you choose for the course—weekend retreat, multiple weeks on one practice?					
47. What other practices would you include?					
48. Hospitality	1	2	3	4	5
49. Household Economics	1	2	3	4	5
50. Saying Yes and Saying No	1	2	3	4	5
51. Testimony	1	2	3	4	5
52. Discernment	1	2	3	4	5
53. Shaping Communities	1	2	3	4	5

Any other comments or suggestions?

Commissioning Worship Service

Gathering

Prelude

Opening Prayer *Celtic Prayers from Iona*

Song "Gather Us In" # 1

Psalter Psalm 90:1-17

Song "Our God, Our Help in Ages Past"

Reading "Awakening" Wayne
E. Simsic

Song "Bless the Lord" # 5

Turning

Psalter Psalm 51:1-17

Response "Create in Me a Clean Heart" # 7

Prayer of Confession (unison)

Creator God, You Spirit has given us gifts. Yet we fail to use the gifts you so graciously bestow. Forgive us our fear, our apathy, whatever it is within us that holds your image captive in us. Make us bold in Your name that we may embody Your grace and Your strength in this world.

(In silence, lift up your failure and your fear for God's transforming touch)

Amen.

Assurance of Forgiveness

Leader: In the transforming moment of resurrection, we find ourselves forgiven. Let your hearts be lifted up, your fear and weariness put aside.

People: For God has declared God's love for us. We are forgiven.

Response "Jesus Lifted Me" # 9

Receiving

Song "Wait for the Lord" # 11

Reading "A Musical Metaphor" Peggy
Moon

Song "Sing, My Soul" # 17

Epistle Romans 14:7-9

Song "The Last Journey" # 13

Gospel Matthew 9:35 - 10:1

Sending

Song "In Love You Summon" # 16

Call to Faithful Practice

Leader: We are called by God to be the church of Jesus Christ, a sign in the world today of what God intends for all humankind.

People: By practicing our faith, we begin anew that journey.

Leader: Will you, by God's grace, seek to enter into the mighty work that God is already doing in your life?

People: I will, with God's help.

Litany for Commitment (see next page)

Song "My Life Flows On" # 18

Charge

Closing Prayer *Celtic Prayers from Iona*



Litany for Commitment

(for use with Commissioning Worship Service)

Leader: O God, by your might and majesty, we are fearfully and wonderfully made. Before we were formed in the womb, you knew us and consecrated us. Through your son, Jesus, you have redeemed us, body and soul.

People: We have heard the challenge to cherish our bodies and encourage others to do the same. Into our world of violence and abuse, infuse your peace. Lead us forth to guard the sacredness of every living thing as we put into practice HONORING THE BODY.

Refrain: For you, O Lord, my soul in stillness waits, truly my hope is in you.

Leader: O God, in your wisdom you created this world and then rested. You instruct us to keep the Sabbath and follow a similar pattern of work and rest in order that we be reminded that all things come from your hand. We greet each day, joining in the work you are already doing.

People: We have heard the challenge to receive the day as a gift and remember that time itself is made holy by your presence. Into our world of hectic schedules and frantic pace, instill your calm. Lead us forth to live each day of our lives fully as we put into practice KEEPING SABBATH.

Refrain: For you, O Lord, my soul in stillness waits, truly my hope is in you.

Leader: O God, by your wonderful grace and mercy, you have shown us what it means to truly forgive. Again and again you call us back to you. By Jesus' innocent sacrifice on the cross, you have shown to what lengths you are willing to go on our behalf.

People: We have heard the challenge to forgive, even as you have forgiven us, though it is so hard to let go of our pride and distorted sense of what we think is right. Into our world of revenge and bitterness, pour out your justice, tempered with mercy. Lead us forth to enter into the forgiveness you already make possible as we put into practice FORGIVENESS.

Refrain: For you, O Lord, my soul in stillness waits, truly my hope is in you.

Leader: O God, well-spring of our souls, your desire for us is shalom. The healing redemption you bring to us through Christ is of the whole: body, soul, will, mind, emotions, spirit. By your grace, you release the essential well-being of your life within us.

People: We have heard the challenge to embrace healing for ourselves and each other. Into our world of brokenness and disease, bring the balm of your healing touch. Lead us forth to be channels of your wholeness, experiencing your miracles in our midst as we put into practice HEALING.

Refrain: For you, O Lord, my soul in stillness waits, truly my hope is in you.

Leader: O God, through your son's death on the cross, you have conquered death for us so that there is nothing to fear. You set us free from those bonds to see the wonders of each day with new eyes of faith.

People: We have heard the challenge to count our days that we may gain a wise heart, assured that death is not the final word. Into our world of denial and false hopes, bring the dawn of your new day. Lead us forth to be companions along life's way, all journeying together to our final destination as we put into practice DYING WELL.

Refrain: For you, O Lord, my soul in stillness waits, truly my hope is in you.

Leader: O God, by your design, creation itself sings out, glorifying your holy name. Into the very fabric of our existence you have woven the songs of your spirit.

People: We have heard the challenge to keep on singing the songs of faith as we teach them to generations to come. Knowing the wonders of your love, how can we not sing when the Spirit says sing? Into our world of strife and dissonance, sound the notes of your grace. Lead us forth to ever sing the songs you have placed in our souls as we put into practice SINGING OUR LIVES.

Refrain: For you, O Lord, my soul in stillness waits, truly my hope is in you.

Reflective Readings

(for use with Commissioning Worship Service)

“Awakening”

I look forward to spring mornings and the waves of birdcall that rise and fall outside the window, filling my senses and calling me to praise. I awake, feeling alive and gifted. In his journal, Thomas Merton describes the call of birds as the call of all life into being:

“The first chirps of the waking birds – ‘le point vierge’ of the dawn, a moment of awe and inexpressible innocence, when the Father in silence opens their eyes and they speak to Him, wondering if it is time to ‘be’? He tells them, ‘Yes.’ Then they one by one wake and being to sing.”

For Merton le point vierge of the dawn, literally the virgin point, also represents our own utter dependence on God’s love. We, and indeed all creatures, are brought into existence and sustained in love from moment to moment. God is interested in more than our day’s activities, no matter how important they may seem. Indeed, God wants to occupy that secret space in our hearts, the place of loving communion between creature and Creator.

This realization opens our hearts to the fullness of the present. Self-awareness gives way to Mystery; the “I” remains in the background and we find ourselves listening in the silence. We hear a voice that tells us we were loved even before we came into this world, and will always be loved. Paradise is now for those who pay attention.

From, “Awakening,” Wayne E. Simsic, *Weavings*, Vol. XVIII, No. 1, Nashville: Upper Room Ministries, 2002.

“A Musical Metaphor”

I need to become sensitive to the natural rhythms of my body, soul, and spirit so that I am attuned to the life flowing from within me – that unique part written for me alone by the Master Composer. And I need to perceive that the rhythms of my life fit into the rhythms of the lives around me, before me, and after me, participating with them in creating the timeless masterpiece of God’s symphony. As I remember the common ways of seeking God and keep before me the larger vision of the coming kingdom, I am encouraged to persevere, enduring the routine tasks and disciplines which will prepare me to play my part as best I can. My daily life is an etude preparing me for eternal life. This week’s etude is more challenging than last, and I know that even harder ones lie ahead. But as my ability is refined, my creativity increases, and there is much joy.

How diligently we should want to practice our part for the orchestra of life! And this is precisely the invitation we are given. We are practicing for the revelation of God’s masterpiece in the new creation. The rhythms of our lives comprise the symphony of God’s creation – a work which has been in progress longer than any other. I want to play well in that orchestra.

From “(A) Musical Metaphor,” Peggy Moon, *Weavings*, Vol. II, No. 5, Nashville: Upper Room Ministries, 1987.

Resources



- ◇ Books
- ◇ Booklets
- ◇ Articles
- ◇ Websites
- ◇ Recordings
- ◇ Videos and DVDs

These suggested resources represent a portion of the great resources available on the subject of faith practices and end-of-life issues. Many of the resources listed here are available at the library of Hospice of the Upstate in the Sadler Bereavement and Education Center.

Books

***(The) Active Life: Wisdom for Work, Creativity, and Caring*, Parker J. Palmer, New York: HarperSanFrancisco, 1990.**

In this book, the author articulates a down-to-earth spirituality for persons who live busy, active lives based on the conviction that where world and spirit intersect – there transformation can begin. The practices of silence, solitude, contemplation, and centeredness are to bear fruit in our actions.

***Celebration of Discipline: The Path to Spiritual Growth*, Richard Foster, New York: HarperSanFrancisco, 1988.**

Foster provides a wealth of examples demonstrating how the disciplines of prayer, meditation, fasting, study, simplicity, solitude, submission, service, confession, worship, guidance, and celebration can become part of our daily activities to “bring the abundance of God into our lives.” These disciplines call us to “move beyond surface living into the depths” and “urge us to be the answer to a hollow world.” These disciplines are best exercised in the midst of our relationships.

***Celtic Benediction: Morning and Night Prayer*, J. Philip Newell, Grand Rapids: Wm.B. Eerdmans Publ. Co., 2000.**

An illuminated collection of prayers for each morning and night of the week invites us to meditate each day on a different aspect of

the creation story in Genesis. The illustrations are of Celtic art taken from the Lindisfarne Gospels. This book opens the eyes of our hearts in order that we may see God afresh in all things.

***Celtic Prayers from Iona*, J. Philip Newell, New York: Paulist Press, 1997.**

The author presents a weekly cycle of morning and evening prayers in the Celtic tradition, with gospel and psalm readings taken from the liturgical year. These celebrate God’s hand in creation and closeness in the daily acts of living. Beautiful calligraphy makes the book a delight for the eye as well as the spirit.

***(The) Denial of Death*, Ernest Becker, New York: The Free Press, 1973.**

In this book of great depth, the author delves into the realm of philosophy and psychology to examine humankind’s fear of death and its control over our lives. Becker seeks to move beyond Freud and relies heavily on the works of Otto Rank. The introduction to Rank’s writings is one of the great values of this book.

***Dying Well: Peace and Possibilities at the End of Life*, Ira Byock, New York: Riverhead Books, 1998.**

Dr. Ira Byock is a prominent spokesperson for the hospice movement and in this book shows, through the true stories of patients, that dying well is really about living and that much important work can be accomplished in the final months, weeks, and even days of life.

***Embodying Forgiveness, A Theological Analysis*, L. Gregory Jones, Grand Rapids, Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1995.**

Drawing from a wide variety of literature as well as from Scripture and theological texts,

Jones revisits the concept of forgiveness. His premise is that forgiveness is a “craft,” a way of life in which forgiveness has distinctive elements of love, confession, repentance, justice, punishment, remembrance, and forgetfulness.

***Everyday Grace: Having Hope, Finding Forgiveness, and Making Miracles*, Marianne Williamson, New York: Riverhead Press, 2002.**

The premise of this book is that the way we live in our everyday world determines the shape of who we are. “Everyday Grace helps us mine our inner resources as we lay the foundation for a more graceful life: a life in which we stop blaming and judging... a life in which we take time to savor sacred silence; a life in which miracles happen.” The author walks us through a day in this life. With open hearts and open minds we can begin to work the magic of miracles.

***Final Gifts: Understanding the Special Awareness, Needs, and Communications of the Dying*, Maggie Callahan and Patricia Kelly, New York: Bantam Books, 1992.**

Two hospice nurses who have tended the terminally ill for more than a decade share their intimate experiences with patients at the edge of life. Their stories teach us to listen as the dying communicate their needs so that we gain new insight into the leave-taking process. We may then discover the gifts of wisdom, faith and love that the dying leave for us to share.

***Four Things That Matter Most; A Book About Living*, Ira Byock, M.D., New York: Free Press, 2004.**

This book centers on the four simple phrases – “Please forgive me,” “I forgive you,” “Thank you,” and “I love you.” They contain the most powerful words in our lan-

guage, and the author teaches us how to practice these life-affirming words in our day-to-day lives. His insights and inspiring stories help us to forgive, appreciate, love, and celebrate one another more fully.

***From Grim to Green Pastures: Meditations for the Sick and Their Caregivers*, Richard L. Morgan, Nashville: Upper Room Books, 1994.**

Through his own experience of illness and those to whom he ministers, the author affirms that brokenness can be transformed into healing, drawing on the grace of God's tangible love while not minimizing the hard reality of suffering. Each thoughtful meditation includes a scripture text and a closing prayer.

***God and Human Suffering: An Exercise in the Theology of the Cross*, Douglas John Hall, Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1986.**

The author seeks to address suffering by pointing out that certain aspects of what we call suffering – loneliness, experience of limits, temptation, anxiety – are necessary parts of God's good creation. He speaks of a God whose power expresses itself unexpectedly in the weakness of love. An invaluable part of this book is the Appendix wherein he evaluates five popular, leading thinkers on suffering: Harold Kushner, C.S. Lewis, Diogenes Allen, George Buttrick, and Leslie Weatherhead.

***(The) Grace in Dying: how we are transformed spiritually as we die*, Kathleen Dowling Singh, New York, Harper Collins Publishers, 1998.**

Trained in transpersonal psychology and working with dying patients in a hospice, the author seeks to uncover in this book what dying has to do with living and what living has to do with dying. She maintains that dying is "a process of

natural enlightenment, of finally coming home to our true self." (p. 2). "Kathleen Dowling Singh opens our eyes to the spiritual aspects of dying, as Sherwin Nuland and Elisabeth Kubler-Ross did for the physical and psychological. Her message... can offer reassurance throughout life." – Steven A. Schroeder, M.D.

***Honoring the Body: Meditations on a Christian Practice*, Stephanie Paulsell, San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 2002.**

This book in the Practices of Faith Series expands upon the Christian practice of Honoring the Body, exploring how we can transform our troubled relationship with our bodies to one of honor and joy. There is a chapter on Honoring the Suffering Body that ties in well to this course. Throughout the book the emphasis is on practical things we can do to remember that we are children of God in our bodies and our spirits.

***How We Die: Reflections on Life's Final Chapter*, Sherwin B. Nuland, New York: Vintage Books, 1993.**

A noted surgeon details the medical realities of cancer, heart attack, stroke, AIDS, and Alzheimer's disease with sensitivity and compassion. He tells us how most of us are likely to die, and in doing so, suggests how we may live more fully and meaningfully. A National Book Award Winner.

***Keeping the Sabbath Wholly: Ceasing, Resting, Embracing, Feasting*, Marva Dawn, Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co, 1989.**

This book is not just about the Sabbath, but is a fervent plea for Sabbath keeping. Building on the works of previous Christian and Jewish writers, the author delves further by telling stories that illustrate various dimensions of ceasing,

resting, embracing, and feasting; describing particular customs she has developed in observing the Sabbath; and referring to biblical passages that relate to the issues. A theologically insightful account of a spiritual discipline Christians often neglect.

***Love, Medicine and Miracles: Lessons Learned About Self-Healing from a Surgeon's Experience with Exceptional Patients*, Bernie S. Siegel, New York: Harper and Row Publishers, 1986.**

From a surgeon's point of view, the author tells the stories of his patients that make clear that unconditional love is the most powerful stimulant of the immune system. He has learned the truth: love heals. He sees miracles happen to patients every day and discusses how they can happen to us.

***(The) Next Place*, Warren Hanson, Golden Valley, MN: Waldman House Press, 1997.**

For people of all ages, this book is an inspirational journey of light and hope to a place where earthy hurts are left behind. Beautiful artwork and sentiments grace these pages.

***On Death and Dying*, Elisabeth Kubler-Ross, New York: The Macmillan Company, 1969.**

This classic work has been called, "a profound lesson for the living." By naming five stages of those who move through the dying process with examples from their stories, the author helps us to see more clearly the dynamics in our own lives as we face any kind of loss, and eventually face our own deaths.

***One Foot in Eden: A Celtic View of the Stages of Life*, J. Philip Newell, Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1999.**

This book prayerfully reflects on the stages of human life

from birth through death as seen through the Celtic tradition. The author writes that the purpose of the book is to reveal “the Celtic belief that grace is given by God to liberate the goodness that has been planted at the heart of life. Grace is opposed to what is false in us but not to what is most deeply natural.” Exercises are suggested at the end of each chapter for further reflection. At the conclusion of the book there is a short guide for using the book in small groups.

***Our Greatest Gift: A Meditation on Dying and Caring*, Henri J. M. Nouwen, New York: Harper Collins Publishers, 1994.**

This book is a moving, personal look at human mortality. The author shares his own experiences with aging, loss, fear, and grief. In so doing, he reveals the gifts that the living and dying can give to one another. He asks the poignant question, “Will our death give new life, new hope, and new faith to our friends, or will it be no more than another cause for sadness?” (p. xvi)

***Practicing Our Faith: A Way of Life for a Searching People*, ed. Dorothy Bass, San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1997.**

This book serves as the main textbook for this course, *Living Till We Die*, a journey of faith practices. Of the twelve faith practices the book covers, each written by a different author, we chose six practices to explore from an end of life perspective. The faith practices are inter-related, building upon each other. Further insights would be gained by looking at the other six faith practices. The premise of all the faith practices is that our faith, what we believe, should not be left in the realm of doctrine and theory, but lived out day-to-day. Specific ways to practice these are explored.

***Prayer: Finding the Heart's True Home*, Richard Foster, New York: Harper Collins Publishers, 1992.**

The author offers a compelling primer on prayer, helping us to understand, experience, and practice it in its many forms. He shows how prayer can move us inward into personal transformation, upward toward intimacy with God, and outward to minister to others. His chapter on Healing Prayer is particularly pertinent to this course.

***Prayers From The Heart*, Richard J. Foster, New York: Harper Collins Publishers, 1994.**

This collection of prayers by Richard Foster is presented in three sections according to the three aspects of the human journey – the journey inward, the journey upward, and the journey outward. All prayers seek to guide us in practicing the presence of God in the midst of the stresses and strains of contemporary life.

***Praying Twice: The Music and Words of Congregational Song*, Brian Wren, Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2000.**

Theologian and hymn writer Brian Wren explores in this book the theological significance of congregational singing, analyzes the importance of contemporary worship music, and explains the power of tune and text in the life and nurture of a congregation. He offers helpful and practical suggestions for pastors and musicians alike.

***Receiving the Day: Christian Practices for Opening the Gift of Time*, Dorothy Bass, San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 2000.**

This book is in the *Practices of Faith* book series and expands upon the practice of Sabbath keeping by looking at time as a gift and an opportunity – not

an adversary. The author invites us to see time through the lens of faith, exploring the Christian practices that follow the rhythms of the day, the week, and the year. She offers guidance for entering into these practices today, drawing on the experiences of those who are doing so.

***(The) Reinvention of Work: A New Vision of Livelihood for Our Time*, Matthew Fox, New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 1994.**

An Episcopal priest, the author challenges the ways in our culture that the self is sacrificed for a job. Drawing on a rich legacy of great mystics and philosophers, he proposes a spirituality of work. With passion he share his vision of a world where our personal and professional lives are celebrated in harmony.

***Remembering Well: Rituals for Celebrating Life and Mourning Death*, Sarah York, San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 2000.**

In this book, Sarah York guides those who grieve to “give sorrow words” by planning services and rituals, especially those who experience existing rituals as empty or irrelevant. Actual services and rituals are included.

***(The) Sabbath*, Abraham Joshua Heschel, New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1951.**

This book has been hailed as a classic of Jewish spirituality ever since its original publication. It's more than a book about the Sabbath, it's a book about a way of life. The author speaks about the architecture of time, indicating that “the Sabbaths are our great cathedrals.”

***Sabbath: Restoring the Sacred Rhythm of Rest*, Wayne Muller, New York, Bantam Books, 1999.**

The author shows us how

to create a special time of rest, delight, and renewal as a refuge for our souls. He has included stories, poems, and practices at the end of each chapter which draw from various traditions besides his own Christian tradition. His hope is that “you will find in these pages some taste of Sabbath delight.” (p. 12).

***Sabbath Time*, Tilden Edwards, Nashville: Upper Room Books, 1992.**

The insights of this book offer practical ways to maintain the balance for our worship, play, rest, work, community, and ministry. “An understanding and living of Sabbath time can help support a sane and holy rhythm of life for us.” (p. 15). The author also traces the practice of Sabbath in the early church to the erosion of Sabbath in our current culture.

***Sacred Dying: Creating Rituals for Embracing the End of Life*, Megory Anderson, Rocklin, CA: Prima Lifestyles, 2001.**

“In this culture we have stripped dying of meaning, often reducing it to a purely medical event. This book helps reclaim death’s sacred ground and provides practical tools and rituals to help caregivers use the time of dying and grieving as a path to wholeness.” - Frank Ostaeski, founder, Zen Hospice Project.

***Sadako and the Thousand Paper Cranes*, Eleanor Coerr, New York, Dell Publishing, 1977.**

The author recounts the moving story of Sadako whose courage and spirit in the face of her illness as a result of radiation from the Hiroshima bomb has made her a heroine to children in Japan.

***(A) Song to Sing, A Life to Live*, Don and Emily Saliers, San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 2004.**

This book in the Practices

of Faith Series offers reflections on music as a spiritual practice. Father and daughter co-authors interweave their own stories with the stories of others to explore how music brings healing to people. That their musical audiences differ – Emily is a folk-rock singer-songwriter with Indigo Girls and Don is a composer, cantor, and church musician – adds to the richness of their approach. The book “bridges two generations, two approaches to spirituality, and two genres of music – the music of Saturday night and Sunday morning.”

***Sounds of the Eternal: A Celtic Psalter*, J. Philip Newell, Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2002.**

New and original prayers for each morning and evening of the week invite us to rediscover the mystery of God’s image within and what it means to be made, body and soul, in the image of God. The essential goodness of creation is woven throughout. Illustrations from Hebrew manuscripts add to the beauty of this book.

***Teaching for Faith: A Guide for Teachers of Adult Classes*, Richard Robert Osmer, Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1992.**

This resource includes a chapter on how to use the lecture method well and a chapter on how to lead a discussion, both containing very practical tips for the leader. Also of note is the Appendix which present two patterns of teaching, one a six-week church school class series and the other a weekend retreat on the same topic of spirituality. This serves as a good demonstration of how the same material can be presented in two different formats, serving as a good model for how this course could also be adapted for different settings.

Teaching Today’s Teachers to

***Teach*, Don Griggs, Nashville, Abingdon Press, 2003.**

This book contains practical ideas, advice, and wisdom on the art and practice of teaching and is invaluable for Christian educators. Chapters cover topics such as: Biblical Goals and Content for Teaching in the Church, Ten Questions for Teachers to Ask and Answer, How Do Students Learn, and The Art of Asking Questions. At the end of each chapter is a section, Practicing What We’re Reading, with useful exercises and tips.

***Tuesdays with Morrie: an old man, a young man, and life’s greatest lesson*, Mitch Albom, New York: Doubleday, 1997.**

The author introduces us to Morrie Schwartz who had been one of his college professors. Now Morrie is dying and Mitch visits with him in his study every Tuesday, just as they used to back in college. Their rekindled relationship turned into one final “class” - lessons in how to live. Mitch captures Morrie’s dignity and frankness, as well as his good humor and zest for life.

***Turn My Heart: A Sacred Journey from Brokenness to Healing*, Susan Briehl and Marty Haugen, Chicago: GIA Publications, 2004.**

This book is a collection of psalms of longing and lament, words of comfort and courage, and songs of sadness and renewed joy. For those who are wounded or weeping, these pages give guidance on being a pilgrim on the sacred journey deeper into the heart of God. It is a threefold journey: (1) wounded, weeping, (2) turning, trusting, (3) healing, hoping. There is an accompanying CD, as well as choral arrangements to the songs.

***Walking A Sacred Path: Rediscovering the Labyrinth as a Spiritual Tool*, Lauren Artress,**

New York: Riverhead Books, 1995.

Over the past several years, Lauren Artress has introduced the labyrinth to thousands and observed their experiences with its power. This book explores the historical origins of this metaphor for the spiritual journey and how this walking meditation quiets the mind and opens the soul, evoking a feeling of wholeness.

***What Dying People Want: Practical Wisdom for the End of Life*, David Kuhl, New York: PublicAffairs, 2002.**

As a physician, the author gives voice to the needs of dying patients with sensitivity and great clinical insight. He brings his background in counseling psychology and his expertise in palliative care to bear in addressing the psychological and spiritual distress that comes with the knowledge of death. The book also includes ways to enhance the doctor/patient relationship.

***What's So Amazing About Grace?*, Philip Yancey, Grand Rapids, Zondervan Publishing House, 1997.**

With compelling imagery, the author speaks of the grace that brings hope and transformation to a jaded world. He asks the hard question, "Should any grace at all be shown to the likes of Jeffrey Dahmer, who killed and cannibalized seventeen young men?" He stirs our thinking about forgiveness as a faith practice, pointing out that true grace is shocking, scandalous. "One of the most gifted writers of our day has put a telescope on the brilliant star of grace, and finely focused on what a beautiful and powerful healing force followers of Jesus Christ could become." – The Honorable Mark O. Hatfield. Also available is a Study Guide, co-authored with Brenda Quinn.

***You Only Die Once: Preparing for the End of Life with Grace and Gusto*, Margie Jenkins, Nashville: Integrity Publishers, 2002.**

With a master's degree in social work, Margie Jenkins has specialized in grief counseling and therapy for nearly 30 years. In this important book, her approach to the subject of dying is professionally objective and sprinkled with personal humor and empathy. Her thesis is that if one will deal with all the details associated with one's inevitable death while one is able to do so, then one can relax and enjoy an emboldened life with family and friends. "Her sagacious wit turns this taboo topic into a page-turner." – Judy Haas Smith. This book would lend itself well to a workshop in a church setting.

Booklets

Five Wishes, produced by Aging with Dignity, Tallahassee, FL, 2005, www.agingwithdignity.org. Copies may also be purchased by calling 1-888-594-7437. There is also a Five Wishes Video and a Next Steps guide available.

Isn't It Time We Talk? Sponsored by The Carolinas Center for Hospice and End of Life Care, 2002, www.carolinasendoflifecare.org. Copies may also be purchased by calling 800-662-8859.

Articles

Awakening," Wayne E. Simsic, Weavings, Vol. XVIII, No. 1, Nashville: Upper Room Ministries, 2002.

"Forgiveness," Christian Reflection: A Series in Faith and Ethics, The Center for Christian Ethics at Baylor University, 2001, www.ChristianEthics.ws.

"(A) Musical Metaphor," Peggy Moon, Weavings, Vol. II, No. 5,

Nashville: Upper Room Ministries, 1987.

"Practicing Our Faith: A Guide for Conversation, Learning, and Growth," Practicing Our Faith Series, 1997, www.practicingourfaith.org.

"Receiving The Day, Christian Practices for Opening the Gift of Time: A Guide for Conversation, Learning, and Growth," Practicing Our Faith Series, 2001, www.practicingourfaith.org.

"Recipe (For A Church Cookbook)," J. Barrie Shepherd, Weavings, Vol. XVII, No. 1, Nashville: Upper Room Ministries, 2002.

"Sabbath," Christian Reflection: A Series in Faith and Ethics, The Center for Christian Ethics at Baylor University, 2002, www.ChristianEthics.ws.

"To Touch the Fringe of God's Garment," Jean Blomquist, Weavings, Vol. VI, No. 4, Nashville: Upper Room Ministries, 1991.

Websites

On Labyrinths www.labyrinthcompany.com Offers background information as well as ordering information for finger labyrinths.

www.labyrinthonline.com Offers ordering information for finger labyrinths.

www.lessons4living.com Offers a finger labyrinth to download.

On Sadako and the Thousand Paper Cranes www.sadako.com Offers background information on Sadako's story and the Sadako project.

On the Valparaiso Project www.practicingourfaith.org Offers general information about the

Practicing Our Faith Series, current projects, and additional resources.

Music

"Living Till We Die Songbook" and CD (instrumental), companion to *Living Till We Die: a journey of faith practices*, ed. Nancy Blakely. Anderson, SC: Hospice of the

They contain these songs:

1. * "Gather Us In"
2. * "Before the World Began"
3. * "Torn in Two"
4. * "Enemy of Apathy"
5. * "Bless the Lord"
6. * "Today I Awake"
7. * "Create in Me a Clean Heart"
8. * "For Freedom Christ Has Set Us Free"
9. "I'm So Glad"
10. * "We Cannot Measure How You Heal"
11. * "Wait For the Lord"
12. * "My Soul in Stillness Waits"
13. * "The Last Journey"
14. * "How Long, O Lord"
15. * "Go, Silent Friend"
16. * "In Love You Summon"
17. * "Sing, My Soul"
18. "My Life Flows On"
19. "What Wondrous Love Is This?"
20. "Our God, Our Help in Ages Past"
21. "Praise God, From All Blessings Flow"

*notation and recordings for these may be obtained through GIA Publications, Inc., Chicago, IL, www.giamusic.com, 800-442-1358.

Recordings

"All My Life's a Circle," *Greatest Stories Live*, Harry Chapin. Elektra/Wea, 1990.

"Bless the Lord," *Sing To God, Jacques Berthier, Taizé. GIA Publications, 1995.

"Cat's in the Cradle," *Greatest Stories Live*, Harry Chapin. Elektra/Wea, 1990

"(The) Circle Game," *Hits*, Joni Mitchell. Warner Bros, 1996.

"(The) Four Seasons," *Vivaldi: The Four Seasons; Violin Concertos*, Antonio Vivaldi. EMI Classics, 2002.

"Gather Us In," *After the Rain, Jeanne Cotter. GIA Publications, 1989. Instrumental version.

"Gather Us In," *Gather Us In, Marty Haugen. GIA Publications, 1982.

"Gospel Changes," *Poems, Prayers, and Promises*, John Denver. RCA, 1990.

"He Will Carry Me," *Stories and Songs*, Mark Schultz. Word Entertainment LLC, 2003.

"How Can I Keep From Singing?" *I Will Not Sing Alone, The Wild Goose Collective & Macappella. GIA Publications, 2004.

"I Will Sing a Song of Love," *I Will Not Sing Alone, The Wild Goose Collective & Macappella. GIA Publications, 2004.

(The) Last Journey: *Songs for the Time of Grieving, John Bell, Wild Goose Resource Group. GIA Publications, 1996.

Returning: *Songs for the Journey Home*, Kathleen Deignan. Schola Ministries, 2006. www.scholaministries.org.

"Running Just To Catch Myself," *Stories and Songs*, Mark Schultz. Word Entertainment LLC, 2003.

"Sabbath Prayer," *Fiddler on the Roof* [Soundtrack]. Capitol, 2001.

Sleep, Baby, Sleep: quiet songs for quiet times, Nicolette Larson, produced and arranged by Andrew Gold and Nicolette Larson. Sony, 1994.

"Sunrise, Sunset," *Fiddler on the Roof* [Soundtrack]. Capitol, 2001.

"Time in a Bottle," *Classic Hits*, Jim Croce. Rhino/Wea, 2004.

****Turn My Heart: a Sacred Journey from Brokenness to Healing***, Marty Haugen. GIA Publications, 2003. This goes along with the book and choral arrangements of all the songs by the same name.

Videos and DVDs

"Living Fully, Dying Well," Rueben Job. Abingdon Press, 2006. This DVD accompanies the study for small groups of the same name, which also has a Leader's book and a Participant's book.

Growing in Faith: Practices that Shape the Changing Lives of Christians. Valparaiso, Indiana: The Valparaiso Project on the Education and Formation of People in Faith. Includes segment "Meet Mary Oyer." Available at Hospice of the Upstate, Anderson, SC. Contact Nancy Blakely, 1-800-261-8636.

Passion of the Christ, directed by Mel Gibson. Twentieth Century Fox, 2004.

Places in the Heart, directed by Robert Benton. Sony, 2001. Sally Field won an Oscar as best actress for her portrayal of Edna Spalding.

Let us hear from you ...

Keep the conversation going ...

Give tips for others seeking to practice their faith.

Please copy and complete this form and fax or email to:

Nancy Blakely
nblakely@hospicehouse.net
fax: 864-328-1132

In what setting was the curriculum used? _____

What was the time frame? _____

How many were there in the group? _____

What activities were most helpful to the group? _____

Least helpful? _____

As a leader, what did you find most helpful about the study guide? _____

Least Helpful? _____

If the evaluation form was used, please share a summary of the responses. _____

Do you have any further suggestions or comments? _____