



# Training Handout

March 9, 2019

The Lodge at Welch Allyn, Skaneateles

Our Learning Community Journey Together – CNY 2019

## **What is a Learning Community?**

A learning community is a group of congregations who commit to one another in a nine-month learning experience. Through prayer, skill-building, action and reflection they address pressing questions about the future. The experience includes three Saturday workshops and ongoing coaching calls with diocesan coaches and members of the Coordinating Team.

## **What will we be doing together?**

### **1. Gathering for 3 Training Workshops**

#### *Insightful Leadership: Begin by Asking Different Questions*

(Saturday, March 9, 2019)

This first training helps equip participants to listen to God in their local contexts. Participants will dwell in Scripture together (Dwelling in the Word), share stories about what God is doing in the life of their local church, and notice where God might be at work in their everyday lives. The goal for these practices is to help the participants begin to answer the question, “What might God be up to?”

#### *Learn by Doing: Using Action Learning to Discover God’s Leading*

(Saturday, June 1, 2019) In our Learning Community training, we will focus on helping participants use action learning to deepen their exploration of what they think God might be up to. The idea is to help participants “behave their way into new thinking,” rather than only trying to think their way into new behaviors. Participants will be given simple “action learning experiments” to try with others in their congregation.

#### *Sharing Our Learning: Intentional Reflection on Our Actions*

(Saturday, September 28, 2019) – Our third training will focus on learning to share what we’ve learned from the action learning experiments we did over the summer. Action learning requires intentional reflection on what was done so we can see what God might be teaching us!

### **2. Taking Steps in-between Workshops**

A Guiding Team from each participating congregation will be attending the training workshops listed above and then taking what they learn back to their congregations. They will be empowered to invite others from their congregation to participate in learning together as we move through the process.

## Leadership

### Who is leading this learning community process?

With the support of Bishop DeDe Duncan-Probe, the Diocese has established a Coordinating Team of people who are charged with helping facilitate the process and reflect on what the Diocese is learning as a whole through this work.

Coordinating Team Members:

Ms. Carol Ackley, *Team Leader*

Dr. Bambi Carkey

The Rev. Canon John Crosswaite

Ms. Kathy Dengler

The Rev. Deacon Patricia Kinney

Ms. Sue Mahon

Dr. Michael Binder will be working as a consultant in support of the Coordinating Team and helping to facilitate the second training in this process.

### Coaching

Each Guiding Team will be provided a coach who will help them take the steps outlined by the process.

**Training Day Agenda**  
**March 9, 2019**

9:00	Welcome
9:10	Dwelling in Scripture Together: Exodus 2:23 – 3:12
9:45	Overview of the Day
	Listening as a Spiritual Practice
	Introduction to Asking God Questions
10:30	Break
10:45	Listening to One Another's Stories
11:05	Naming God's Activity
12:00	Lunch
1:00	Introduction to Listening Practices
2:00	Planning Next Steps
2:40	Where Have You Seen God at Work Today?
3:00	Dismissal

## Dwelling in the Word

Dwelling in the Word is an ancient way of reading the Scripture. Dwelling in the Word is a way of spiritually submitting to the text as one way God speaks to us, with a willingness to be shaped by what God might want to say through the Scripture. In this way, we are being interpreted by the text together as we listen to it.

Three questions guide our listening:

1. What caught your attention?
2. What question would you want to ask?
3. What are we hearing in this text (where might the Spirit be nudging us)?

The process of dwelling in a particular text is as follows.

### Listen to the Word Together

- Pray that God would speak to us
- Read the text, out loud and slowly
- Allow for silence
- Read again, out loud and slowly
- Allow for silence

### Listen to Someone Else

- Find one person you can share your thoughts about the text with, a “reasonably friendly looking stranger,” someone you maybe don’t know well
- Spend 4-5 minutes each sharing about what caught your imagination, or a question you have, or what you think the Spirit might be saying

### Share in a Group

- Share in a group of 6-8 people what you heard your conversation partner say

*What might God be saying to us as a group? What are you hearing?*

## Dwelling in the Word

### Exodus 2:23 – 3:12

23 During that long period, the king of Egypt died. The Israelites groaned in their slavery and cried out, and their cry for help because of their slavery went up to God. 24 God heard their groaning and he remembered his covenant with Abraham, with Isaac and with Jacob. 25 So God looked on the Israelites and was concerned about them.

3:1 Now Moses was tending the flock of Jethro his father-in-law, the priest of Midian, and he led the flock to the far side of the wilderness and came to Horeb, the mountain of God. 2 There the angel of the Lord appeared to him in flames of fire from within a bush. Moses saw that though the bush was on fire it did not burn up. 3 So Moses thought, "I will go over and see this strange sight—why the bush does not burn up."

4 When the Lord saw that he had gone over to look, God called to him from within the bush, "Moses! Moses!" And Moses said, "Here I am."

5 "Do not come any closer," God said. "Take off your sandals, for the place where you are standing is holy ground." 6 Then he said, "I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob." At this, Moses hid his face, because he was afraid to look at God.

7 The Lord said, "I have indeed seen the misery of my people in Egypt. I have heard them crying out because of their slave drivers, and I am concerned about their suffering. 8 So I have come down to rescue them from the hand of the Egyptians and to bring them up out of that land into a good and spacious land, a land flowing with milk and honey—the home of the Canaanites, Hittites, Amorites, Perizzites, Hivites and Jebusites. 9 And now the cry of the Israelites has reached me, and I have seen the way the Egyptians are oppressing them. 10 So now, go. I am sending you to Pharaoh to bring my people the Israelites out of Egypt." 11 But Moses said to God, "Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh and bring the Israelites out of Egypt?" 12 And God said, "I will be with you. And this will be the sign to you that it is I who have sent you: When you have brought the people out of Egypt, you will worship God on this mountain."

### Questions:

What catches your attention in this passage?

What questions does this passage create for you?

What do you think God might be saying to your parish or the Diocese through this passage?

## Overview

- Listen
- Try
- Share

Listening as a Spiritual Practice.

Listening is a way of being church.

## Asking God Questions

The questions we ask shape how we think about God, our congregation, each other, and our neighborhood. We want to learn to regularly ask “God Questions” of each other along this journey.

Examples of “God Questions”

- What might God be up to?
- What might God be saying to us?
- How do we sense God’s presence in our daily lives (in our workplaces and in our neighborhoods)?
- What does God care about in our local communities?
- How might God be leading our congregation to join in something God is already doing?

## Listening to One Another’s Stories

Listening to each other is an essential practice for learning to ask different questions. As we learn to listen to each other well, we also increase our capacity to hear what God might be saying to us as well.

Pair up with someone near you.

Share a story of a time when you were most spiritually engaged and energized in your experience of your local church.

- What was happening in your life during the time you felt most spiritually engaged?
- What energized you most during this time?
- How did the church play a role in this experience in your life?



## Naming God's Activity

We assume that God is present with us in everything we are doing each and every day. Sometimes we are more aware of God's presence than others!

We want to engage in a practice of listening to our own lives and stories and wonder together where God might have been present in the midst of those experiences.

We want to get more comfortable naming what we think God might be up to in our midst.

Being able to name God's activity in our midst gives us the chance to join with what God is presently inviting us into.

### Naming God's Activity Exercise

Take a few moments quietly to reflect on the story you shared. What might God have been up to in that experience? Jot down a few notes. (10 mins.)

- What do you think God might have been doing in this time in your life?
- Was God teaching you something?
- Was God reassuring or encouraging you?
- Was God challenging you? Inviting you into something?

Pair back up and share what you think God might have been up to. (10 mins.)

Share at your table what you heard your partner say. (15 mins.)

We will take time to share as a large group some of what you heard at your tables.

## OARS: A Process for Active Listening

- ♦ O – Observation and Open Ended Questions
- ♦ A – Affirmation
- ♦ R – Reflective Listening
- ♦ S - Summarization

## Introduction to Listening Practices

We have three listening practices we'd like to invite you to participate in over the next three months.

- Listening to Scripture through Dwelling in the Word
- Listening to Your Neighborhood (God Sightings)
- Listening to the Congregation (do what we just did with other people in your church)

If your Guiding Team already has some experience with the listening practices above and you'd like to go deeper with your listening, consider the following options:

- Invite other committees, teams, and groups in your congregation to practice dwelling in the word. Teach them how to do it and invite them to share with you what their experience of it is like.
- Invite a community leader with knowledge of your neighborhood to be your guide on a walk through your community. Invite them to share what they've learned about your community, including its assets and challenges. Ask them if they sense God's presence anywhere in your community.
- Do some listening interviews with community leaders and neighbors. Instructions for this and suggested questions are available on the LCI website.
- Identify a ministry focus with your guiding team that you want to use these listening practices to learn about.

### *Ministry Focus Example – Youth*

- Dwelling – Try Dwelling in the Word with some of the youth from your congregation and/or local community. Use the Exodus text or another part of the Bible you think is appropriate. See what insights they have about what the text might be saying.
- Listening to the Neighborhood – Invite some youth to walk with you around your neighborhood/community. Ask them to tell you what they notice, what they think are strengths of the community, and what challenges they see. Have them take pictures of anything they think indicates that God is present.
- Listening to the Congregation – Ask some youth from your congregation and/or local community if you can interview them about their spiritual life. Use the questions from the “listening to others” worksheet and see what they say. If you have grandparents in your congregation, see if it would be possible for someone to interview their grandkids (or ask them to interview their grandkids).

## Planning Next Steps – Your Assignment

Your Assignment: Asking Different Questions (March-May)

### Gather

Plan for your Guiding Team to get together 3 times between now and our next training on June 1<sup>st</sup>. Plan at least one meeting in March, April, and May.

### Dwell

Plan to listen to Exodus 2:23 – 3:12 several times a week. Email observations about things you are hearing to other members of your Guiding Team. Plan to spend time listening to this scripture whenever you team gathers together (Use “Dwelling in the Word” guidelines in this packet). Write down what you are hearing. Invite other people in your congregation to try Dwelling in the Word as well.

*Going Deeper: the word.*

*Invite other committees, teams, and groups in your congregation to practice dwelling in*

### Walk

Invite your congregation to walk your neighborhood(s) twice a month between now and our next training. Invite them to take pictures or make notes about what they think God might be doing in their neighborhoods. Post pictures to the LCI Facebook page.

*Going Deeper: Invite a community leader to be your guide on a neighborhood walk.*

### Listen to Others

Ask people in your congregation about when they have felt most spiritually alive. Try and talk to 8-10 people (total, as a team) in your church community about where they may have seen God working in their lives. Write down some notes you can share with your team (see separate “Listen to Others” worksheet).

*Going Deeper: Interview neighbors and community leaders using the instructions and questions provided (see LCI website).*

### OPTIONAL: Choose a Ministry Focus

Identify a ministry focus that your team is passionate about and use these listening practices to deepen your understanding of that ministry area.

## **KEY QUESTION: WHAT MIGHT GOD BE UP TO?**

**Next Training Dates: June 1<sup>st</sup> with Michael Binder at White Eagle Conference Center in Hamilton and Saturday, September 28<sup>th</sup>, 2019 (location TBD)**