



Training Handout

June 1st, 2019



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, 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 Training Sessions

A Guiding Team from each participating congregation will be attending the training sessions 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 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

June 1st, 2019

Learn by Doing: Using Action Learning to Discover God's Leading

- | | |
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| 9:00 – 9:45 | Welcome and Dwelling in Scripture Together |
| 9:45 - 10:30 | You are Here – Where We Have Been
and Where We are Going
Sharing Our Learning –
Reviewing Work since Last Training |
| 10:30 - 10:45 | Break |
| 10:45 - 11:15 | Next Step: Action Learning Experiments |
| 11:15 – 12:00 | Case Study: Pretend Episcopal Church |
| 12:00 – 1:00 | Lunch |
| 1:00 - 1:45 | Action Learning Experiment Assignment Options |
| 1:45 - 2:45 | Team Planning Time: Choose an Experiment, Invite
the Parish |
| 2:45 - 3:00 | Where Have You Seen God at Work Today? |

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, slowly
- ⊙ Allow for silence
- ⊙ Read again
- ⊙ 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

Luke 10:1-12 (NRSV)

10 After this the Lord appointed seventy others and sent them on ahead of him in pairs to every town and place where he himself intended to go. ² He said to them, "The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; therefore ask the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest. ³ Go on your way. See, I am sending you out like lambs into the midst of wolves. ⁴ Carry no purse, no bag, no sandals; and greet no one on the road. ⁵ Whatever house you enter, first say, 'Peace to this house!' ⁶ And if anyone is there who shares in peace, your peace will rest on that person; but if not, it will return to you. ⁷ Remain in the same house, eating and drinking whatever they provide, for the laborer deserves to be paid. Do not move about from house to house. ⁸ Whenever you enter a town and its people welcome you, eat what is set before you; ⁹ cure the sick who are there, and say to them, 'The kingdom of God has come near to you.' ¹⁰ But whenever you enter a town and they do not welcome you, go out into its streets and say, ¹¹ 'Even the dust of your town that clings to our feet, we wipe off in protest against you. Yet know this: the kingdom of God has come near.' ¹² I tell you, on that day it will be more tolerable for Sodom than for that town.

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?

Sharing our Learning – Reviewing Work since Last Training

1. Listen to Others

- a. What's one thing your Guiding Team learned from listening to people in your congregation?
- b. What's one thing your Guiding Team learned from having to do this assignment (or empower other people to do it)?

2. Dwelling in the Word (Exodus 3, or other)

- a. What did your Guiding Team learn from listening to this text?
- b. How did you use the dwelling exercise in your parish?
- c. What did your Guiding Team learn from doing this practice of listening to Exodus together and encouraging other people to do it?

3. Walking the Neighborhood

- a. Choose 2 pictures (or descriptions of things you saw if you didn't take any pictures) that illustrated where God might have been working in your "neighborhood."

Next Step: Action Learning Experiments

What is an experiment?

An experiment in this process is a planned action-learning experience that is designed to help us “behave our way into new thinking.”

What is the point of experiments?

Experiments are the best way to learn when we are faced with challenges that require us to adapt and do something differently than we have done it before. Experiments create space for us to discover new ways to be the church in our context.

What makes an experiment successful?

The success of an experiment is determined by how much we learn and are transformed by the experience rather than by how much impact our actions have on others.

How do you design a good experiment?

There are 3 major steps to designing an experiment:

1. Name what you want to learn.
2. Describe the steps you will take in the experiment.
3. Create a feedback loop.

Action Learning Experiment Example: *Have 2 Give 1*

This is an experiment in generosity and decluttering - taken from Mark Scandrette's book, *Practicing the Way of Jesus*.

Learning Objective:

We want to learn how to experience freedom from having too much stuff while also following Jesus' teaching on selling possessions and giving to the poor (Luke 12:33).

Why do we want to learn this?

We have heard that people are overwhelmed by their possessions and want to experiment with selling things and giving to the poor as a possible remedy.

What steps are we going to take?

Step 1: Invite participants into an 8-week experiment focused on selling possessions and giving to the poor. Consider inviting someone who is not part of your parish!

Step 2: Gather once a week to dwell on Jesus' teaching in Luke 12:22-34. Talk about what you notice in the text and how God might be speaking to you. Share how the text is making you feel.

Step 3: Each week invite the group to identify 1 or 2 possessions (i.e. books, shoes, furniture, electronics, etc.) that they could sell and give the proceeds to the poor. Have people begin to collect these items at their homes.

Step 4: Plan for a yard sale where you will sell what they have collected.

Step 5: Decide as a group how to donate the proceeds to those in need.

Step 6: Host a yard sale at the parish (if possible) and sell the items the members of the group collected. Give the proceeds to the chosen cause.

What is our feedback loop?

Each week the group will share how the experiment is affecting them. At the end of 8 weeks, participants are encouraged to write down a one-page reflection on how this experiment has impacted them and their relationship with God.

Case Study: Pretend Episcopal Church

Pretend Episcopal Church

Pretend had a Guiding Team of 3 people who did some of the listening work assigned in the last training. Here's some of what they learned.

Listening to Others

The team originally felt overwhelmed by the prospect of interviewing 8-10 people with the questions about when people felt most spiritually alive. They weren't sure how they would ask people these questions because they seemed quite personal. They also weren't sure when they would ask people to have these conversations because it seemed like trying to do it on a Sunday might be too much for people.

Partner Sharing – What insights can you gain from the challenges Pretend Church experienced? How does this compare to your own experience?

However, the team learned a couple things as they tried to figure out how to do this assignment. First, they learned that other people were willing to be listeners along with them and they didn't have to do all the interviews themselves. Two people in the parish were willing to help do the interviews, and that helped lighten the load of the work. These people felt honored to be invited to listen to others, it was a way they had never been asked to serve in the parish before. Second, they learned that people responded very well to being personally invited to share their stories. Once people understood the point of the listening interviews, they were willing to share their stories. Several of the interviews really produced meaningful conversations that were deeper than people were used to experiencing.

Partner Sharing – What insights can you gain from the challenges Pretend Church experienced? How does this compare to your own experience?

The content of the listening sessions also produced some interesting insights. The interviews revealed that not many people had a space to talk about this part of their life. But people have had very significant experiences in their relationship with God that have greatly shaped their life. Those experiences came through a variety of life circumstances, both periods of suffering and struggle as well as periods of personal discovery and success. Many people had never been invited to name these kinds of experiences as something "God was doing," but when they thought back on it they could clearly see God leading and shaping their life during these times.

Partner Sharing – What insights can you gain from the challenges Pretend Church experienced? How does this compare to your own experience?

Dwelling in the Word (Exodus 3)

The Guiding Team listened together to this text in Exodus 3 each time they got together. They were struck by how it took something like a burning bush to get Moses' attention and wondered what God might try to get their own attention. They kept coming back to how clearly the text described God's action in this season of the life of the Israelites, and talked about how it is hard to be comfortable naming God's action in the present day. The fact that something had to die (Exodus 2:23) seemed important as they listened to this text, and wondered about what they might have to let go of in order to follow God into the future.

The Guiding Team also invited the vestry to engage in dwelling in the word at their meetings over these months. The vestry found this practice energizing. There were very good discussions about both the meaning of the text and the practice of dwelling itself. One member of the vestry thought that dwelling in the Word at the beginning of their meetings changed the way they engaged the other items on the agenda.

Through this practice of dwelling in the Word, the Guiding Team began to recognize how they are used to a clergy person explaining the text to them rather than interpreting it themselves. This was a bit scary at times for them. They wondered about whether or not they were reading something into the text that wasn't there. They wondered about how they could honor all the different perspectives people brought to the reading. But in general, they appreciated the chance to hear everyone's voice when thinking about this passage.

Listening to the Neighborhood (God Sightings)

The idea of taking pictures of ways people saw God at work in their "neighborhood" was challenging. The team wanted to be sure they respected the privacy of others. On top of that, it was hard to know what should count as something that showed God's presence and what shouldn't. The team ended up taking a few pictures of places and people in the neighborhood around their parish building that they hadn't paid much attention to before. The exercise caused them to walk into a few businesses near the parish they hadn't engaged in before. They met the owner of a corner store and learned a bit about their background. They took a picture of a farmer's market as an example of God's provision in their neighborhood. Even though the team felt like they already knew their neighborhood pretty well, they realized there were some things they hadn't been aware of. There were some new people in the area that they hadn't

interacted with. Overall, they realized that by paying attention differently to their surroundings, they noticed quite a few examples of people and places where God was clearly present that they wouldn't have otherwise noticed.

Case Study: Pretend Episcopal Church

Next Steps: Moving Toward Action Learning

So what should this team do next? Imagine that you are coaching this team and they are going to try and follow up on some of what they learned by using action learning.

1. Start by going through each section of this description and noting places where you think the team might want to focus their attention in order to learn more about what God might be teaching them.
 - a. In the "Listening to Others" section, what is something the team learned or noticed that they might want to spend more time learning about over the next few months?
 - b. In the "Dwelling in the Word" section, what is something the team learned or noticed that they might want to spend more time learning about over the next few months?
 - c. In the "Listening to the Neighborhood" section, what is something the team learned or noticed that they might want to spend more time learning about over the next few months?
2. Do you have any initial thoughts about actions the team might take to follow up on any of these insights that came from their listening work?
 - a. What is something the team could *do*, and invite the parish to do with them, that would deepen their learning about something they noticed through the interviews they did?
 - b. What is something the team could *do*, and invite the parish to do with them, that would deepen their learning about something they noticed through the dwelling they did?
 - c. What is something the team could *do*, and invite the parish to do with them, that would deepen their learning about something they noticed through the listening to the neighborhood they did?

It's ok if it is hard to come up with actions they could take, this is just a first pass at this work!

ACTION LEARNING EXPERIMENT ASSIGNMENT OPTIONS

We encourage your guiding team to think about possible action learning experiments you want to try in two major categories: investing presence and investing relationship. We hope these categories will help you imagine how you can “learn by doing” in some of the areas of focus surfaced by your listening work. Below you will find a description of what these categories mean and how you might choose to experiment with each of them.

Action Learning Experiment Category #1: Investing Presence

Many of you may have found in your listening work that there are places in your communities that you feel God might be inviting you to invest more of your time and a presence in an effort to better understand what God might be doing there.

Is there a place you came across in your “neighborhood” that you could spend more time in just to see what God might be doing there?

Examples:

- Barbershop/Hair Salon
- Coffee Shop
- Laundromat
- Farm Supply Store
- Grocery store
- Library
- Movie Theater
- Food Pantry
- Craft Brewery
- Neighborhood fair/street fair
- Farmers Markets

Once you identify a place, consider spending an extended period of time there on more than one occasion over the next few months (30-60 minutes each visit for 3 visits).

While you are there, ask yourself some questions:

- How would I describe the people here?
- Why are people gathering here?
- What makes me comfortable or uncomfortable in this space?
- What do I think God is doing in the lives of the people here?
- What might God be up to in this space?

ACTION LEARNING EXPERIMENT ASSIGNMENT OPTIONS

Another category we suggest you consider when thinking about action learning experiments is investing relationship. Through your listening work, you may have come across people that you think God might want you to be better connected to as a parish.

Action Learning Experiment Category #2: Investing Relationship

Are there people that God introduced you to through your listening work over the last few months that God might want you to develop more relationship with?

- Someone you interviewed
- Someone you didn't know in your parish until recently
- Someone you came across while walking the neighborhood and taking pictures
- A leader in your neighborhood/town
- An actual physical neighbor
- A co-worker
- Someone you just happened to meet

If you can identify someone or a group of people you think God might want you to get to know better, consider some ways you might engage with them over the next 3 months. Examples include:

- Inviting a neighbor over for dinner (and maybe even asking them to share some of their spiritual journey with you)
- Getting to know the name and something about a person who works somewhere you regularly go (i.e. coffeeshop, store, library, etc.)
- Helping to organize a National Night Out party (August 7th)
 - Consider putting together a kit for people in your parish who would be willing to help organize a NNO party
- Getting invited over to a neighbor's house for dinner and sharing some of your spiritual journey with them
- Going to a sporting/music/art event of a child of someone you know

ACTION LEARNING EXPERIMENT ASSIGNMENT OPTIONS

Examples of Action Learning Experiments You Could Try

Experiments ordered from easier to more challenging!

- A. Hangout in a New Place – Maybe there was a place that you noticed when listening to your neighborhood that you’re not as familiar with. Consider planning to spend 30 minutes there several different times over the course of the summer. Who is there? What are they doing? How do you sense God’s presence?
- B. Borrow a Tool – Practice engaging your neighbors by borrowing something from them. Could be a lawn tool, a cup of milk, or something else. This will put you in a place where you are vulnerable with your neighbors, allowing them to serve you.
- C. Sit on the Front Lawn – Set up some lawn chairs in the front of wherever you live and commit to sitting in those chairs on a regular basis. Pay attention to what is going on around you, who is outside, what is the neighborhood like, what do you think God might be doing in the neighborhood?
- D. Go See a Baseball Game – Are their children in your parish or in your neighborhood who are engaged in a sport, music or art activity over the summer. Consider going to one of their games/recitals/shows to show an interest in what they are doing. When you go, ask what God might be doing in the lives of all the people gathered there.
- E. Prayer Experiment – Go to a summer neighborhood event, like a county fair or farmers market gathering, and set up a table with your church’s name displayed and bunch of strips of cloth on the table. Invite people to write down prayers they have on the strips of cloth and hang them on a display.
- F. Eat with Your Neighbor– Consider developing enough relationship with a neighbor that you can share a meal with that person. See if you can ask that person to tell you one significant story about their spiritual journey during the meal and be willing to share your own.
- G. Listen to Spiritual Stories - Identify a ministry your church is already involved in where you could make deeper connections with neighbors and practice listening to their spiritual stories. Use the listening practices you learned to start conversations with people involved in those ministries.
- H. Pray at the Laundromat – Go to a local laundromat several times over the summer. Get permission to set up a table, offer to pay for people’s laundry and also pray for them.

Action Learning Experiments Options related to *Healing*

Several parishes in this process last year had experiences that made them more aware of the need for healing in their communities. This was true of their parish communities and the neighborhoods those parishes are located in. It seems God was giving some participants a window into the hurt that some of their neighbors are experiencing or have experienced.

The Coordinating Team discerned that this was not just one parish's experience, but maybe something God was inviting the Diocese to pay attention to. In other parts of the life of the diocese others have felt led by God to name healing as a ministry focus area as well. In light of this learning, the Coordinating Team created a number of action learning experiments aimed at helping guiding teams/parishes learn more about how God might be leading them to join God's healing work in their contexts.

What do we hope to learn?

How to be aware of the need for healing around us.

How to join the healing work God wants to do in our lives and the lives of others?

Entry-Level Action Learning Experiments

- Pray for God to make you aware of someone in your life who needs healing
- Do some research online about what other Episcopalians are doing to foster healing in their communities?
- Find some healing stories in Scripture to dwell in as a group
- Send a note to someone you know is hurting and tell them you are praying for them to sense God's presence and experience God's healing
- Create/make a gift for someone who needs healing
- Pray for healing
- Share stories of healing with someone or a group of people

More Challenging Action Learning Experiments

- Write a letter of apology for ways in which the church has caused hurt in other people's lives. Share it with someone outside the church.
- Offering a healing service that intentionally invites the community. Maybe even do the healing service in a more public place in the community.
- Comforting Presence - practice being with people who are hurting or close to death (i.e. caring for people in hospice)
- Ask for forgiveness from someone you think you might have hurt
- Longings and Losses Exercise – offer God the losses and hurts you've experienced (See handout)
- Offer co-workers the chance to share prayer requests with you

Experiment Design Worksheet

1. Name what you want to learn (learning objective). How is this based on your listening work?
2. Describe the steps you will take in the experiment.
3. Create a feedback loop.

Planning Next Steps – Your Assignment

Your Assignment: Learn by Doing (June-Sept 2018)

Gather

Plan for your Guiding Team to get together 3 times between now and our next training on September 28th. Plan at least one meeting in June, July, and August.

Continue to Dwell in the Word

Plan to listen to Luke 10:1-12 together at each of your meetings (or another passage you choose). Invite other groups in your parish to begin using this practice when they gathered. Keep track of what you are learning as you engage this practice.

Try an Action Learning Experiment (or two)

Decide on what experiment or experiments your Guiding Team would like to invite the parish into trying over the next several months. Begin by reviewing what you learned from the listening work you did in-between the first two trainings. Identify a few areas where you think God might be inviting you to do some more learning.

Choose an experiment given as an example at the training or design one of your own. Make sure your learning objective, steps, and feedback loop are clear.

Choose something that other people in the parish would be able to try over the course of the next three months. Create a communication and invitation plan for how you will invite other people in the parish into these experiments over the summer.

Make a plan for recording what you learn as you start engaging in these experiments. You'll be invited to share what you learned at our next training in September.

KEY QUESTION: WHAT MIGHT GOD BE UP TO?

Next Training Date:

Saturday, September 28th, 2019 at the Red Mill Inn, Baldwinsville