

RETREAT # 2

Telling and Sharing our Stories



Turn the Page: Discovering, Discerning and connecting the pieces of our Church story.

What we have learned so far...

- The congregation has participated in Timeline Event and we learned about the stories and history from the view of the church.
- The Demographic and Discernment team has learned about our neighborhood.

Before the Retreat:

- Write up Demographics and Timeline report and pictures/communication, distributed to Retreat #2 participants.
- Plan for refreshments, location and needed supplies.
- Invite the participants for Retreat # 2
 - Facilitator/interim pastor
 - Transition/discernment team members
 - Persons who assisted with the demographic study
 - Session and deacon members (optional)

Pandemic Version

During the Pandemic plan for the retreat to be over ZOOM or another video conferencing platform. Make sure all can participate by computer, or another device.



Team Retreat #2: Sharing the Stories

Dwelling in the Word

Instructions

Read Luke 10:1-12 aloud. Others can follow along in Bibles or handouts or can simply listen.

Allow some silence to unfold after the reading.

Each person finds a reasonably friendly-looking stranger to listen to, asking the stranger to say what picture or question popped up or where his or her imagination was caught as the passage was read. The pair listens to one another well enough to report what the other has said. They also exchange names, so that each can introduce the other during the reporting.

The pairs return to the larger group and introduce their partners and say what they heard from one another. The retreat leader(s) make sure that everyone has been introduced and, if there's time, some further discussion of the passage can take place.

Take time to reflect together on ways Dwelling in the Word can be used in the Congregation during this discernment or transitional time.

What have we learned? What are the stories we are gathering and discovering?

What have we learned about our congregation's culture and character from the timeline event?

- What did you observe? What are the patterns? What surprised? What didn't? Record your responses.
- What are the Bible Stories you heard or come to mind? What are the patterns? What surprises you? What resonates with you?

Record your responses on large paper or electronic white board.

What have we discovered and learned about our community?

Reflecting on the demographic study and other resources

- Review the demographic information and report.
- Where do you see God at work in the community?
- What are opportunities for ministry and partnerships for the congregation?
- Record your responses.

Next work

Listening to and Collecting the Stories

Storytelling Season

The Discernment Team should recruit a small team to complete this part of the work of inviting and gathering people together to hear their stories.

The Storytelling Season Team responsibilities are to plan and carry out a meeting or series of meetings in the congregation to listen to as many members and participants as possible.

Storytelling Season Event(s) Overview

The Storytelling Season Team organizes several Storytelling Season gatherings of groups between 6 - 10 people. These can be groups that already know each other, work together, are an organized group (i.e., choir, women's circle, Bible Study) or are groups that are organized specifically for this storytelling season gatherings.

The Storytelling Season process may take place during the regularly scheduled time of organized groups or schedule dates and people sign up to participate on the different dates.

Each Storytelling Season needs two facilitators; one to ask the questions and assist in keeping the conversation going and one to keep notes. Summaries from the demographic and Timeline event should be made available to the congregation. (see communication ideas)

Overview of Storytelling Season Event:

- Begin with Dwelling in the Word; Luke 10: 1 -12
- Facilitators invite participants to respond to some or all of the following questions:
 - What Biblical stories relate to our life together as a faith community?
 - What are some metaphors or images that best fit with our community? With our congregation?
 - What did you learn from the demographic report that surprises you? What doesn't surprise you?

- What did you learn from the History Timeline event? What surprises you? What doesn't surprise you?
- Where do you see God at work in your congregation? Where do you see God at work in your community?
- In one word describe your congregation

Notes will be kept from each Storytelling Season meeting.

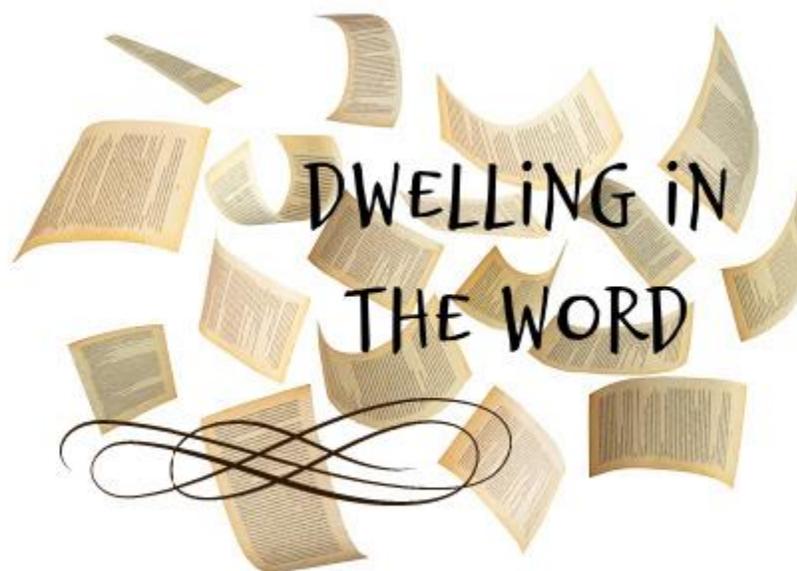
- About Note taking: The notes from the Storytelling Season Gatherings should include only comments and stories. Avoid using specific names or quotes. Remind the speakers that what they say will be shared but no comment will be connected to a specific speaker.

Pandemic Version

The Pandemic Version works the same way except meeting in person the groups meet in virtual meeting platforms such as Zoom, or Google meets. When using these platforms, the group should be no more than 10 people so everyone can see each other on one screen.

There should be a facilitator and recorder to ask questions and take notes. The meeting should not be recorded.

Even if a pandemic version is no longer needed this could also be a good way to listen to those who are unable to come in person or live away.



Planning a Discernment Event for Session or Congregation

Discernment Event for Session or Congregation

*Important: The Discernment event is scheduled **for after the** Storytelling season is completed.*

Purpose

- To review learnings from the “in between work”
- To reflect on *How God is calling us in our time and place*
- To look for patterns and commonalities
- To spend time listening to each other about what we have learned.
- To put together the information for more reflection and action

Participants

- Discernment Team members
- Session members
- Church leaders
- Church members who are interested
- Other participants of the church
- Invite anyone who wants to come

Preparation

- Set a date for when as many participants can meet – 2 hour time frame
- Can plan a meal or hospitality for the meeting. Take that into consideration of time.
- Lots of paper or white board, markers, a recorder or two
- A presentation of the findings and discoveries so far. This could be in PowerPoint format or written documents.

Process

- For Dwelling in the Word, use Philippians 1:27; 2:5 -11. (*yes, it is a different Dwelling text- not a typo*)
- Share with the group a summary, reflections and a PowerPoint of the Timeline event, community demographics and listening posts. Reports should be available for participants to view if desired.
- Review the ground rules for brainstorming

- Take time to brainstorm ideas using the reflections, Dwelling in the Word and reports. Ask the groups to wrestle with a central question, “Where does God appear to be at work in us and in our corner of the world right now?”
- Following the brainstorming time, take time for silent reflection preceded by a reading of the Dwelling text once again.
- Led by the facilitator, engage the entire group in a conversation about what they have learned about the church, the neighborhood, the Biblical stories and metaphors that have been shared, and the ideas that arose during the brainstorm. Set ground rules for the length of comments. Depending on the size of the group can use the Mutual Invitation process.
- After all have had an opportunity to share his/her thoughts and ideas, the Facilitator should bring the meeting to a close by asking:
 - What is the sense of the room?
 - Have we been inspired in some way toward a particular image or metaphor?
 - Do we have an emerging sense of God’s call to our congregation?
- Reread the dwelling passage and pray for God’s wisdom to lead the congregation.

During the event, the recorders of stories records what is said during the brainstorm and Closure/Summary segments. The resulting account (or as much of it as is helpful) should be published to the wider membership, so that everyone understands what is going on.

After the event

The Discernment Team meets to reflect upon what has been learned at the Discernment event, what has coalesced, what remains unfocused and what is emerging.

Pandemic version

The Pandemic Version will follow the same format with the following changes: If the group is larger than 10, the participants should first receive instructions and then be divided into break out rooms for the conversation. A facilitator and note taker will have to be identified and instructed in the process ahead of time. Each break out room should have 8 to 12 people. After each break out room completes the process, they return to the larger group to share what they have learned. The facilitator summarizes what has been learned and what is the general sense of the group reports.

Next Steps

Complete the retreat planning using the Next Steps Worksheet to plan for the Storytelling season and the Discernment Event.



Next Steps Worksheet for Retreat # 2

What will we put on the calendar? Who will do this?

- Date for Retreat #3
- Date(s) for the Storytelling Season
- Date for the meeting to reflect on the Storytelling Season
- Date for the Discernment Event
- Date for the meeting to reflect on the discernment event

Who will we need to recruit? Who'll do this? What are deadlines for planning each event.

- Team for the Storytelling Season
- Team for the Discernment Event?

What supplies and resources will we need? Who'll do this?

- For the Storytelling Season
- For the Discernment Event