Dwelling in the Word — A Missional Practice

Missional practices: cultivating new understandings, ways of being, and living Christ’s mission.

Purpose: To listen to God and to one another to hear and discover in new ways God’s direction by reading scripture and posing questions. “Dwelling in the Word” is a missional practice based on our understanding that God continues to speak to us in the context of our day and calling. Listen for God’s voice or sense God’s presence in scripture to connect with God’s mission in Christ. Listen to the voices of others about what God is doing in their lives. This practice is not about gaining information about scripture. Dwelling in the Word is about imagining how God is calling and sending us to embody and live the concerns and passion of Christ in our communities and the world.

Steps:

Pre-select a scripture passage and form a question(s)* for reflection to explore and discover where God is leading you.

Gather in the spirit of fellowship taking time to pray for one another.

Provide a copy of the scripture passage and the questions to allow participants to hear and read them for reflection (see page three for an illustration of a selected scripture and questions).

The person designated to lead:

- Asks participants to listen for or sense a particular word, phrase or image in the scripture passage that they feel led to explore or wonder about.
- Reads the scripture passage and provides a moment of silence for reflection.
- Asks participants to share reflections on what aspect of the scripture they were drawn to explore or wonder about.
- Before reading the scripture a 2nd time, asks participants to reflect on a specific question(s) that focuses their attention.
- Reads the passage a second time; pauses for silence; and asks people to share their responses to the question(s).
- Offers prayer to conclude the time in this missional practice or to transition to another activity.

Tips for the Process:

Be patient. Take time for being with and deepening relationships with one another. Listen to, affirm, and encourage one another. Be open and allow moments of silence for the reading of scripture to transform our understanding and our way of being and doing. Do not let this
become an intellectual exercise which will limit the transformative impact of this practice. If someone wishes to remain silent, that is acceptable. It is important to remember that the reflections are to be personal and not become an exercise in biblical interpretation. Like any practice, this will take time to fully understand.

*Selecting the Scripture Passage and Forming Questions for Reflection:

Dwelling in the Word is a key way to explore and discover where God is leading us as persons and as congregations in mission. Selecting a scripture passage and forming questions for reflection are important first steps.

In the LCM Field Guide are “Twelve Months of Scripture for Dwelling in the Word” from which to choose scripture texts. In addition to these, select passages from the Bible, Doctrine and Covenants, and the Book of Mormon that resonate or speak to you, select ones with imagery, narrative, and people, and especially select ones depicting Jesus or the New Testament church.

Typical questions for consideration are:

- Is there a word, phrase or place in the scripture I feel drawn to dwell or explore?
- What words, images, or phrases are speaking to me in this text?
- What is God’s invitation to me in this scripture?
- What is God’s invitation to us as a Pastor Leadership Team in this scripture?
- What is God’s invitation to our congregation in this scripture?
- How am I or are we being called to live into this story today?

In addition to these typical questions, create or form questions relevant to concerns or opportunities for disciple formation, leadership or congregational life. Examples:

- What are some ways for us to individually and in community create more space to “Listen to the Voice that echoes across the eons of time and yet speaks anew in this moment?” (See Doctrine and Covenants 162:1b and select additional verses.)
- What might God desire to reveal to us about our sacred journey as a congregation as we read “Lift up your eyes and fix them on the place beyond the horizon to which you are sent. Journey in trust, assured that the great and marvelous work is for this time and for all time?” (See Doctrine and Covenants 161:1a and select additional verses.)
- What do we “keep on doing” that “the God of peace” will make known to us as we read Philippians 4:4-9?
Dwelling in the Word

Doctrine and Covenants 161:3a, b, c, d and 163:11b

161:3a. Open your hearts and feel the yearnings of your brothers and sisters who are lonely, despised, fearful, neglected, unloved. Reach out in understanding, clasp their hands, and invite all to share in the blessings of community created in the name of the One who suffered on behalf of all.

161:3b. Do not be fearful of one another. Respect each life journey, even in its brokenness and uncertainty, for each person has walked alone at times. Be ready to listen and slow to criticize, lest judgments be unrighteous and unredemptive.

161:3c. Be patient with one another, for creating sacred community is arduous and even painful. But it is to loving community such as this that each is called. Be courageous and visionary, believing in the power of just a few vibrant witnesses to transform the world. Be assured that love will overcome the voices of fear, division, and deceit.

161:3d. Understand that the road to transformation travels both inward and outward. The road to transformation is the path of the disciple.

163:11b. There are many issues that could easily consume the time and energy of the church. However, the challenge before a prophetic people is to discern and pursue what matters most for the journey ahead.

Questions for Reflection:

1. Is there a word, phrase, or image that causes you to pause or go deeper in your understanding of Christ’s mission?

2. If this text were written only for you, how does it speak to your life experience and invite you into Christ’s mission?