

What is healthy congregational spirituality?

A guide to resources

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Although most of what is crowding the shelves in the spirituality section of bookstores and on web-sites today focuses on personal spirituality, a growing body of literature is emerging that examines and defines healthy communal spirituality. And since our own Anabaptist/Mennonite tradition was born in an attempt to restore a vital communal spirituality, we would do well to pay attention to this literature and discern what is wheat and what may be chaff.

It may be a dangerous undertaking, however, to try to define healthy congregational spirituality. In *Life Together*, Dietrich Bonhoeffer observes, “God hates visionary dreaming: it makes the dreamer proud and pretentious. [Those] who fashion a visionary ideal of community demand that it be realized by God, by others, and by [themselves]” ([New York: Harper & Row, 1954], 27). Despite such risks, current writers and church leaders persist in the effort to identify the origin and character of vibrant spiritual communities.

What is being written today falls into two broad categories: one group of books focuses on the role of the pastor as spiritual leader; the second group gives attention to practices and patterns that shape healthy congregational life. Within each group I will highlight one or two especially important titles and make briefer reference to a variety of other useful titles.

The pastor’s role in healthy congregational spirituality

No one disagrees with the assumption that pastoral leaders play a key role in the spiritual health of congregations. What is up for discussion is how that happens best.

The church has always known that pastors lead by example. If pastors tend their own spiritual health, they provide a model for those they lead. When they make prayer a priority, seek out

spiritually nourishing relationships, and express their faith daily in ordinary ways in their own neighborhood, they show what it means to love God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength, and your neighbor as yourself—Jesus’ own definition of healthy spirituality (Mark 12:30–31).

Eugene Peterson, pastor-turned-author, emphasizes this theme in *Working the Angles: The Shape of Pastoral Integrity* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987). “I don’t know of any other profession in which it is quite as easy to fake it as in ours,” he confesses. “It doesn’t take many years in this business to realize that we can conduct a fairly respectable pastoral ministry without giving much more than ceremonial attention to God” (3–4). And even when ecclesiastical hierarchies and the congregation itself conspire to support public success at the expense of inner vitality, Peterson challenges pastors to examine their lives and ministry and take responsibility for the integrity of their vocation.

Peterson compares the work of ministry to the angles of a triangle: preaching, teaching, and administration are the visible, public lines of pastoral work, while prayer, Scripture, and spiritual direction are the three small, less noticed angles. Working these angles is what gives shape and integrity to the daily work of pastors—the acts of attention to God in relation to one’s own self as pastor (prayer), the acts of attention to the biblical communities of Israel and the church (Scripture), and the acts of attention directed to another person (spiritual direction). “If we get the angles right,” says Peterson, “it is a simple matter to draw in the lines” (4).

A number of other books also address the significant role of the pastor’s own spirituality. *Leading the Congregation: Caring for Yourself While Serving Others*, written by Norman Shawchuck and Roger Heuser (Nashville: Abingdon, 1993), explores the relationship between spiritual integrity and the demands of administrative leadership. The authors’ three-dimensional vision of healthy spiritual leadership includes an upward view of God, an inward view of the self, and an outward view of the wider context of pastoral ministry.

Spiritual Wholeness for Clergy: A New Psychology of Intimacy with God, Self, and Others, by Donald R. Hands and Wayne L. Fehr ([Washington, D.C.]: Alban Inst., 1993), grew out of the healing

ministry of Saint Barnabas Center (Wisconsin), and emphasizes the intimate relationship between psychological and spiritual health. In her foreword, novelist Susan Howatch acknowledges the dangers inherent in a clerical career and notes that this book would have been enormously valuable to the characters in her Church of England series.

In another Alban Institute book, *How Prayer Shapes Ministry* (1992), John E. Biersdorf explores the relationship between prayer and ministry. He suggests that prayer is not just a resource for ministry; instead ministry is an expression of prayer. Biersdorf draws from systems theory as well as Myers-Briggs terminology to provide guidance for enriched personal and public prayer.

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Three other recent titles that provide guidance from a biblical perspective for the spiritual health of leaders are E. Glenn Hinson, *Spiritual Preparation for Christian Leadership* (Nashville: Upper Room Bks., 1999); Reggie McNeal, *A Work of Heart: Understanding How God Shapes Spiritual Leaders* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2000); and Marva J. Dawn and Eugene H. Peterson,

The Unnecessary Pastor: Rediscovering the Call (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, and Vancouver: Regent College, 2000). In his review of the last book (*Canadian Mennonite*, May 1, 2000), Henry Paetkau comments that judging by the speed with which the book sold out at a recent gathering of Mennonite ministers, the discussion of pastoral messiah complexes touches a particularly sensitive nerve among clergy (11). What Dawn and Peterson do is encourage pastors to withstand destructive cultural and religious forces that attempt to domesticate their ministry and to live instead out of an identity that derives from the crucified and risen Jesus (which, of course, is the call for all Christians—clergy or not).

Finally, a book that agrees with the above emphasis on the pastor's own spirituality but goes an important step further to make explicit the connection with congregational spirituality is Howard Rice's *The Pastor as Spiritual Guide* (Nashville: Upper Room Bks., 1998). Rice states flatly, "The principal tool for the work of pastoral ministry is one's own faith" (35). When people

turn to a pastor, he says, they are looking for “a model of being in the world that is anchored in God..., someone who can point them toward depth and meaning” (34).

But beyond being models of faithfulness, pastors are also called to be spiritual guides for their congregations. In fact, Rice asserts that spiritual guidance is the most appropriate lens—the organizing principle—for viewing all of pastoral ministry. He defines spiritual guidance as “a sacramental quality of seeing the work of God in the ordinary. This guidance takes place in the way a leader assists a person, a group, or a congregation to pay attention to the ways God is at work in their lives, individually and corporately” (62). In other words, the central call of pastoral ministry is to assist people in the process of discerning and responding to God’s presence in their lives.

The most enlightening chapter in the book, in my opinion, is the first chapter, “A Calling Seeking Definition,” in which Rice

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examines the history of ministerial leadership and identifies a succession of historical and current images: pastor as evangelist, as mediator of sacramental grace, as preacher (and resident theologian), as teacher, as pastoral counselor, as agent of social change, and as manager of an institution. Although each of these images has its place within an overall understanding of ministry, none is adequate as a central vision. Having cleared the way for his thesis, Rice then identifies the unique calling of the pastor as spiritual guide to the entire congregation and proceeds to explore implications for leadership of worship,

education, social change, and management. Unfortunately the second half of the book is less captivating than the first half, but these topics are better treated by the specialist writers of books dealt with in the next section of this essay.

Practices and patterns for healthy congregational spirituality

When pastors faithfully tend their own spiritual health and view all of pastoral ministry through the lens of spiritual guidance, they will have done the most important work they can do to foster

vital spiritual life in their congregations. The next set of titles offers specific guidance for the practice of pastoral ministry as seen with the renewed vision of ministry as spiritual guidance. These books begin to provide answers for ordinary everyday tasks: How does one preach or lead a worship service as a spiritual guide? How does one lead a committee or congregational meeting? Prepare candidates for baptism? Teach parents? Care for the grieving? Train evangelists or peacemakers?

Though the last decade has produced a small but sturdy collection of books that provide overall guidance for such a vision,¹ the most relevant for Mennonite churches is *Congregational Discipling: A Threefold Vision for Worship, Community, and Mission*, sponsored by Mennonite Board of Congregational Ministries, Herald Press Congregational Publishing, and Commission on Education (Scottsdale: Herald Pr., 1997). Rooted in more than a decade of intensive testing, writing, and teaching (in North America and beyond) and based on biblical teachings and Anabaptist understandings of the nature of the church, the Congregational Discipling Vision provides a practical framework for seeing all of congregational life as spiritually formative.

Individual chapters describe the discipling process (or, one could say, the spiritual guidance process) in three broad arenas of congregational life: worship (both corporate and personal), community (relationships within the body of Christ), and mission (the church's weekday work of witness, service, peacemaking, and stewardship in the world). Attention is also given to the needs for guidance within specific age groups: children, youth, young adults, middle adults, older adults. A chapter on church architecture spells out the formative potential of the spaces where congregations worship. Another chapter, on money, includes a useful chart for analyzing how the congregation's budget supports discipling priorities. A chapter on the pastor-as-discipler and another on organizational structures provide leaders with theological foundations and practical tools for spiritual guidance in the nitty-gritty situations of congregational life. In each chapter, the focus is on the heart of the matter: how the discipling or spiritual formation process leads to love of God, self, neighbor, and the world.

In the following section, a variety of resources are noted for the ministries of spiritual guidance taking place in these three major arenas—the vertical arena of worship and spirituality, the horizontal arena of community and family life, and the outward arena of mission and peace.

Spiritual guidance for the congregation's life of worship

Because public worship is a central opportunity for communal encounter with God, a priority for healthy congregational spirituality is worship leaders (musicians, Scripture readers, preachers, pray-ers, offering takers, visual artists, etc.) who understand their priestly and prophetic roles. However, in a tradition with under-developed sacramental understandings, our lay leaders (and sometimes even pastors) may struggle to function as spiritual guides who create space for God's presence and help worshipers hear and receive God's transforming word for their lives. Because no written resource alone can provide adequate guidance or training, pastors must offer individual mentoring for those who are learning to lead worship. Worship leaders need formal instruction as well as modeling in the role of silence, language, posture, pacing, responsiveness to the congregation, prayerfulness, awareness of Scripture and tradition, and many other dimensions of this ministry.

Two books by Philip H. Pfatteicher provide a foundation for understanding worship as formation: *The School of the Church: Worship and Christian Formation* (Valley Forge: TPI PA, 1995), and *Liturgical Spirituality* (Valley Forge: TPI PA, 1997). More scholarly than some of the titles previously mentioned, these books offer theological and historical depth and repay careful reading.

A particular area in need of attention is the role of ritual in worship. Three books provide indispensable guidance for planning and leading rituals that open the way for God's transforming work. Tom F. Driver, *Liberating Rites: Understanding the Transformative Power of Ritual* (Boulder: Westview, 1998), and Eleanor Kreider, *Communion Shapes Character* (Scottsdale: Herald Pr., 1997), both offer useful theoretical discussions as well as helpful examples of effective rituals. *The Minister's Manual*, edited by John Rempel (Newton and Winnipeg: Faith & Life, and Scottsdale and Waterloo: Herald Pr., 1998), which should be in every church and

pastor's library, contains a fine set of essays illuminating the history, theology, and practice of the church's rituals, along with rubrics for use.

Many congregations are discovering that regularly offering healing rituals within the context of Sunday morning worship is a potent means of restoring and maintaining healthy spirituality. Two useful guides for such ministry are Avery Brooke, *Healing in the Landscape of Prayer* (Cambridge, Mass.: Cowley Pubns., 1996), and Ian Cowie, *Prayer and Ideas for Healing Services* (Glasgow: Wild Goose Pubns., 1995).²

A spiritually deforming experience in some congregations is “worship wars”—conflicts over competing visions of styles of

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worship. Several of the most useful books for helping leaders think through these issues are Paul B. Brown, *In and for the World: Bringing the Contemporary into Christian Worship* (Minneapolis: Fortress Pr., 1992); Marva J. Dawn, *Is It a Lost Cause? Having the Heart of God for the Church's Children* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997); Pamela Ann Moeller, *Exploring Worship Anew: Dreams and Visions* (St. Louis: Chalice Pr., 1998); and Carol Doran and Thomas Troeger, *Trouble at the Table: Gathering the Tribes for Worship* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1992). In the latter

book, a helpful set of maps provides vocabulary for people to talk about their differences in ways that create understanding rather than erect barriers.

As part of the work of spiritual guidance, pastors and leaders must introduce people to spiritual disciplines—those practices, which, as Richard Foster reminds us, do not manipulate God but rather put us in the place where grace can reach us. Many, many resources are available for teaching or mentoring. Among the best are: Marjorie J. Thompson, *Soul Feast: An Invitation to the Christian Spiritual Life* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1995); Dorothy C. Bass, ed., *Practicing Our Faith: A Way of Life for a Searching People* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1997); and a brand-new gem of a book, Joan Chittister, *Illuminated Life: Monastic Wisdom for Seekers of Light* (New York: Orbis Bks., 2000). We are

fortunate to have excellent resources written by Mennonite authors as well: Wendy Miller, *Invitation to Presence: A Guide to Spiritual Disciplines* (Nashville: Upper Room Bks., 1995); Arthur Paul Boers, *Lord, Teach Us to Pray: A New Look at the Lord's Prayer* (Scottsdale: Herald Pr., 1992); and Marlene Kropf and Eddy Hall, *Praying With the Anabaptists: The Secret of Bearing Fruit* (Newton and Winnipeg: Faith & Life, 1994).

A particular spiritual practice—praying the daily office—has not formally been part of our faith tradition. Although families may engage in family worship and small groups often include prayer together as part of their agenda, a regular gathering for liturgical prayer is less often practiced. In recent years, however, the practice of morning or evening prayer has become more common in Mennonite institutions or at special events such as weekend conferences or retreats. C. W. McPherson, *Grace at This Time: Praying the Daily Office* (Harrisburg: Morehouse Pub., 1999), offers an introduction to the theology and spirituality of the daily office and also provides rubrics for the office. Other often-used daily prayer books include J. Philip Newell, *Celtic Prayers from Iona* (New York: Paulist Pr., 1997); *Praise God: Common Prayer at Taizé* (New York: OUP, 1997); and Rueben P. Job and Norman Shawchuck, *A Guide to Prayer for All God's People* (Nashville: Upper Room Bks., 1990).

Spiritual guidance for the congregation's life together as the body of Christ

Several temptations can divert or distort the ministry of spiritual guidance in the communal arena. One is the temptation of therapy (to apply psychological understandings to group life); another is the temptation of organization (to apply managerial wisdom); and a third is the temptation of teaching (to apply educational theories). While each of these areas of knowledge enriches the formation of healthy communal life, none is the center. To provide spiritual guidance for the common life means that in every relationship leaders focus on assisting people or groups to respond to the mystery of God's grace in their lives. In pastoral care, for example, people may indeed be loved, supported, encouraged, counseled, confronted, or mentored, but the major task is tending their relationship with God. A book that

treats this theme is M. Simone Roach, *Caring from the Heart: The Convergence of Caring and Spirituality* (New York: Paulist Pr., 1997).

One of the most significant arenas of communal spirituality is small groups. While an abundance of how-to books is available for groups, two essential practices for groups that desire healthy spirituality are prayer and Scripture meditation. Two books that speak to the heart of the matter are Norvene Vest, *Gathered in the Word: Praying the Scripture in Small Groups* (Nashville: Upper Room Bks., 1996), and M. Robert Mulholland, Jr., *Shaped by the Word: The Power of Scripture in Spiritual Formation* (Nashville: Upper Room, 1985). Even mature Christians can confuse study of the Bible with a living relationship with God. Both Vest and Mulholland offer wisdom from the church's tradition for encountering the living Word. I can personally testify to the sustaining and enriching gifts gained from the practice of praying Scripture in a group. The small group with which I meet weekly has used Vest's adaptation of *lectio divina*³ with much profit for several years.

Related to small group spirituality are the practices of spiritual direction and spiritual friendship. More often occurring in one-to-one settings, these practices provide individual guidance for Christians seeking more vital spirituality. Two classics in the field of spiritual direction are William A. Barry and William J. Connolly, *The Practice of Spiritual Direction* (New York: Seabury Pr., 1982), and Margaret Guenther, *Holy Listening: The Art of Spiritual Direction* (Cambridge, Mass.: Cowley Pubns., 1992). To introduce spiritual friendship, two books provide practical guidance: Wendy Miller, *Learning to Listen: A Guide for Spiritual Friends* (Nashville: Upper Room Bks., 1993), and Timothy Jones, *Finding a Spiritual Friend: How Friends and Mentors Can Make Your Faith Grow* (Nashville: Upper Room Bks., 1998).⁴

A growing arena of individual and group spiritual formation in Mennonite churches is retreats. Although retreats may have multiple purposes (fellowship, study, recreation, or rest, for example), many Mennonites today are seeking contemplative retreats where silence, solitude, prayer, and Scripture meditation are the primary focus. Two resources for such retreats are Rueben P. Job, *Spiritual Life in the Congregation: A Guide for Retreats* (Nashville: Upper Room Bks., 1997), and Jane E. Vennard, *Be*

Still: Designing and Leading Contemplative Retreats (Bethesda, Md.: Alban Inst., 2000).

The temptation to diverge from the spiritual guidance vision may be especially strong in the business and committee life of the congregation. Because of time pressures and the strong influence of corporate managerial practices, congregations may forget that the real goal of all our decision-making structures is nurturing

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faith and advancing the reign of God. Only a simpleton would pretend that transforming business meetings into faith-building experiences is easy, but several courageous writers are pointing the way. Perhaps the most influential is Charles M. Olsen with an approach called Worshipful Work. His book, *Transforming Church Boards into Communities of Spiritual Leaders* ([Washington, D.C]: Alban Inst., 1995), is a creative application of biblical and historical discernment traditions to the ordinary business of church councils and committees. In *Discerning God's Will Together: A Spiritual Practice for the Church* (Bethesda, Md.: Alban Inst., 1997), a book

written with Danny E. Morris, Olsen carries the creative vision further and offers a model for discerning God's way in the midst of confusing or polarized situations.⁵

Because spiritual awareness begins in the family, a significant arena for spiritual formation (which certainly affects congregational life) is the home. Again, a multitude of titles is available, but the single most useful work, in my opinion, is Marjorie J. Thompson, *Family—The Forming Center: A Vision of the Role of Family in Spiritual Formation* (Nashville: Upper Room Bks., 1989). Another important Mennonite resource for family life is not a book but the Opening Doors initiative sponsored by the Commission on Education (Newton, Kansas), a new conceptual model for integrating family spirituality and congregational life.⁶

Probably the single most significant communal arena for nourishing healthy spirituality is the baptismal and church membership preparation process. Here the congregation has the

opportunity to provide nourishing spiritual food for infant Christians and initiate them into healthy spiritual practices which will sustain their faith and send them out into the world as Spirit-directed disciples. Instead of seeing the catechetical process primarily as a time for imparting information, recent efforts in the church emphasize a broader spiritual formation approach. Two Mennonite guides are based on this vision: *Making Disciples: A Guide for Youth Catechism Leaders*, a group writing effort under the editorial direction of Susan E. Janzen (Newton: Faith & Life, and Scottdale: Mennonite Pub. House, 1992); and Jane Hooper Peifer and John Stahl-Wert, *Welcoming New Christians: A Guide for the Christian Initiation of Adults* (Newton: Faith & Life, and Scottdale: Mennonite Pub. House, 1995). Both of these works draw on the ancient church practice of the catechumenate as a four-part process of initiation: evangelization, inquiry and exploration, preparation for baptism, and post-baptismal formation.

Spiritual guidance for the congregation's life of mission and ministry in the world

Before exploring the implications of a spiritual guidance vision for specific congregational ministries in the world, an important stopping place is the everyday work life of Christians. Our Anabaptist tradition highlights the important role of daily discipleship, whether that occurs in the home, neighborhood, or workplace. And since many people today spend a majority of their waking hours at work, this arena deserves careful attention as a place where the Spirit is bringing new life.

Perhaps the most creative, integrative writing on this theme in recent years is Parker J. Palmer, *The Active Life: A Spirituality of Work, Creativity, and Caring* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1990). As a doing-oriented person who experienced a tug-of-war between the active and contemplative life, Palmer eventually came to see that his call was to hold together a paradoxical vision in which both contemplation and action are honored and integrated at the root. He says, "Action becomes more than a matter of getting from here to there, but a contemplative affair as well, a path by which we may discover inner truth.

Contemplation becomes more than a luxury to be indulged when the worries of the world are behind us, but a way of changing

consciousness that may have more impact on the world than strategic action can have” (17).

Several other titles that amplify this discussion are Elizabeth A. Dreyer, *Earth Crammed with Heaven: A Spirituality of Everyday Life* (New York: Paulist Pr., 1994); Steve Jacobsen, *Hearts to God, Hands to Work: Connecting Spirituality and Work* (Bethesda, Md.: Alban Inst., 1997); and Barbara Smith-Moran, *Soul at Work: Reflections on a Spirituality of Working* (Winona, Minn.: St. Mary's, 1997).

The two temptations Christians face in the life of the Spirit in the world are related to the active-contemplative paradox described above. Some Christians burn themselves out by working too hard in ministries of justice, service, peacemaking, and witness, acting as though human effort alone will fulfill the reign of God. Others are overly passive, waiting for God to make all the effort and not contributing their energy and gifts to God's dream. Whatever ministry of action one is called to in the world, a faithful response both waits on God and moves in faithful obedience to God's call.

Probably the book that has done most to transform the vision and practice of people I know with regard to the church's ministry of evangelism is Ben Campbell Johnson, *Speaking of God: Evangelism as Initial Spiritual Guidance* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1991). For Mennonites who may find it difficult to speak of faith in secular contexts, Johnson's vision is liberating. He describes a crisis of major proportions in North America: God's people lack art and passion in sharing their faith. Differentiating between God-talk (making references to God in every conversation) and God-speech (candid, natural conversation about what is most important in our lives), he uses the image of spiritual guide as central for this ministry. Noticing where God is already at work in another's life, encouraging conversation about what is happening, and supporting another in the path of faithfulness are critical ingredients. When this happens, he says, “the repulsive image of the rude, intrusive soul saver gives way to an intelligent, sensitive, caring, compassionate human being helping persons find the meaning of their lives” (28).

The congregation's ministries of justice, service, and peacemaking demand a particularly resilient spirituality. Often

taking place in oppressive or violent situations, these ministries sooner or later breed discouragement, cynicism, or despair. James McGinnis, *Journey into Compassion: A Spirituality for the Long Haul* (Bloomington, Ind.: Meyer Stone Bks., 1989), emphasizes that our own experience of being loved by God is the sustaining source of ongoing creativity and loving service in the world.

Spirituality for the future

In a sense, healthy congregational spirituality must be re-invented in every generation. Because our faith is shaped and lived out in specific environments, leaders must always be attentive to what

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God is doing in the world, in the church, and within our own hearts. While certain classic practices remain essential for healthy spiritual growth (God-centered worship, loving relationships within Christ's body, and Spirit-filled witness and ministry in the world), our particular response of faithfulness requires not only an appreciation and understanding of our own spiritual tradition but a lively engagement with the world to which God calls us.

To better understand our own Anabaptist spiritual heritage, I recommend three valuable introductory essays found in the following

books: Daniel Liechty, trans. and ed., *Early Anabaptist Spirituality: Selected Writings*, (New York: Paulist Pr., 1994); J. Craig Haas, *Readings from Mennonite Writings, New & Old* (Intercourse, Pa.: Good Bks. PA, 1992), and Cornelius J. Dyck, trans. and ed., *Spiritual Life in Anabaptism: Classic Devotional Resources* (Scottsdale: Herald Pr., 1995). For a more thorough discussion of early Anabaptist spirituality, and particularly its corporate expressions, see chapters 20–27 of C. Arnold Snyder's *Anabaptist History and Theology: An Introduction* (Kitchener: Pandora Press, 1995).

A challenging look at spirituality in the postmodern world is provided by Thomas Hart, *Spiritual Quest: A Guide to the Changing Landscape* (New York: Paulist Pr., 1999), or Leonard Sweet, *FaithQuakes* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1994). Even better, the autobiographical conversion stories of such gifted contemporary writers as Kathleen Norris, in *Dakota: A Spiritual Geography*

(Boston: HM, 1993) and *The Cloister Walk* (New York: Riverhead Bks., 1996), or Anne Lamott, in *Traveling Mercies: Some Thoughts on Faith* (New York: Pantheon, 1999), give fascinating glimpses into the Spirit's creative work in drawing people to Christ and also into the role of ordinary faithful congregations in providing a welcoming home for such seekers.

What we can count on is that "God who began a good work among you will bring it to completion by the day of Jesus Christ" (Phil. 1.6). Though we often use this verse to declare our personal confidence in God's enduring good purposes, it was originally addressed to a congregation. Fragile or graceless or impotent as the church sometimes seems to be, God still promises to use us to bring glory to Christ. Thanks be to God!

Notes

¹ Among the best are Susanne Johnson, *Christian Spiritual Formation in the Church and Classroom* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1989); Maria Harris, *Fashion Me a People: Curriculum in the Church* (Westminster/John Knox Press, 1989); Clark M. Williamson and Ronald J. Allen, *The Vital Church: Teaching, Worship, Community Service* (St. Louis: Chalice Press, 1998); and John Ackerman, *Spiritual Awakening: A Guide to Spiritual Life in Congregations* ([Bethesda, Md.]: Alban Inst., 1994). Another book some Mennonite congregations have benefited from is Christian A. Schwarz, *Natural Church Development: A Guide to Eight Essential Qualities of Healthy Churches* (Carol Stream: ChurchSmart Resources, 1996).

² Additional titles are Theodore W. Jennings, *The Liturgy of Liberation: The Confession and Forgiveness of Sins* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1988); Leo Thomas and Jan Alkire, *Healing Ministry: A Practical Guide* (Kansas City, Mo.: Sheed & Ward, 1994); and Flora Slosson Wuellner, *Prayer and Our Bodies* (Nashville: Upper Room, 1987), as well as *Prayer, Stress & Our Inner Wounds* by the same author (Nashville: Upper Room, 1985).

³ *Lectio divina*, or sacred reading, is a practice from early Christian fathers and mothers that teaches a disciplined approach to hearing a word from God in a specific text and responding to it in obedience.

⁴ A helpful book on group spiritual direction is Rose Mary Dougherty, *Group Spiritual Direction: Community for Discernment* (New York: Paulist Pr., 1995). An accompanying video is also available.

⁵ Also useful are these titles: Suzanne G. Farnham, Joseph P. Gill, R. Taylor McLean, and Susan M. Ward, *Listening Hearts: Discerning Call in Community* (Harrisburg: Morehouse Pub., 1991); Luke Timothy Johnson, *Scripture & Discernment: Decision Making in the Church*, rev. ed. (Nashville: Abingdon, 1996); and George D. McClain, *Claiming All Things for God: Prayer, Discernment, and Ritual for Social Change* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1998).

⁶ Several other important titles are Ernest Boyer, Jr., *Finding God at Home: Family Life as Spiritual Discipline* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1988); Anne Broyles, *Growing Together in Love: God Known through Family Life* (Nashville: Upper Room Bks., 1993); Mary Anne McPherson Oliver, *Conjugal Spirituality: The Primacy of Mutual Love in*

Christian Tradition (Kansas City, Mo.: Sheed & Ward, 1994); Sara Wenger Shenk, *Coming Home: A Thoughtful Resource for Fathers, Mothers, and the Rebirth of the Family* (Intercourse, Pa.: Good Bks. PA, 1992); and Wendy Wright, *Sacred Dwelling: A Spirituality of Family Life* (New York: Crossroad NY, 1989).