

HIGH – our relationship with God (spiritual formation and practice)

RESOURCES

INTERNET

- **CRG (Congregational Resource Guide)**, <http://congregationalresources.org/> A wonderful project of the [Alban Institute](#), and [Lilly Endowment Inc.](#) and a free gift to America's Congregations. The abundance of resources available for congregations and their leaders can be overwhelming. CRG constantly sifts and mines these materials for those that demonstrate a high likelihood for usefulness in congregational life. The site strives to point leaders to materials that can assist congregation's becoming healthy bodies of worship and agents of transformation in their communities. Categories include CARE (for neighbor, congregations, clergy); DISCOVER (education, spirituality, traditions); ENGAGE (congregation, community, future); MANAGE (facilities, technology, finances) WORSHIP (sermons, styles, music). Resources include books, podcasts, programs, links, blogs, etc.
- **God Pause Daily Devotions**, Luther Seminary. http://www.luthersem.edu/godpause/daily_view.aspx God Pause email devotions are short, meaningful reflections on the following Sunday's lessons and gospel delivered directly to your email box. Also, these can be a good preparation for an extra meaningful worship experience.
- **Practicing Our Faith**, <http://www.practicingourfaith.org/> Valparaiso Project on the Education and Formation of People in Faith, a project whose purpose is to develop resources to help contemporary people live the Christian faith with vitality and integrity in changing times. The Project is ecumenical in orientation and appreciative of the legacies of a range of Christian traditions.
- **Pray as you go**, <http://www.pray-as-you-go.org/> A daily 10-12 minute podcast for individuals that includes music, scripture, and reflection questions by Jesuit Media Initiatives – British Province of the Society of Jesus
- **Prayer Resources – ELCA**, <http://archive.elca.org/prayer/resources.html> Practical suggestions, programs, and tools to develop and enrich prayer in the congregation and lives of members.
- **Sacred Space: your daily prayer on line**, <http://www.sacredspace.ie/> A daily offering of centering thoughts, scripture reading, reflection prompts, and blessing offered by the Irish Jesuits
- **Seven Faith Practices**, <http://www.elca.org/Growing-In-Faith/Discipleship/Christian-Education/Discipleship/7-Faith-Practices.aspx> Followers of Jesus are inspired to develop practices and patterns for living that characterize a life that is devoted to daily discipleship. This ELCA resource offers seven common practices that have been identified as key to model and nurture. Also: <http://www.elca.org/Growing-In-Faith/Discipleship/Christian-Education/Discipleship.aspx>
- **Spirituality and Practice**, <http://www.spiritualityandpractice.com/> This multifaith and interspiritual website, founded by former contributors to The Lutheran magazine Frederic and Mary Ann Brussat, is devoted to resources for spiritual journeys. The site's name reflects a basic understanding: *spirituality* and *practice* are the two places where all the world's religions and spiritual paths come together.
- **Soul café** <http://www.soulcafe.org/home> Soul cafe is an online resource that enables communication and collaboration within the Church. It is a place to initiate ongoing and vital discussions after meetings and event, sharing what works and doesn't work in congregations and ministries, and breaking down "silos" of communication. Soul cafe offers an archive that can be mined to provide insight for solutions to current and future challenges. There is a "High, Deep, and Wide" group at: <http://www.soulcafe.org/group/high-deep-and-wide>

BOOKS

- **A Spirituality of Service: Reflections on a life-long journey of faith and work among the world's poor**, Jerry Aker. "What do you get when you cross a seasoned international development professional with a spiritual director? Jerry Aker. His book combines journal reflections with commentary on the life of faith in a narrative that is both engaging and inspiring." Each chapter includes life stories; a reflection; scripture; and questions for meditation. The author worked for Lutheran World Relief, Heifer International, Agros International, and Church World Service and lives in Montana.
- **Spiritual Disciplines Handbook: Practices That Transform Us**, Ahlberg, Adelle, Calhoun IVP Books. While the word *discipline* may make us want to run and hide, the author shows how desires and discipline work together to lead an enriched faith. Instead of just giving information *about* spiritual disciplines, this *Handbook* is full of practical, accessible guidance that helps you actually *do* them. Includes suggestions for group use.
- **Practicing Our Faith: A Way of Life for a Searching People**, Dorothy Bass, Jossey-Bass. Helps take belief out of the realm of theory and shows how to live it out in a series of twelve central practices such as hospitality, forgiveness, healing, testimony, and keeping Sabbath. Designed to work across a wide range of Christian laypeople, leaders, denominations, and study groups. A study guide is available for download from the Practicing our Faith website.
- **The Breath of the Soul: reflections on prayer**, Joan Chittister, Twenty-Third Publications. A simple little book from a Benedictine nun and author. Suitable for individual use or easily divided into a 6-8 week group study and reflection. Forty-two short reflections on preparing for and engaging in prayer. After each reflection is a suggested daily "mantra" and scripture passage.
- **Grounded in Prayer: A Small Group Training Guide for Congregational Prayer**, Dahlseng, Brent W., Augsburg Fortress Pub. 2003. Explores how the Holy Spirit works in hearts to break up the hardened soil of the path, unseat the rocks of distraction, uproot the thorns and thistles of the world, and plant the seed of faith deeply into good soil. This study covers six themes: 1.The Groundwork for Prayer 2.Sharpening your personal tools for prayer 3.Praying for the hardened path 4.Praying for the rocky ground 5.Praying for the thorny ground 6.Blessing the good soil provides daily prayer exercises for each of the six weeks.
- **Celebration of Discipline: the path to spiritual growth**, Richard Foster, HarperSanFrancisco. A classic, yet still useful, guide to various aspects of spiritual practice. There is also a helpful study guide available, Richard J. Foster's Study Guide for Celebration of Discipline, HarperOne.
- **Finding Our Way Again: The Return of the Ancient Practices**, McLaren, Brian, Thomas Nelson. A guide to a wide variety of ancient spiritual practices and disciplines, showing how they form character and help persons experience God and one another in new ways. Chapters end with reflection questions and suggested practices.
- **Naked Spirituality: A Life with God in 12 Simple Words**, Brian D. McLaren, Harper One. A four-stage framework for understanding the spiritual life, with spiritual practices appropriate to each stage. Each practice is rooted in a simple word: *here, thanks, O, sorry, help, please, when, no, why, behold, yes, and silence*. Accessible, practical book for living a spiritual life. Includes suggestions for group use/involvement.
- **Living Grace: Spiritual Growth in the Everyday World**, Martie McMane, Marlin Press. Practical help for spiritual growth and living a positive effective life. Using the wisdom of Jesus and compelling stories, twelve personal covenants are shared to promote a more grace-filled life. Includes ideas for journaling, self-reflection, meditation, prayer, and scripture reading. Suitable for individual or group use.
- **Spiritual Formation: Following the Movements of the Spirit**, Henri J. M. Nouwen, Harper One. Advice on how to live out the five classical stages of spiritual development. Featuring a unique *visio divina* to help guide and focus prayer. A "how to" on moving from the mind to the heart and living in God. Chapters end with exercises for spiritual formation and reflection questions.
- **The Contemplative Pastor: Returning to the Art of Spiritual Direction**, Eugene H. Peterson, Eerdmans. A book for pastors who want and need to get back to the basics. Addresses themes such as curing souls, praying with eyes open, the language of prayer, the ministry of small talk, all illustrated with engaging personal anecdotes.
- **Unbinding Your Soul: your experiment in prayer and community**, Martha Grace Reese, Chalice Press. A part of a Lily funded experiment in evangelism/outreach. Prepares church members to invite others to a small group experience in study, reflection, and exercises in prayer.

- **Soul Feast: An Invitation to the Christian Spiritual Life**, Marjorie J. Thompson, WJK Press. Offers a framework for understanding spiritual disciplines and instruction for developing and nurturing those practices for individual reflection and group study by a Presbyterian minister and the director of Pathways Center for Spiritual Leadership at Upper Room ministries.
- **A Praying Congregation: The Art of Teaching Spiritual Practice**, Jane Vennard, Alban Inst. The book offers not only particular prayer forms, but also tools and processes that foster a safe environment for dialogue about prayer. It explores ways leaders can help people recall their earliest memories of prayer, express their beliefs about prayer, and examine their theologies of the God to whom they pray. The book includes lots of activities, discovery questions, and lists of further resources. (From CRG website). Vennard is a UCC pastor, teaches courses on prayer and spirituality at the Iliff School of Theology, Denver, is also a spiritual director and retreat leader, and a contributor to the Lutheran Magazine.

OTHER

- **Communal Sabbath: One Churches Annual Practice of Rest** – Congregational Resource Guide, Adam and Amy Rohler/Bethesda Covenant Church, New York City. For three Sundays in August, their congregants are invited to visit other churches, to pray and meditate on their relationships with God, and to reflect on God's vision for their won congregation. (Article from CRG website).
- **Confirmation Prayer Experience – Immanuel Lutheran/Missoula**. To increase the practice of prayer Pastor Aprille Jordan has for the last 10 years closed confirmation evening studies in the sanctuary. The 15 minute experience begins with a breathing/relaxation technique to quiet the body/mind. Then a portion of scripture is read slowly (sometimes moving into lectio, other times into 10 minutes of centering prayer). The experience closes with a spoken prayer and all depart in silence in the peace of Christ. "It always amazes me how much these hyper students love this, as well as the adults...and tell me it's their favorite part of confirmation. My main goal was to teach them to listen to God, to be still...as prayer."
- **"God Sightings" – Faith Lutheran/Lander,Wy**. As a part of worship the congregation sets aside time for "God Sightings" in which people are invited share experiences and/or events where they have seen God at work. Participation is very good and the congregation responds well to this.
- **Lifelong Faith and Faith Formation 2020/Lorie Hughes, King of Glory/Billings, Secretary/Historian of LACE (Lutheran Association for Christian Educators)**. <http://www.faithformation2020.net/> LifelongFaith Associates is committed to helping congregations develop lifelong faith formation for all ages and generations. Part of this includes the Faith Formation 2020 Initiative <http://www.faithformation2020.net/> This offers the vision, tools, and resources for designing new models, practices, strategies, and activities to address the spiritual and religious needs for today and into the future. Both websites are rich in materials for spiritual formation, discipleship, and outreach. Lots of good stuff on these sites from Roman Catholic educator and innovator John Roberto.
- **Living Liturgy Workshop**, <http://www.livingliturgy.com/> The Living Liturgy weekend was conceived as an opportunity for Lutheran worship leaders to experience and study and reflect on ways to help their communities pray with power, integrity and meaning. The workshop seeks to recover, renew, and enliven the worship of the church, while strengthening the connections between the life of the worshipping community and our life of faith in the world.
- **Renovare'**, <http://www.renovare.us/> A program that seeks to resource, fuel, model, and advocate more intentional living and spiritual formation among Christians and those wanting a deeper connection with God. A foundational presence in the spiritual formation movement for over 20 years, Renovaré is Christian in commitment, ecumenical in breadth, and international in scope. A recent resource is: **25 Books Every Christian Should Read: A Guide to the Essential Spiritual Classics**, which chronologically works from Athanasius to Henri Nouwen, providing historical background for each work or its author, a justification for why that work is essential, guidelines for reading the selection, an excerpt, and discussion or reflection questions that can be used by individuals or small groups.

- **Spiritual Formation Program - Northridge Lutheran Church/ Kalispell.** Over the past 20 years NLC has been involved in an intentional spiritual formation process. In fact, numerous small groups who have met weekly for as long as 19 years for the purpose of spiritual formation. The process begins with the pastor doing an orientation of 6-8 sessions. From that group, small groups are formed – NLC has found that 5-6 people is an ideal group size. The Spiritual Formation Groups are equipped with a plan and resources that take about two years to work on in order to build a good foundation. The groups are built upon a foundation of practicing the classic spiritual disciplines, such as prayer, meditation, scripture, worship, and service. The groups offer support, guidance, companionship, and accountability for a spiritual journey. They often serve as discernment groups. These small groups provide a place for people to deeply share the most important things of their lives as they seek to be disciples of Jesus Christ. Perhaps the "success" of these groups is best measured by the longevity of and commitment to the spiritual formation process for the long haul.