

**Teaching Spiritual Practice:
An Experiential Approach to Christian Formation and Parish
Development**

Education Designs in the Anglican Tradition

**For Use with *In Your Holy Spirit: Traditional Spiritual Practices in Today's Christian
Life***

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Experiential Education and Spiritual Development

The educational designs presented here come from work done by Robert Gallagher and myself with both lay people and clergy in the Episcopal Church. Our intention is to help parish leaders develop effective methods to connect with parishioners about spiritual life, to deepen individual spiritual life, and to nurture the overall health of the parish by attending to the church's primary task: the formation of Christians.

We offer an approach that combines opportunities to learn about spiritual practice, to experience various expressions of those practices, and to participate in structured opportunities to reflect on those experiences. Experiences coupled with *structured opportunities for reflection* on that experience are the primary elements of experiential education.

*Seven whole days not
one in seven I will praise
thee; e'en eternity's too
short to extol thee. .*

George Herbert

In our work with both parish churches, and with participants in Shaping the Parish™ and the Church Development Institute, we are frequently reminded that an experiential approach is neither commonly used nor easily understood by those charged with creating and overseeing the parish's formation efforts. At the same time, we believe that what we are proposing is both more effective and, in many cases, easier to implement and maintain than traditional "Christian Education" programs.

To that end, we will provide some descriptions of experiential and participatory/reflective education contrasted with other methods. Keep in mind that other approaches, including what we describe as the conventional "Sunday Forum," are not bad or "wrong." Similarly, poorly thought out, sloppily designed, or simply irrelevant experiential and participatory offerings won't do magic. We do, though, think that experiential approaches are on the whole more effective in achieving our desired outcomes: namely, building the competence of the congregation for spiritual practice, and tilting the overall tone and climate of the parish toward health and maturity.

These designs include a mix of didactic presentation, participatory material, reflection on prior events, and some experiential elements.

What is Experiential Education?

The following principles of experiential education practice are excerpted from the Association for Experiential Education. See <http://www.aee.org> for more information.

- Experiential learning occurs when carefully chosen experiences are supported by reflection, critical analysis and synthesis.

- Experiences are structured to require the learner to take initiative, make decisions and be accountable for results.
- Throughout the experiential learning process, the learner is actively engaged in posing questions, investigating, experimenting, being curious, solving problems, assuming responsibility, being creative, and constructing meaning.
- Learners are engaged intellectually, emotionally, socially, soulfully and/or physically. This involvement produces a perception that the learning task is authentic.
- The results of the learning are personal and form the basis for future experience and learning.
- The educator’s primary roles include setting suitable experiences, posing problems, setting boundaries, supporting learners, insuring physical and emotional safety, and facilitating the learning process.

Formation and Culture

The principles above strike me as particularly suited to the culture and strengths of the Episcopal Church. They assume an adult approach to learning, an acceptance of ambiguity, willingness to question, acknowledgement of different outcomes and understandings within a common frame of reference, and engagement of the whole person.

In experiential education, the leader offers “carefully chosen experiences supported by reflection, critical analysis and synthesis.” The nature of the experience and the nature of the reflection are central—you don’t just do any old thing simply to have an experience. The experience becomes the basis for subsequent reflection, and it should be constructed with enough weight and with enough connection to the desired outcomes that the reflection will be meaningful.

Similarly, the practices of the Episcopal Church are central to its life—we care deeply about worship, our tradition, about our ways of being, but the typical Episcopal parish is likely to accept a wide range of approaches, individual practices, beliefs, and opinions from its members. The parish church creates a structured container for worship and allows those participating to bring their entire selves to the experience—to be shaped, challenged, and nurtured in the Spirit by those experiences.

In contrast, what most of us are familiar with in many of our educational experiences, whether in school, at work, or at church, is the “transmission” view of education. This involves an approach that assumes the teacher has the answers and that the teacher can unilaterally transmit those answers to the learner. There is an underlying assumption that the learner is a kind of empty vessel who will be filled up by what the teacher is able to transmit. By its nature, learning under this scenario is highly dependent on the teacher and

For the fully Christian life is a Eucharistic life: that is, a natural life conformed to the pattern of Jesus, given in its wholeness to God, laid on His altar as a sacrifice of love, and consecrated, transformed by His inpouring life, to be used to give life and food to other souls.

Evelyn Underhill

that may foster passivity in the learner, while possibly inhibiting experimentation or exploration by the learner.

When it comes to spiritual life, experimentation is a good thing—especially experimentation based on a system or map of spiritual life, and accompanied by coaching in spiritual practice—and it is crucial for the parishioner to take responsibility for his or her own spiritual development. We hope to provide you with ways to encourage individual responsibility and openness to exploration, while developing real competence in spiritual practice.

Conventional— Presentation	Participatory with Reflection and some Presentation	Mix of Experiential and Participatory Elements with some Presentation
<p>Offer a Sunday Forum lecture about the three-fold rule of prayer. Provide some history on the Benedictine Tradition, as well as the Anglican approach to Scripture, Reason, and Tradition. Provide some Q&A time. Approximately 1 hour.</p>	<p>Offer a Sunday Forum presentation about the three-fold rule of prayer. Have participants brainstorm on newsprint forms of spiritual practice they have engaged in. Then have them mark the two or three that have sustained them over time. Have participants talk in groups of 2-4 about what has been helpful to them in their spiritual life—based on their own personality and inclinations. What has been more challenging? Close with discussion of spiritual maps rather than assorted practices, the idea of structuring one’s spiritual life to provide a mix of nurture vs stretch. Approximately 1.5 to 2 hours.</p>	<p>Provide relatively brief information on Eucharist, Office, and Personal Devotions and have participants try associated practices. (Note: We’re not suggesting you do all of this! There are many ways to engage this.) Examples: Have a mini Gospel procession and have the participants read along in the service leaflet while the Gospel is read. Then do it again and this time have them set down the leaflet and focus on the reader. Reflect on the two experiences: What do participants notice? How were the two experiences different? Conduct a short <i>lectio divina</i> and debrief with participants about what came up for them. Consider different ways to say the Office (e.g., shorter forms, book vs iPhone) and agree to try that for the next week. Then provide a structured opportunity to reflect on the experience: What did I do? What happened? How did I feel? Is there something I might do differently next time? Offer comments, as appropriate, to provide context or ideas about how to approach/engage elements. 3 sessions of about 1.5 hours each.</p>

Be aware of the difference between content and method. The examples above start with the same overarching content—the threefold rule of prayer. They then use didactic, participatory and experiential methods to deliver that content.

Also be aware that use of participatory and experiential methods is no guarantee of depth. Similarly, lectures can be powerful, illuminating, and moving. We do not believe the parish church is primarily an educational organization, and we are not interested in advocating method for the sake of method. Rather, our interest is in pursuing a formation strategy for

the parish church that is predicated on building the Apostolic Core¹—of increasing the competence and commitment of a critical mass of parishioners at the center. We hope to ground the system “in a mission orientation and an organizational culture that supports the mission”—namely, spiritual formation and renewal of baptismal identity².

We are convinced that more participatory and experiential approaches to spiritual life and practice are some of our most effective and accessible ways to pursue that mission. We hope this will serve as a valuable resource to you in bringing formation to life in your own parish.

Design Principles

- Keep the objectives in mind—what are you trying to accomplish? Does your design support those objectives? If building competence, are you teaching participants how to *do something*? Instead of *telling* people how to genuflect or perform a solemn bow and explaining when they should do it, instead demonstrate it for them, and then have them try it themselves. Let them try it again. Don’t just talk about the Office; provide options for saying it and help members actually do it.
- Avoid “talk-talk.” Beware of long presentations, lectures, and excessive focus on the leader. While you may be a wonderful and erudite speaker, if the program is more about you talking and less about the participants doing and reflecting, *this program will necessarily be diminished*. Challenge yourself to step out of the role of “expert” and into the role of “guide” or “facilitator.”
- Less is often more.
- Incorporate images and quotations to evoke different takes on spiritual life.
- Fleshing things out with background theory and theology can be very helpful, but try to have presentation sections *follow* the experience/reflection parts. It may seem counter-intuitive, but the fact is that the theology of the Church comes fully alive when we have actually experienced worship, prayer, community or service, and can connect the theory to practice.
- Provide ways to engage both introverts and extraverts. For example, if asking reflection questions, have participants take a few minutes to write down the answers on their own. Then have them get into small groups (2-4) to discuss their responses.
- Design with an eye toward *accepting* people where they are and *inviting* them to go deeper.
- Use newsprint, both to present key points during a presentation, and to record the ideas of participants. This helps ensure that information is communicated clearly and allows people to feel heard.
- Check your own biases and avoid the tendency to impose “shoulds.” Also avoid the countervailing tendency to suggest that people should do “whatever feels

¹ See The Shape of the Parish Model. From Robert Gallagher’s *Fill All Things: The Dynamics of Spirituality in the Parish Church*, for more information. Ascension Press © 2008.

² See The Renewal—Apostolate Cycle. *Ibid.*

comfortable.” The spiritual life requires both nurture and challenge, but judgment doesn’t usually lead anywhere productive. A more useful approach is to be clear about the tradition and help people reflect on their own lives through the lens of that tradition.

- Do dry runs. Try what you’ve designed and see if it works. Pay attention to how much time things take—consider eliminating the leader’s talking and substituting opportunities for the participants to talk.
- If you keep running up against time constraints, ask yourself whether you need more dates and more time. To provide enough depth and enough time to develop competence, you may need to offer additional sessions or narrow the scope of what you’re doing (e.g., offer a single session after Mass on Practices During the Eucharist, rather than trying to combine Eucharist, Office, and Reflection into one).

Basic Structures & Offerings

The designs that follow can be used as a Lenten Program, a Newcomers Orientation, the basis for a weekend retreat, and as a regular formation offering in the parish that provides an introduction to spiritual life. A central tenet is that each parish needs to provide regular opportunities for parishioners—both new and longer-term—to reflect on their spiritual lives, to deepen their spiritual practice, and to build competence in the spiritual life.

We encourage you to re-think your programs and formation efforts in light of the parish’s real purpose—to renew its members in baptismal identity.

What does this look like in practical terms? Let’s use the example of Newcomers Classes:

- ***Less or none of this:*** A Newcomers Class that provides a history of the Episcopal Church, some vaguely defensive remarks about Henry VIII, our kooky terminology, and some commentary on Scripture, Reason, and Tradition.
- ***Much more of this:*** Invite them to a several-session course in Anglican Spiritual Practice. Teach them about the Eucharist, the Office, Reflection, participation in Community, and Service in daily life. *Coach them* in how to participate in the Eucharist, how to say the Office.

It is, of course, important to allow people an opportunity to ask their questions—they may really want to know about the split with Rome, or about what a narthex is. There is also value in figuring out ways to orient people about the parish’s culture and ways of being. Nonetheless, *the focus of formation efforts should be around spiritual life.*

One idea is to combine a social time with some opportunity for more casual Q&A. This is great as long as there are *also* in-depth spiritual practice sessions. The problem in most of our parishes is that we simply don’t create the opportunities to learn about and develop skill with spiritual practice.

Keep your attention on the primary task, on *forming people in Christ.*

Following are variations on the basic format:

1. A Sunday forum “intro” to spiritual practice based on a “map” or system of spiritual life.
2. A single session (approximately 2 hours) to help parishioners reflect on their own spiritual practice (Rule of Life). Could be used each year as preparation for Lent.
3. A 5-session Anglican Spirituality Course. This can be used as a Lenten Program, a form of Newcomers’ Orientation, and a regular offering in the parish as an introduction to spiritual life. Each session about 1.5 hours long. Designs assume participants have read the associated chapter from *IYHS: Traditional Spiritual Practices in Today’s Christian Life* prior to attending the session.

Note that the different formats require greater or lesser commitment from the participants and may provide alternative pathways in for parishioners at various places in their own spiritual journeys. A five-session course, for example, may be offered on weekday evenings. You will get fewer participants than if you offered a shorter course right after coffee hour, but you will also attract those ready to go deeper.

At the same time, a shorter post-coffee hour introduction to spiritual practices with some basic information about spiritual practice may be attended by a good sized crowd, and you will have planted some seeds.

It’s really not about the numbers. Helping a few members move from a more tentative or immature spiritual life to a Progressing Sacramental or Apostolic life has power far beyond what the count would indicate. The majority will never demand Apostolic spirituality, never seek out an Apostolic climate—they will choose comfort over challenge, certainty over mystery, familiarity over awe and wonder. It’s just the way it is and it’s not a bad thing. Our job as parish leaders is to *both* accept people where they are *and* invite them to go deeper. Some will accept your invitation.

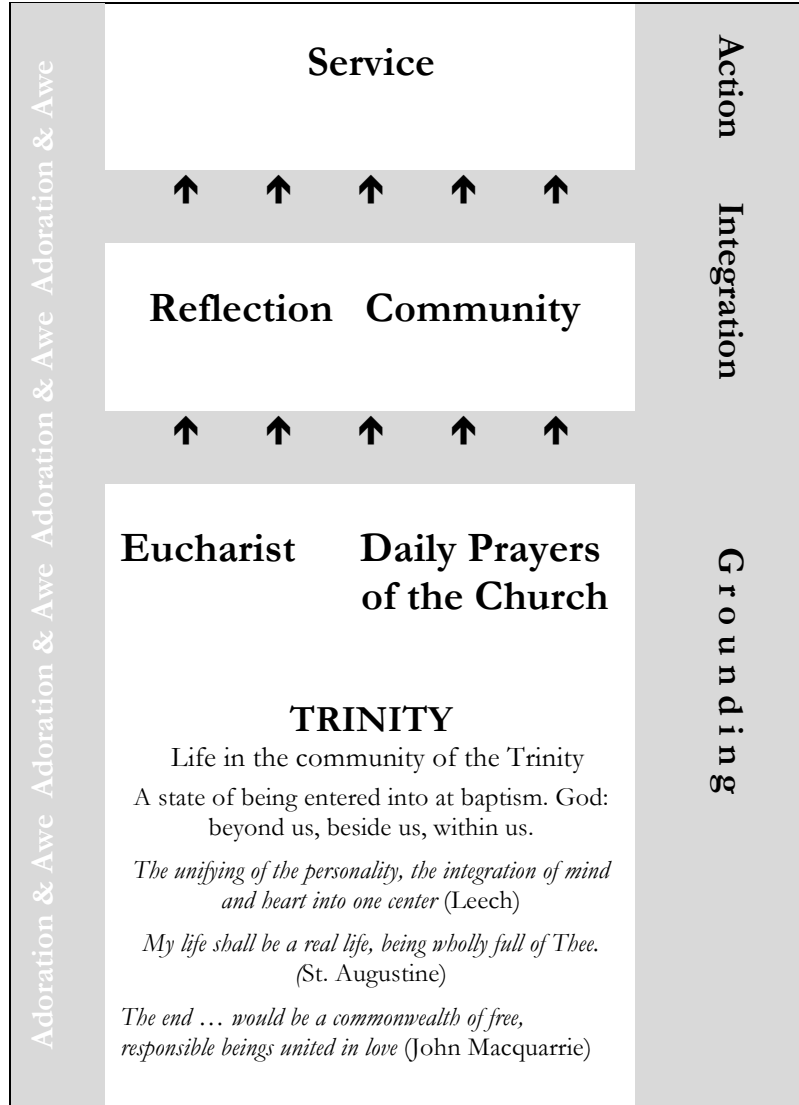
We assume that you could use these basic designs repeatedly by offering sessions each year and varying the emphasis or focus. Keep offering opportunities for parishioners to learn about and deepen their spiritual practice and *spend less energy and time* on providing presentations or forum topics that are (1) outside our tradition; (2) relatively superficial; or (3) that encourage a “smorgasbord,” or “pick a random practice” approach to religious life. Focus formation on offerings that will help parishioners live by Rule, not rules, and that will provide a balance of nurture and stretch.

All of the designs provided here assume the use of the Spiritual Practices Map from *In Your Holy Spirit: Traditional Spiritual Practices in Today’s Christian Life*, and Robert Gallagher’s *In Your Holy Spirit: Shaping the Parish Through Spiritual Practice*. There are also a number of questions and exercises that appear at the end of each chapter in *IYHS: Traditional Spiritual*

Practices in Today's Christian Life. These were created with both group and individual reflection in mind and should provide some more ideas for the content of your own sessions. The Anglican Spirituality sessions assume the participants have read the corresponding chapter.

A Map: Spiritual Practices

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Design #1:

A Sunday Morning Introduction to Spiritual Practice

Use and Purpose: This can be used at the beginning of Lent as a yearly opportunity to reflect on the individual's spiritual practice and to orient the parish more generally to both the Anglican tradition and to the idea of spiritual practice as a system. May help build "readiness" in the congregation for more work around spiritual practice and maturity.

Time: Approximately 1 hour.

Handout: Spiritual Practices Map. Possibly offer cards with shortened form of Office, or other resources for saying Office on one's own.

1. Set up the session for a space where there is enough room for those gathered to move around, as well as space to sit.
2. Set up chairs in a semi-circle/U-shaped arrangement. Place newsprint and easel at the front of the space. Make sure you have chisel-point, dark markers so whatever you write is visible.
3. Write the names of the five spiritual practices on five pieces of paper (8 ½" x 11"). Place them on the floor in the same basic layout as the Spiritual Practices Map. Again, you will need space for the participants to move around so leave enough room.
4. Provide brief information on the spiritual practices—use newsprint. Present the Map, the notion of a system—Weekly Practice/Eucharist & Daily Practice/Office for grounding; Community & Reflection for integration; and expressed in action as Service. All of these rest on the base of life in the community of the Trinity—a state of being entered into at baptism. God: beyond us, beside us, within us. Spend a bit more time on the practices you think might be less familiar. Provide brief comments that may help the participants see what has been familiar with fresh eyes.
(Approximately 15-20 minutes for overview)

Examples of information to include in overview:

Eucharist—Weekly Practice. There are three primary ways we join in the Holy Eucharist: Be Present, Participate and Engage. The most important of these is to simply be present. "We exist to participate in the life and glory of God and it is in the Eucharist that life is focused and actualized." "To accept that the essential act is being there is an act of humility. It is also a statement that you have grown up enough to realize that it is foolish to allow your passing feelings to control your spiritual life."³

Office—Daily Practice. Note the pervasive pattern of daily and weekly practice in many religions. Discuss the fact that the Office is the prayers of the Church, not our

³From *IYHS: Shaping the Parish Through Spiritual Practice*, by Robert Gallagher.

own prayers—even when said alone, we say them with the faithful all over the world, and throughout the centuries. The Office is always *common* prayer. Read a quote from a spiritual writer about the Office (e.g., Evelyn Underhill, Kenneth Leech).⁴

Reflection—Inner Silence and Stillness. Reflection is about “listening to your life,” it is “a focused lens through which the individual considers his or her life as formed by the worship and doctrine of the Christian faith.” “As the collect has it, ‘we are placed among things which are passing away,’ and we are ‘to hold fast to those that shall endure.’ Sorting one from the other is the work of Reflection.”⁵ Reflection is personal—the ways that will prove effective for us will come out of our own personalities and preferences and will vary widely. Examples: walking, spending time with friends, therapy, spiritual direction, saying the rosary, journaling.

Community. “The parish community is a gift of God. It’s a pathway into communion with God and our sisters and brothers. In that community we can come to know and love God, become friends of God and one another.” Christianity is fundamentally communal. The notion of “believing but not belonging” just doesn’t fly. Mention some images of community that go beyond idealized concepts. “A place where we can fight with those we love.” “God has so ordained things that we grow in faith only through the frail instrumentality of one another.” (John of the Cross) The community is where we grow into the full stature of Christ—where we submit both to communal listening processes and the sources of authority accepted by the community. Where we learn to be both fully ourselves and part of something bigger than we are.

Service. Be sure you are conversant with the Renewal-Apostolate Cycle (Robert Gallagher—*Fill All Things*, and also discussed in *IYHS: Traditional Spiritual Practices in Today’s Christian Life*.) Cover the Apostolate of daily life—that for most Christians, their service occurs in the routine circumstances of daily life—with family, friends, at work, and in civic life. It doesn’t take place solely “at church” or when providing direct assistance to the poor. To the extent we have become the light of Christ—a process nurtured by the other four practices—we will be the light of Christ in our daily life.

5. After describing the practices, tell people to go over by the pieces of paper on the floor. Mention that growing in the spiritual life involves a combination of nurturing our gifts—doing those things that come easy, that feed us—and stretching in some areas that are more challenging. Let people know that they’re going to have two opportunities to pick a practice that nurtures them. Ask them to pick the practice they are most drawn to, the one that feeds them most easily. Have each person

⁴ See pg 173 *Fill All Things: The Dynamics of Spirituality in the Parish Church*, Robert Gallagher.

⁵ From *IYHS: Traditional Spiritual Practices in Today’s Christian Life*, Michelle Heyne.

physically stand by the piece of paper associated with that practice—e.g. Eucharist, Community, etc.

6. Depending on the numbers, you can either have people talk together about the practice they're all standing in: E.g., those standing in Eucharist talk together in response to the question, How does it feed you? Or, if there are fewer people (or only one person in some of the practices) individuals can share one-by-one with the rest of the group. Invite people to share what they want to share but don't pressure them.
7. Ask participants to move to the practice that they are *next* most drawn to. Repeat above process.
8. Ask participants to move to the practice they find most challenging. Share what they notice—what about it is more challenging? Does this connect to other areas of their lives they find difficult?
9. Depending on time, give the participants an opportunity to comment on anything they noticed in follow-up.
10. Depending on time, make some follow-up observations as appropriate. One example: Often introverts are drawn to Reflection, extraverts to Community. It's important to nurture our gifts while engaging some more challenging areas. Extraverts might find it very difficult to create silence and stillness, while introverts may struggle to go to coffee hour. Both Community and Reflection are important elements of a well-developed spiritual life.
11. 10-15 minutes before ending: Have participants return to the circle. Ask them to take a few minutes to write down their thoughts about what they might do during Lent—what practice could they take on, either deepen or stretch? Is there something they might try that would nurture an existing gift?

Design #2:

Lenten Preparation: Reflection on Spiritual Life

Use and Purpose: May be used annually in connection with the Ash Wednesday invitation to “observe a holy Lent.” An opportunity to reflect more deeply on spiritual life and practice and to begin to develop a Rule of Life.

Time: Approximately 1.5 hours, most likely in the evening.

Handouts/Materials: Spiritual Practices Map, Lenten Assessment. Worksheets: Balancing Life by the Rule & Creating Your Spiritual Discipline Worksheet, and Establishing a Rule of Life based on the Christian Life Model. (The Map and Assessment are included in this document; the remaining handouts and worksheets appear in *IYHS: Traditional Spiritual Practices in Today’s Christian Life*, pp 111-120.)

Have either Prayer Books or cards with the Compline service (or other simplified form of Office) printed on them.

*It is possible to think about Lent as an invitation to denial, as a way of eliminating our faults through forms of starvation:
If we don’t feed it, it will die.*

But I think the Anglican approach to Lent is more one of welcoming an opportunity to move closer to God, to grow into the full stature of Christ, and to remove the impediments that we come across on that journey. Lent provides us a chance to look at those impediments clearly and to be reassured that God will help us move them.

Design Notes: Times indicated are approximate. Will depend mostly on number of participants, and on how interested participants are in talking together. Give priority to participant sharing/reflection over leader talking, and give priority to completing the worksheets and deciding what to do for Lent over both participants and leader talking. It’s a good idea to pick a time to start completing the worksheets and stick to that.

1. Introduction. Welcome, brief overview of evening. (3 minutes)
2. Spiritual Practices Lenten Assessment. (7-10 minutes to complete)
3. After the assessment is completed, have participants answer the following questions. Give them an opportunity to respond on their own, in writing. (5-10 minutes)
 - a) Did one of the spiritual practices assessed strike you as less well-developed than the others? If so, which one?
 - b) In the exercise where you circled and underlined parts of the Ash Wednesday liturgy, did anything in particular strike you?
 - c) What, if anything, seems more familiar to you: to feel drawn in by the words of the liturgy or to feel put off?

4. Get into twos or threes, depending on group size. Invite participants to share what they would like to about responses to the questions. (15-20 minutes)
5. Return to large group. Provide presentation on Lenten traditions and the Anglican approach. (10-15 minutes)
 - Observe the Church's traditions—Eucharist, Daily Prayers, Personal Prayers or Reflection. (See Design #1 for ideas about discussing the practices). Use a systematic approach to spiritual life, develop a Rule of Life.
 - Go over the Church's traditions about Lent:
 - a) Fasting
 - b) Additional prayer and self-examination
 - c) Confession
 - d) Spiritual reading
 - Invite questions, comments, observations.
6. *Begin this part at least 35 minutes before ending time.* Have worksheets available. Establishing a Rule of Life based on the Christian Life Model and Balancing Life by the Rule & Creating Your Spiritual Discipline. Explain that participants should take a look at these two options and pick the one that seems most helpful. (20-25 minutes)
7. Come back to large group. Debrief as people want to share what they've decided to do. (5 minutes)
8. End with Compline. (10 minutes) Note: Depending on what time of day this is offered, you might choose instead to end with a shortened form of Morning or Evening Prayer or with the Noontday Office.

Assessing Your Spiritual Practices—Lenten Reflection

Sunday Eucharist

1. Attendance (circle one)

About 1/4 of the time Half the time ¾ of the time Just about every
Sunday

2. My ability to participate (Circle the number that is closest to your experience)

I am frequently
confused and
uncertain about how
to participate.

I can “flow” with it. I
mostly don’t need a
Prayer Book or leaflet.

1 2 3 4 5

Participating in the Daily Prayers of the Church

3. Doing the Office in some form on my own or with others

Never. Only when offered at a
meeting or retreat. Sporadically or at during
some season(s) of the church
year. Most days.

4. Knowing how to do the Daily Office

I have no idea.

I understand how to use
it in the Prayer Book and
ways to innovate the use.

1 2 3 4 5

Disciplined ways of reflecting [“Listen to your life”]

Grounding/centering yourself so you can reflect. The spiritual practice of “pondering” and seeking God’s presence in the people, circumstances and things of life. Practices that connect daily life to God. May include self-examination and repentance, petition, intercession, thanksgiving, and praise or adoration.

5. Ways that work for me

I don’t have ways
that work for me.

I have ways that are
effective for me.

1 2 3 4 5

Participating in the parish community

6. The community I seek is one in which people are free to be themselves; to speak and listen fully and authentically. In which differences are accepted (we can fight with those we love). In which we can make decisions and solve the problems we face.

I don't want church to be that way.

It is what I seek; and more.

1

2

3

4

5

7. Connection with people

I don't know anyone well.

I know a number of people and have a few friends in the parish.

1

2

3

4

5

8. Participation in parish social life

Not at all.

I participate regularly and frequently.

1

2

3

4

5

The process of spiritual growth

9. Foundations

I have a poor foundation in the spiritual practices of the church.

I have a strong foundation in the spiritual practices of the church.

1

2

3

4

5

10. Experiment

I don't know how or feel confident enough to experiment with spiritual practices.

I have a sense of how to innovate & experiment with spiritual practices.

1

2

3

4

5

11. Rule of Life

My spiritual life is not based on pattern or Rule.

I have an established Rule of life that serves my current and developing spiritual growth.

1

2

3

4

5

Service

12. In Daily Life—with family and friends, at work, in civic life, in day-to-day interactions

I don't have a clear understanding of how I serve in my daily life.

I am very clear about serving in daily life.

1

2

3

4

5

Part II.

Read the following passage from the Ash Wednesday liturgy. As you read, **circle** words and phrases you are most drawn to. **Underline** words and phrases that are off-putting.

The first Christians observed with great devotion the days of our Lord's passion and resurrection, and it became the custom of the Church to prepare for them by a season of penitence and fasting. This season of Lent provided a time in which converts to the faith were prepared for Holy Baptism. It was also a time when those who, because of notorious sins, had been separated from the body of the faithful were reconciled by penitence and forgiveness, and restored to the fellowship of the Church. Thereby, the whole congregation was put in mind of the message of pardon and absolution set forth in the Gospel of our Savior, and of the need which all Christians continually have to renew their repentance and faith. I invite you, therefore, in the name of the Church, to the observance of a holy Lent, by self-examination and repentance, by prayer, fasting and self-denial, and by reading and meditating on God's holy word.

Questions for Reflection

- 1) Did one of the spiritual practices assessed strike you as less well-developed than the others? If so, which one?

Design #3:

A Five Session Course in Anglican Spirituality

Purpose: Provide orientation to and develop competence in five primary spiritual practices of the Church. Offered regularly in the parish with invitations to participate made to both newcomers and existing members. When offering annually, you can shift the focus, change the exercises, and create new reflection questions while preserving the overall format and objectives.

Time: Five sessions of approximately 1 ½ hours each. Typically held on weekday evenings.

Design Notes: Evening courses require an additional level of commitment. The participant must make an active decision to come, which changes the spirit and tone of the gathering and may tilt it toward the more spiritually mature. This sort of class can be an opportunity for participants to explore their own spiritual life with greater depth than they've been able to before.

It may well make sense to figure out how to provide food and drinks if holding the class during the dinner hour. It does not need to be elaborate but providing food both solves the practical problem of participants being distracted by hunger, while also providing some social glue.

Participants are often asked to try something in between sessions. Provide an opportunity at the subsequent session to reflect and debrief how the week went.

The designs assume that the participants have read the corresponding chapter from *IYHS: Traditional Spiritual Practices in Today's Christian Life* prior to attending. This is quite helpful in ensuring that everyone has some common background and helps limit the need for the leader to do too much lecturing.

About the Use of the Office

Always end the sessions with Compline (or some other Office, if that works better with your timing). It is important to give participants experience with common prayer in the Church's tradition and to build that into the parish's culture. We recommend creating cards that provide an overview of the service—keep it simple, short, and self-contained. These can be used both during these courses and at other meetings and events of the parish.

Whichever Office you choose to do, keep it consistent. Do it the same way, at the same time, each session and when the community is gathered at other times. If you already say the Office publicly, you can use your existing customary or use this as an opportunity to develop one.

Provide coaching at the beginning and avoid instructions during the liturgy. For example, provide page numbers, canticles, and hymns in advance and do not repeat them once you start. Don't tell people to stand up or sit down, but it's fine to include those sorts of basic instructions on the card you prepare. We recommend teaching participants to use the pause at the asterisk during the psalm. Again, if you do that, teach people how to do it first—don't just talk about it. Have them practice. Encourage them to listen to the rest of the community, to notice pace, rhythm, and volume.

See the handout, Core Principles Regarding Liturgy, which appears at the end of the design for the Session on Eucharist. Give participants an experience of full, graceful liturgy and help them to own it, to develop their competence.

Session 1: Overview and Eucharist

Note: We recommend that parishes offer an experiential introduction to Eucharistic Practices several times a year as a 1 to 1 ½ hour session in the church after Mass on Sunday. This should be offered as a way of orienting newcomers to the Eucharist and a way of refreshing the practice of existing members. This is *not* an instructed Eucharist, but a way to allow people to try different practices, different intellectual stances, and to deepen their experience of worship. Design information for this program is available at: <http://www.congregationaldevelopment.com/booklets-models-and-handouts/>

The design below for the Eucharist session of an Anglican Spirituality course contains different material and offers a different focus. It is not a substitute for the more frequent sessions described above.

Purpose and Use: Provide participants with additional information on worship and Eucharist, specifically, as the center of parish life. Increase participants' sense of personal responsibility toward spiritual life and competence with respect to liturgy. Provide orientation to the notion of a system of spiritual practice out of the Anglican tradition, rather than an assortment of random practices based on feelings or happenstance.

Handouts/Materials: Will vary depending on what elements you select. Prepare in advance newsprint for recording results of Spiritual Practices Assessment. You will likely need three separate pieces of newsprint—it's OK to number the items and use a few key words to cover the question. Make sure there's space for the numbered rankings. Participants will be putting their marks up on the paper.

Design Notes: Participants will need to have read the first two chapters of the book prior to coming. Make sure you let them know this ahead of time. This design for a session on Eucharist provides the most options—there are many ways to approach this and, since Eucharist is the experience of worship common to all members, it is the most familiar. It lends itself to a variety of approaches, as well as to opportunities to explore numerous facets or to go into greater depth in a particular area. In reviewing these options, consider what might fit best in your parish—what might provide a good mix of nurture and stretch.

After you decide what you want to do, make sure you time it out and do a dry run. Do *not* include all the options—it will be too long, too unwieldy, and just plain chaotic.

1. Set up space with newsprint, chisel-point markers, and name tags. Arrange chairs in modified circle/U-shape with open end for presentation.
2. Have any food and drink out and available. Give participants a chance to eat and get settled.
3. Introduction and Overview. Note what the sessions will cover. Explain that it will be a mix of presentation, participatory, and experiential elements. Say that there

will be opportunities to practice something in between sessions and then to reflect the next week on how it went. (1-2 minutes)

4. Connecting exercise: Go around the circle and have each participant introduce themselves and say something they hope to get out of participating in these sessions. (Note: time obviously varies depending on numbers of people—will need to keep handle on that. Make sure people understand that the comment is to be brief.)
5. Write up the Spiritual Practices map on newsprint and note that it will form the shape and backdrop for all sessions.
6. Pass out the Spiritual Practices Assessment (pps 19-21, *IYHS: Traditional Spiritual Practices in Today's Christian Life*) and ask participants to complete individually. (5 minutes)
7. When people have finished the Assessment, ask all participants to transfer their marks to the sheets of newsprint you prepared earlier and have hung up at the front of the room. Leader should also transfer his or her marks to the sheets. Give people chisel point markers and have them place a visible mark—check or X—on the sheets. (5-10 minutes)

The liturgy is for the sanctification of man and the glorification of God.

Vatican II, Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy

8. Have participants look at results. What do they notice? Anything they're curious about? (5 minutes)
9. Decide on what to do next—you might want to facilitate more conversation about worship, or you might want to move to one of the exercises ("A Stance Taken" or "Be Present, Participate, Engage").

Option 9. a) The Function of Worship in Your Life—What does it do for you, to you? Allow individuals a few minutes to think and jot down thoughts, then share in small groups. Debrief in total group, and write people's responses up on newsprint. Some ideas that might emerge—Connects me to God, Connects me to others, I get reflective about my life, I experience a sense of meaning in my life, I participate in and learn a rhythm, I experience myself as part of something larger than me; something older than me; something that will go on after me. (10-15 minutes)

Option 9. b) Impact of Different Forms of Worship—What types of prayer and worship have you used? Brainstorm. Participants call out what they've done and the leader writes up on newsprint. Don't filter, don't edit. Once they're done with that, have participants place check marks next to items on the list—"Who has participated in which of these?" Once that's finished, you should have lots of check

marks all over. Now ask, “Which have you stayed with for longer periods of time?” Have participants circle those (or use some other method to identify the different response). What do people notice? (20 minutes)

10. Leader may move past 9, above, and focus instead on the responses to the Eucharist assessment questions (6 & 7). Present material noting that there are three primary ways to join in the Holy Eucharist: Be Present, Participate and Engage. The most important of these is to simply be present. “We exist to participate in the life and glory of God and it is in the Eucharist that life is focused and actualized.” “To accept that the essential act is being there is an act of humility. It is also a statement that you have grown up enough to realize that it is foolish to allow your passing feelings to control your spiritual life.”⁶ Accepting the need to simply show up is connected to our stance, to the intellectual attitude or emotion we bring to our participation. We have choices about the stance we take and we can choose to change it. (5-10 minutes)
11. Provide exercise: either “A Stance Taken” or “Be Present, Participate and Engage.” Have participants read and complete the sheets, then discuss in small groups (2-4 people). Ask people to share what they want to. (10-15 minutes)
12. Provide an experience of looking toward the liturgical action. (Leader should be familiar with Core Principles Regarding Liturgy and may want to distribute to participants—appears at end of this design.) Pass out copies of the Gospel reading. Set up a mini Gospel procession—have participants stand as they might during the Gospel procession. Explain that you are going to read through the Gospel two separate times. The first time, you would like participants to read along as the Gospel is read aloud. Proceed as usual—procession, acclamation, response, reading. Right after the first reading, read it again, but this time ask participants to set the paper down and look directly at the reader. Again, proceed as usual—procession, acclamation, response, reading. (5 minutes)
13. Debrief. What did people notice during the two readings? How were they different? Allow people to share their experiences. In wrap-up, clarify that liturgy has much in common with drama—the readings are being proclaimed to us by a human being as part of worship. It’s not Bible study. Contrast with going to a play and reading a copy of the script as the play is performed. Note that looking *toward* the liturgical action is a key element of participating. This may bring up issues about anxiety, making mistakes. It’s important that people realize they both know more than they think they do and that it’s OK to be carried in worship by others.

⁶From *IYHS: Shaping the Parish Through Spiritual Practice*, by Robert Gallagher.

14. *Lectio* experience. If you have time, provide this exercise with engagement. Be sure to clarify that people should *not* do *lectio divina* during the liturgy—but given the prior work around looking at the reader, this may respond to people’s desire to know what is being read. You can suggest they use this method prior to service starting, or at home. Explain that this is a classic method of reading scripture codified by a Carthusian prior in the 11th century. It is used commonly in monasteries. Use a modified form for the exercise—follow the basic outline on the attachment. Provide people an opportunity to read through two or three times and then debrief in the whole group—What images or phrases caught your attention? Did you notice anything new? What feelings came up for you?
15. Wrap up—brief Q&A. (5 minutes)
16. Take away assignment—pick a new practice or a stance you would like to try the next time you attend the Eucharist (do that now). Try it before we meet again. (5 minutes)
17. Remind participants to do the advanced reading for the next session: Chapter Three, Daily Prayers of the Church.
18. Close with Compline. (10 minutes)

Be Present, Participate, and Engage (Excerpted with permission *IYHS: Shaping the Parish Through Spiritual Practice*, Robert Gallagher)

Be present

People need to be told that it matters that they are just present. Just be present. Follow along as well as you are able that day. Let go of all the judgments about how you may not be paying enough attention or how you're not feeling especially pious. To accept that the essential act is being there is the practice of humility. It is also a statement that you have grown up enough to realize that it is foolish to allow your passing feelings to control your spiritual life.

Participate

Parishioners can learn the sequence and the common responses. They can be encouraged to develop the habit of setting the book aside and allowing their attention to be on the liturgical action—looking at the reader not the readings in a leaflet; during the Great Thanksgiving striving to be aware of the community they are with and the actions at the altar.

Our tradition makes much use of the body in liturgy. We stand, kneel, and sit; some cross themselves, bow and genuflect. We see, smell, hear, touch, and taste. Examples:

- Look toward the liturgical action.
- Move forward at the “Invitation.” It is the people’s procession to communion.
- Receive both bread and wine, including receiving from the common cup.

Engage

Ways of making a unique connection with God in the Eucharist. The particulars will vary from person to person, temperament to temperament. Because the purpose of the Eucharist is to worship God in union with the whole church and Christ the head of the church, these forms of engagement are secondary to simply being present and participating. For example: Ways of preparing by reviewing the readings in advance on doing Lectio with a reading; taking a receptive stance during the sermon (assume God has a word for you today), making a special intention at the offertory.

Be Present – Participate – Engage

<i>Be present</i> An act of humility	<i>Participate</i> Might be outward or internal	<i>Engage</i> Making a unique connection
What was a time when the best you could do is just be there?	To what extent can you set aside the leaflet/BCP and move through Liturgy?	What you do; what you might improve?
What issues of spiritual life does this raise for you?	What acts of physical reverence/prayer are important for you?	

A Stance Taken

A stance is an intellectual or emotional attitude or position.

It's not the same as

- A mood, which is a relatively long lasting emotional state – tend to be positive or negative;
- Or an emotion, that tend to be more specific and intense than a mood. Emotions are more likely to be triggered by a particular stimulus. They are more short term;
- Or temperament or personality traits which are even longer lasting than moods.

We can decide to take a stance in relationship to things, people, circumstances, and activities). We have choices about the stances we take and can make a conscious decision to change our stance.

Open	Skeptical
Curious	Judgmental
Solidarity	Opposition
Generous	Cautious
Hope and anticipation	Resignation and regret

1. *What stance did you take in regard to being at the most recent Eucharist you participated in?*

2. *Did that differ from what you usually do?*

3. *What stance is the Eucharistic community invited to take in each case?*

In Eucharist	Stance
Blessed be God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit <i>And blessed be his kingdom, now and forever.</i>	
Alleluia. Christ is risen. <i>The Lord is risen indeed. Alleluia.</i>	
Bless the Lord who forgives all our sins. <i>His mercy endures for ever.</i>	
<i>Almighty God, to you all hearts are open, all desires known, and from you no secrets are hid: Cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of your Holy Spirit, that we may perfectly love you, and worthily magnify your holy Name; through Christ our Lord. Amen.</i>	

Lectio Divina

A slow, meditative reading of scripture. At a time when we are alert. In a quiet and restful place. You need time enough so there is no sense of being hurried.

1. Select a passage; possibly in advance, the day before. Possibly a section of a reading from the Daily Office readings or next Sunday's Eucharist.
2. **Lectio** - Read the passage slowly, pause as you want. Read slowly, gently listening for God's word for you. Read it again, and possibly again. Notice the phrases and words. What word or phrase draws your attention or touches you? Possibly read it aloud. Let the facts settle in; broods over them, allows them to enter imagination & memory. It is a matter of our spiritual development to cultivate the ability to listen deeply, to hear "with the ear of our hearts."
3. **Meditatio** - Reflection on the text. Bring to mind memories and associations related to the text. Allow the reading to sink into your heart and mind. Join Mary "pondering in her heart." Gently repeat the word or phrase, allow it to touch your thoughts, longings and hopes.
4. **Oratio** - Listening & responding to God. Respond silently or aloud with thoughts, words, desires, feelings, commitments, sorrow, and gratitude. Are there major concerns or joys in your life at the moment that this reading is addressing? Is there some area of your life where God may be inviting you to grow?
5. **Contemplatio** - Sit and enjoy the presence of God. Allow God to enter a deeper place in us. Trust that God is working within even if we do not notice. Rest in God's presence

Do not be overly tight about the steps. In practice they may flow from one to another; may happen at the same time. It may be a useful learning method to stay with the steps as separate acts for an initial period.

The Rhythm of Christian Life and of Lectio

The Christian life can be seen as a cycle between being renewed in our baptismal identity and purpose and an apostolate in which we are instruments of God's love in the world. The cycle is between a conscious and intentional attention to God, prayer life, our relationships, Christian formation **and** a subconscious reliance upon God as members of the Body of Christ, in the workplace, family, friendship, civic life and congregational life. (See *Fill All Things*, Robert A. Gallagher, Ascension Press, 2008)

The practice of *lectio divina* depends on that cycle. It is grounded in our developing the capacity for a gentle oscillation between action/practice and receptivity and renewal. In the one we are being transformed into the likeness of Christ. In the other we are actively cooperating with God's grace in human life.

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A Few Core Principles Regarding Liturgy

1. We listen, we don't read.

Reading along while the lector reads the Scriptures or the deacon reads the Gospel or the priest says or sings the Great Thanksgiving undercuts the nature of liturgy. Therefore there's rarely a need to have something in our hands. We know or can learn most of the standard exchanges and prayers. We will need a Prayer Book or leaflet for the psalm and a Hymnal for hymns.

2. Look at the liturgical action.

Paying attention to the drama of the Liturgy is likely to increase your awareness of the meaning of what's happening as well as your awareness of being part of an assembly, the People of God, the Body of Christ.

3. Give yourself to "common prayer."

This is about common words and actions; it's much more than using the Book of Common Prayer. This is more like being part of a soccer team or classical orchestra. It includes:

- developing an awareness of and joining in the rhythm and pace of the community;
- of offering the responses as done in this liturgy rather than making it a point of personal integrity to say the form of the Lord's Prayer you prefer or to use the pronouns related to God that fits your political views;
- and of picking up on the pace of prayer instead of insisting on a slower or faster pace that seems "right" to you.

4. Be Present, Participate, and Engage.

There are three primary ways people join in the Holy Eucharist: Be Present, Participate, and Engage.

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Session #2: Daily Prayers of the Church—Office

Purpose and Objectives: Teach participants about the role of daily common prayer (the Office) in the church’s spiritual tradition. Provide instruction in how to say the Office and ways to adapt for individual use. Encourage participants to integrate the Office in some form into their own spiritual practice. Be aware that we are also building competence in and experience with corporate forms of the Office by saying Compline or some other Office as part of each session.

Time: Approximately 1.5 hours.

Handouts/Materials: Short forms of Office (*IYHS: Traditional Spiritual Practices in Today’s Christian Life*, pps 57-58), Saying the Daily Office handout for following week’s assignment. Access to Prayer Books would be helpful. Create scales on newsprint (item 4) and have them ready. Have handouts with the same scales to pass out to participants.

Design Notes: Particularly if the leader is a member of the clergy, pay close to attention to your own views and use of the Office. A common pattern in the church is that we assume that it is “too difficult” for our parishioners to participate in the Daily Prayers of the Church. At the same time, we routinely ask our members to take on all sorts of church work that requires significant amounts of time, and varying levels of skill and commitment. Yet the Office—a foundational, grounding practice of the tradition—can take about 10 minutes a day and is central to enabling “a connecting-up process where individual and community are held in contact with God. In a very particular way it builds community, providing bricks and mortar wherewith God’s community is continually brought to be.”⁷ We need to teach our members how to say the Office and support them in doing so, in developing a spiritual discipline that includes both Daily Practice and Weekly Practice.

Separately, many clergy find the Office personally boring and therefore seek out forms of prayer they find more interesting. When this spills over into formation efforts in the parish, it has negative consequences. First, the Office is supposed to be boring. That’s part

I lost fear...when I began to know in my bones and sinews that I had been truly baptized into the Lord’s death and Resurrection, that in the only sense that really matters I am already dead, and my life is hid with Christ in God...As Judy and I said the daily offices day by day, we became more and more aware of the living reality of the invisible “communion of saints,”—of the beloved community in Cambridge who were saying their offices too, of the ones gathered around a near-distant throne in heaven—who blend with their our faltering songs of prayer and praise. With them, with black men and white men, with all of life, in Him Whose Name is above all the names that the nations and races shout, whose Name is Itself the Song Which fulfills and “ends” all songs, we are indelibly, unspeakably ONE.

Jonathan Myrick Daniels,
written shortly before his death
in 1965

⁷ From “*What shall we say about the Daily Office?*” Father George Guiver, CR.

of its objectivity—it’s not about you, and we all need reminding of that. Second, it is the ground out of which we grow. Taking on additional practices, additional means of Reflection and growth that better suit our personalities and inclinations are great, but we need to start with the primary elements of Eucharist and Office. This is an area where it’s particularly important to separate your own preferences from your responsibilities as the leader shaping the parish’s spiritual climate.

1. Set up space with newsprint, chisel-point markers, and name tags. Arrange chairs in modified circle/U-shape with open end for presentation.
2. Have any food and drink out and available. Give participants a chance to eat and get settled.
3. Debrief prior week’s experience with Eucharist. What did you try? How did it go? What did you notice? What will you continue with? (5-10 minutes)
4. Handout—scales regarding Daily Office. (5 minutes)

1. When you look at the forms of Office in the Prayer Book, there are a number of elements: canticles, collects, the Creed, different prayers, options around the number of readings, etc. Which statement most closely matches your own view?

It’s important to include all the elements—if I can’t say it as laid out, I shouldn’t say it at all.		It’s important to participate daily and to incorporate the basic elements—psalm, reading, prayer		It’s fine to select just those elements that work for me on a given day
1	2	3	4	5

2. Role of Daily Practice

I don’t have any daily spiritual practice		I say the Office most days; I may have other daily practices		I have one or more daily practices, from different traditions, but I don’t say the Office
1	2	3	4	5

3. Use of Time

I don’t have time for daily practice		I make time for some form of daily practice		I spend significant time on daily practice
1	2	3	4	5

Have participants transfer their marks to the sheet of newsprint. Debrief results in the large group—What do people notice? Use this as way to surface underlying issues about daily practice—e.g., excessive rigidity about “getting it right,” spending time on lots of other practices, but not those central to our tradition, not recognizing the centrality of daily practice. There is value in efficiency! More is not necessarily better. For some people, it may make sense to do less than they are currently doing, but to do it in a more focused way. (10 minutes—move into presentation step, below)

Caution: Do not get judgmental about this part and do not rescue people by being dismissive of the tradition. Your role is to present information and resources about the tradition and provide pathways in to using it. Let people have their own experience of dealing with how their own practice is or is not consistent with the church’s tradition.

Example: I had a participant come to me in some distress because she was upset after learning about the tradition of the Office. She said that she had an extensive meditation practice and it took her over an hour a day. She couldn’t possibly add the Office on to that. I just listened and said something about it sounding like she was having a hard time reconciling her daily practice with the tradition of the church. I could have either criticized her meditation practice or told her not to worry about the Office, but I did neither. I let her be with it *after* I had already (1) taught her about the tradition and (2) provided her with resources to make that tradition her own. She ended up buying the Daily Office books and got into the habit of saying the Office on the bus, on her way in to work. She also continued the meditation practice. Different people will have different responses and different solutions.

5. Provide overview of Office—Daily Practice. Foundational element of the tradition. The primary elements are that it is daily, corporate, both structured and flexible. Note the pervasive pattern of daily and weekly practice in many religions. Discuss the fact that the Office is “the prayers of the Church,” not our own prayers—even when said alone, we say them with the faithful all over the world, and throughout the centuries. The Office is always *common* prayer. Read a quote from a spiritual writer about the Office⁸ (e.g., Evelyn Underhill, Kenneth Leech). (15-20 minutes)

Provide some instruction on saying psalms, rhythm, community (see handout: Core Principles Regarding Liturgy, accompanying the design on the Eucharist). You will have done a bit of this before Compline at the first session and can expand it here. Do the Office the same way every week during the program. See additional notes on saying the Office in the introduction to the Anglican Spirituality design.

⁸ See pg 173, *Fill All Things: The Dynamics of Spirituality in the Parish Church*, Robert Gallagher.

Why do we pause at the asterisk? Because the Prayer Book says we're supposed to. It's also a way of slowing down, paying attention to those around us, and learning how to be part of the broader community—not an overwhelming force, not a passive bystander, but a member of the community, working in rhythm and balance with our brothers and sisters in Christ to offer our prayer to God. It requires attention and care. It requires some humility.

Have Prayer Books available for participants to look through—show them the structure of the BCP, that over $\frac{3}{4}$ is devoted to Eucharist and Office.

Explain how the Daily Lectionary works and how to figure out (1) what year it is and (2) what the assigned readings are.

Make sure you emphasize the central elements: (1) psalm, (2) reading, (3) prayers. Sometimes the most we can manage is saying a fragment of a psalm that we've memorized, or the Lord's Prayer. Some nights, before we drop off to sleep, we say, "Guide us waking, O Lord, and guard us sleeping; that awake we may watch with Christ, and asleep we may rest in peace." Note that if participants haven't said the Office much or at all before, they should not suddenly commit to saying all four Offices every day. Pick something that seems like a stretch but is not onerous.

Let people look at Prayer Books and offer other resources: Internet, iPhone apps (pass one around, if available), Daily Office books. Provide cards with short forms of Office. (10 minutes)

6. Take-away assignment before next session. Give participants worksheet and have them decide what they will experiment with. Remind participants to read the Chapter 4, Reflection, prior to the next session. (5 minutes)
7. End with Compline. Might try to introduce a new element, such as standing and reverencing one another at the start—participants would need to be in choir formation with enough space in between. Could also introduce a simple bow at the *Gloria*. If you introduce a new element, provide coaching and practice *before* the liturgy starts and then do not give further instructions during the liturgy itself. (10-15 minutes)

Saying the Daily Office

During the next week, I will do the following:

_____ Say Morning Prayer

_____ Say Evening Prayer

_____ Say Another Office—which one?

I will use the following resources to say the Office:

_____ On-line or phone app

_____ Prayer book/Bible

_____ Daily Office books

_____ Short Forms provided in class

Session #3: Reflection

Purpose and Objectives: Provide resources and ways of thinking about integration—we are grounded in Eucharist and Office (Weekly and Daily practice) and it is Reflection that helps us integrate and focus our experience. Help participants find effective ways to Reflect.

Time: Approximately 1.5 hours.

Handouts/Materials: Assessment form on use of Daily Office, *IYHS: Traditional Spiritual Practices in Today's Christian Life*, pps 54-56

1. Set up space with newsprint, chisel-point markers, and name tags. Arrange chairs in modified circle/U-shape with open end for presentation. Make sure you have space for later exercise (item 6, below). You will need a space large enough for the whole group to gather, standing, and to move around to different areas.
2. Have any food and drink out and available. Give participants a chance to eat and get settled.
3. Provide opportunity to debrief from prior week's work with the Office. Use the form that appears in *IYHS: Traditional Spiritual Practices in Today's Christian Life*, pps 54-56. Complete individually, then share in small group (10 minutes). Share in total group for further discussion. (10 minutes)
4. Have participants brainstorm forms of Reflection they have used—what have they done to get perspective, to “listen to their lives”? Have them make marks by the ones they have used over significant periods of time. Discuss in large group—What do participants notice? What strikes them? (15 minutes)
5. Presentation by leader on Reflection. Should include:
 - a) The grounding is to be in the Weekly Practice of the Eucharist and the Daily Practice of the Prayers of the Church.
 - b) “We must learn to pray as we are, not as we are not,” William Temple. Discuss the importance of incorporating personality and inclination into the ways we reflect.
 - c) Reflection requires silence and stillness. “It is impossible for our inner selves to be prepared to be open to God and receptive to God's Word until we silence our sinful selves—our efforts to be in control, to manipulate

everything and everyone to accomplish our own purposes?...We need the channel of silence to transport us from the busy harbors of our tensions out to the ocean of God's infinite being."⁹

- d) The place of personal devotions. The tradition of personal devotions includes everything from contemplation to saying the rosary to thanksgiving at meals. Personal devotions can be categorized as: Acts of recollection—ways to recall the presence of God or the actions of the Holy Spirit; Colloquy—discussion or dialogue with God, what many are referring to when they talk about “saying their prayers;” Mental prayer—methods of meditation, contemplation, spiritual reading, such as *lectio divina*.
 - e) Efficiency is a useful measure in spiritual life. *More* pious activity isn't necessarily better. The question is, “What practices are necessary to provide a conscious and intentional attention to God and our status as baptized people in order to make possible an effective subconscious reliance upon God in our daily life in the workplace, family, friendship, and civic life?” (20 minutes)
6. If you did not do the *lectio divina* exercise in the Eucharist session, consider using it in this session. (15 minutes)
 7. Individual reflection exercise & assignment for following week: Provide handout to participants with these questions. Note that they will *not* be asked to share what they write. Remind participants to read Chapter 5, on Community, prior to the next session. (10-15 minutes)
 8. End with Compline. (10 minutes)

⁹ Marva Dawn, *Reaching Out Without Dumbing Down*.

Reflection on Reflection

Reflecting *now*—ways that work for you and for how your life is at this time:

What are the ways in your life that you become centered and still? How do you gain a sense of perspective and proportion?

As you journey toward self knowledge what requires deeper reflection? Is there something you have been avoiding? What might help you move toward that?

Is there something you would like to try in the coming week related to your own capacity for silence, stillness, or gaining perspective?

Session #4: Community

Purpose and Objectives: Create more awareness of different images of health. Create more ownership around the type of community participants would like to see. Increase capacity for more nuanced approach to participating in parish community. Help leaders understand existing capacities and readiness for community life.

Time: Approximately 1.5 hours.

Handouts/Materials: Community Assessment Form (attached). Descriptions of Scott Peck's Stages of Community, pps 75-76, *IYHS: Traditional Spiritual Practices in Today's Christian Life*. Four pieces of paper with Scott Peck's Stages of Community—one stage on each piece of paper. As an alternative, use the Communication Model & Descriptions of Parish Culture found on pps 78-80 of *IYHS: Traditional Spiritual Practices in Today's Christian Life*. You will set the pieces of paper up on the floor for the exercise at Step 6.

1. Set up space with newsprint, chisel-point markers, and name tags. Arrange chairs in modified circle/U-shape with open end for presentation. Make sure you have space for later exercise (item 6, below). You will need a space large enough for the whole group to gather, standing, and to move around to different areas.
2. Have any food and drink out and available. Give participants a chance to eat and get settled.
3. Provide opportunity to debrief from prior week. Use format that seems appropriate given the prior session's assignment. Might ask participants to reflect individually or in larger group. Some questions: What did you do? How did that work? Is there something you'd like to do differently? (5-10 minutes)
4. Hand out Community Reflection/Assessment and have participants complete individually. (5 minutes)
5. Debrief responses in small groups (2-4). Ask people to share what they'd like to share from the Reflection/Assessment. Was there anything that surprised them? That they are curious about? (15 minutes)

To listen attentively to what we hear is much more than giving it passing aural attention. It means in the first instance that we have to listen whether we like or not, whether we hear what want to or something that is actually disagreeable or threatening. If we being to pick and choose we are in fact turning a deaf ear to the many unexpected and perhaps unacceptable ways in which God is trying to reach us.

Esther de Waal, *Seeking God: The Way of St. Benedict*

6. Have group move to the place in the room where the pieces of paper with Scott Peck's Stages of Community are laid out. Ask participants to take a minute to think about the parish. Explain that the leader will read some descriptions of community life, and that the participants will be asked to identify which description best "fits" their own sense of the parish. Leader reads the descriptions of community stages. Might read them a second time and ask the participants to move at that point, to go stand in the square that corresponds to where they think the parish is. (5 minutes)

Alternative: Follow same process using the Communication & Parish Culture model found on pps 78-80 of *IYHS: Traditional Spiritual Practices in Today's Christian Life*.

Note to Leader: Doing this will generate some anxiety in the participants and in the leader. That's normal. Manage your own anxiety and don't get caught up in participants' anxieties. Work to stay in role. Keep directions brief and clear.

Remember that most of the time participants will simply follow the instructions, even if they're somewhat uncomfortable. If one or two people resist, suggest they simply try it or otherwise step back and let others try it. Don't cajole or coax. If a significant number of participants aren't willing to try it, you've learned something about the group and possibly about the parish community, and will need to reassess what the parish is ready for.

7. Debrief. Make a judgment about whether to ask the first question while still standing in the squares in the whole group. This would work best in groups that have a relatively high trust level and relatively high emotional intelligence. Alternatively, head back to the chairs and have participants debrief in small groups (2-4).
 - a) Why did you put your group in that square?
 - b) What role do you play in supporting that stage? (10-15 minutes)
8. Debrief in larger group—is there anything people would like to share? Anything you're curious about learning more about? (5 minutes)
9. Leader makes presentation on life in community.¹⁰ "The parish community is a gift of God. It's a pathway into communion with God and our sisters and brothers. In that community we can come to know and love God, become friends of God and one another." Christianity is fundamentally communal. The notion of "believing but not belonging" just doesn't fly. Mention some images of community that go beyond idealized concepts. "A place where we can fight with those we love." "God has so ordained things that we grow in faith only through the frail instrumentality of one another." (John of the Cross) The community is where we grow into the full stature of

¹⁰ See Esther de Waal's *Seeking God: The Way of St. Benedict*.

Christ—where we submit both to communal listening processes and the sources of authority accepted by the community. Where we learn to be both fully ourselves and part of something bigger than we are.

Ideas for focus: Benedictine listening and Obedience,¹¹ the meaning and value of Stability, and Conversion of Life. Might consider whether one of these areas is a particular strength or challenge for the parish and focus presentation accordingly. Keep in mind that this is a system and the different elements influence one another. Bob Gallagher notes the following factors in developing parish culture within a Benedictine framework:

Stability—Especially seen in liturgy, prayer, and relationships

Obedience—Seen in our openness to listen, and respond to, one another, our bishop, and the larger church.

Conversion of Life—Out of our life of stability or obedience we see and act on new challenges and opportunities for mission and building up the Body of Christ.¹²

Might include some information on “being the community we seek.” Each member is part of the community and contributes to the whole. Discuss stance—the way we see community and our role in it affects our behavior and our openness. (20 minutes+-- time out the rest of the session.

10. Take away assignment. Based on either the Stage of Community or the Parish Culture you identified, what behavior would you like to try to either support the existing stage/culture, or help “be the community you seek”?
11. Remind participants to read Chapter 6, Service, prior to the next session.
12. End with Compline. (10 minutes)

¹¹ For more information, see The Benedictine Promise, pps 92-122, *Fill All Things: The Dynamics of Spirituality in the Parish Church*, © 2008 Robert Gallagher, Ascension Press.

¹² Quote from *Fill All Things: The Dynamics of Spirituality in the Parish Church*, © 2008 Robert Gallagher, Ascension Press.

Reflecting on Parish Community

Images of Parish Community

Circle phrases that speak to you, that express the kind of Parish community you seek and long for.

1. The community I seek is one in which people are free to be themselves; to speak and listen fully and authentically. In which differences are accepted (we can fight with those we love). In which we can make decisions and solve the problems we face.

2. Listening in community requires listening to one another “whether we like it or not, whether we hear what we want to or something that is actually disagreeable or threatening.” (From *Seeking God: The Way of St. Benedict*, by Esther DeWaal)

3. Love is patient and kind; love is not jealous or boastful; it is not arrogant or rude, Love does not insist on its own way, it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice at wrong, but rejoices in the right. Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. I Corinthians 13:4-7

4. O Raphael, lead us toward those we are waiting for, those who are waiting for us: Raphael angel of happy meetings, lead us by the hand toward those we are looking for. May all our movements be guided by your light and transfigured with your joy. Flannery O'Connor

5. God has so ordained things that we grow in faith only through the frail instrumentality of one another. John of the Cross

6. Community life is made up of a lot of small things. It is the small courtesies that matter. Basil Hume, OSB

(see next page or reverse side)

Session #5: Service

Purpose and Objectives: Help participants gain understanding of Service in Daily Life, the Renewal—Apostolate Cycle¹³ and specifically their own Apostolate. See page 108, *IYHS: Traditional Spiritual Practices in Today's Christian Life* for an overview and for possible use as a handout.

Time: Approximately 1 ½ to 2 hours.

Handouts/Materials: Enough sheets of plain paper, preferably legal size or larger, for all participants to have their own sheet. Might provide copy of the R-A Cycle, described above.

Background for Leader: The Renewal-Apostolate Cycle is between a conscious and intentional attention to God, prayer life, our relationships, Christian formation AND a subconscious reliance upon God as members of the Body of Christ, in the workplace, with family, friendship, civic life and congregational life.

- It is important to focus on apostolate in daily life, not just direct service to the poor or what we do in the church.
 - To the extent we have become salt and light, we will be salt and life. This is an organic process.
 - A key image is of church as a place that nourishes and renews us versus church as yet another drain on our time, energy and money.
1. Set up space with newsprint, chisel-point markers, and name tags. Arrange chairs in modified circle/U-shape with open end for presentation.
 2. Have any food and drink out and available. Give participants a chance to eat and get settled.
 3. Check in about prior week. Any further observations about community life, or our individual roles?
 4. Give each participant a piece of paper and ask them to place it sideways (landscape orientation). The instructions are: "Draw a line that represents your relationship with Christ and the church from your birth up until the present." Gauge stopping time by the

One's first duty is adoration, and one's second duty is awe and only one's third duty is service. And that for those three things and nothing else, addressed to God and no one else, you and I and countless human creatures evolved... We observe then that two of the three things for which our souls were made are matters of attitude, or relation: adoration and awe. Unless these two are right, the last of the triad, service, won't be right.

Evelyn Underhill
Concerning the Inner Life

¹³ See *Fill All Things: The Dynamics of Spirituality in the Parish Church* for a more in-depth discussion of this very important concept. Robert A. Gallagher © 2008, Ascension Press.

energy in the room. If people are still actively engaged, give it a bit more time. The leader should draw his or her own line. (10-15 minutes)

If people ask questions about the how or what, encourage them to turn the paper sideways so they have more room, and also repeat the instructions—a line that represents their relationship.

There's not a "right" way to do this.

5. Ask participants to discuss in small groups (3-4 people; may be helpful to break up couples by explicitly asking them to move to a different group)—and ask them to share what they'd like to about the spiritual life line they've drawn. (15-20 minutes)

We may sometimes get the impression that the only "Christian" work is in the church itself or related to direct service to the poor. In fact, though, Christian work is that work done faithfully and conscientiously by Christians.

In Your Holy Spirit: Traditional Spiritual Practices in Today's Christian Life, pg. 94

6. Now ask a second level question: Have group stop prior discussion and ask them to consider a specific question: "Looking at the spiritual life line you've drawn, where are the points that shaped your heart and mind, that made you salt and light?" Give people around 5 minutes to identify those points individually and then have them discuss again in small groups. (20-25 minutes)
7. Present the Renewal-Apostolate Cycle. (20 minutes)
8. Point participants to the last section of the book, The Process of Spiritual Growth. You may want to have some of the forms and worksheets available for people to take with them in developing a Rule of Life on their own.
9. Reflect on sessions overall. Have participants go around the circle, one-by-one, and answer two questions. First, have each person answer: Something significant I've learned is... Next, have each person answer: A challenge I'm taking from away from these sessions is...
10. End with Compline. (10 minutes)

Related Resources

[In Your Holy Spirit: Traditional Spiritual Practices in Today's Christian Life](#), Michelle Heyne, Ascension Press, 2011

[In Your Holy Spirit: Shaping the Parish Through Spiritual Practice](#), Robert A. Gallagher, Ascension Press, 2011

[Fill All Things: The Spiritual Dynamics of the Parish Church](#), Robert A. Gallagher, Ascension Press, 2008.

Web sites

Congregational Development www.congregationaldevelopment.com

Shaping the Parish www.shapingtheparish.com