What is Faithful Innovation?
This is a process, not a program, in which a group of congregations form an intentional "learning community." Together, those congregations commit to one another in a nine-month learning experience. Through prayer, skill-building, action and reflection they address the pressing questions about the future of God's church. The experience includes three Sunday afternoon workshops, listening experiments, and ongoing coaching calls with synod leaders and trained process coaches.

What will we be doing together?

Gathering for One-Day Trainings
We will gather for three one-day training sessions designed to help us discover together what faithful innovation looks like in each of our contexts.

Monthly Coaching
Every month your congregational Guiding Team will connect in person or via online video to receive coaching and share learnings.

Trying New Actions
In-between trainings each congregation will try out some new experiments designed to help you learn more about what God is doing in your midst and how to join in God's work.
Training Descriptions

Training #1      Sunday, March 3rd, 2:00-6:00 PM
Tracing God’s Movement in Our Lives and Neighborhoods

This first training helps equip participants to listen to God in their local contexts. Participants will dwell in Scripture together, share stories about what God is doing in the life of their local congregation, and notice where God might be at work in their everyday lives. The goal for these practices is to help the participants begin to answer the question, “What might God be up to?”

Training #2      Sunday, May 5th, 2:00-6:00 PM
Learn by Doing: Using Action Learning to Discover God’s Leading

In our second Learning Community training, we will focus on helping participants use action learning to deepen their exploration of what they think God might be up to. The idea is to help participants “behave their way into new thinking,” rather than only trying to think their way into new behaviors. Participants will be given simple action learning experiments to try with others in their congregation.

Training #3      Sunday, October 6th, 2:00-6:00 PM
Sharing Our Learning: Intentional Reflection on Our Actions

Our third training will focus on learning to share what we’ve learned from the action learning experiments we did. Action learning requires intentional reflection on what was done so we can see what God might be teaching us!
A learning community provides a space and structure for people to come together to help each other address shared challenges and opportunities. It is an environment characterized by trust, vulnerability, and distributed leadership which generates and multiplies learnings.

**Show Up** Bring your whole self to this work. Be real. Participate fully in meetings and activities. Engage the process. Do the work. You are agreeing to full participation in all the meetings and activities associated with this work. You will need to allot time for the 3 retreat trainings (March 3rd, May 5th, October 6th), along with monthly coaching calls (1 hour) and leadership learning activities in-between gatherings.

**Invest in One Another** The relationships developed in a learning community are integral to its value. Listen attentively. Be compassionate toward one another.

**Pray** Christ is at work wherever two or three are gathered in his name (Mt. 18:20). We move forward with the expectation that God will lead us into the future that God has in mind for us. Prayer helps us to trust the Spirit’s leadership and become more aware of God’s guidance.

**Be Curious** There are no easy answers to the primary challenges facing churches today. New discoveries will emerge in unexpected places, including from the margins. Be open to what God might be teaching us in this process.

**Be Honest** Everyone is facing different challenges in the life of our congregations. Martin Luther said, “A theologian of the cross calls a thing what it is.” We need to share our honest concerns, fears, hopes, and longings in order for us to learn from each other and move forward. Pretending we have it figured out won’t help us!

**Share Your Stories** Be willing to share your stories, successes and failures as you go so that we can all benefit from everyone’s experience.

________________________ ________________________
Coach Name

________________________ ________________________

________________________ ________________________

________________________ ________________________
GUIDING TEAM EXPECTATIONS

The Guiding Team is the conduit through which the congregation as a whole is invited to participate in this process. They will receive coaching on how to engage other people in their congregations throughout process. A coach will be available to help them answer questions that arise and address challenges they face in the process. The Guiding Team should be made up of 4-6 participants.

A participant on the Guiding Team should have the following characteristics/skills

- Ability to work in cooperation with a team
- Willingness to experiment with new activities and behavior as the process will invite
- Ability and willingness to personally invite others in the congregation to participate at different points in the process
- Commitment to participate in all 3 trainings as well as all meetings the Guiding Team schedules to work on each step
- Guiding Team members together represent the diversity of their congregation in terms of age, ethnicity, gender, and socio-economic status
- Commitment to respond to communication related to the process (i.e. email, phone calls)
- Willingness to personally practice some of the spiritual habits integral to the process (i.e. Dwelling in the Word, Listening to Neighborhood)
- Demonstrated leadership ability in some other context
- Commitment to enter the process as a learner without a particular agenda other than to follow God’s leading for the congregation

TIME COMMITMENT

3 Trainings (March 3, May 5, October 6) on Sunday afternoons, 2:00-6:00 PM

On average one meeting per month with members of your Guiding Team. This meeting will be the space where the planning for the execution of each of the steps in this process will take place. Meetings will likely include time with a coach. Time and place will be determined by the team.

Time spent recruiting and training other participants in the congregation throughout the process (i.e. Guiding Team members will train other people in the congregation how to Dwell in the Word, interview other church members, and walk their neighborhoods with a spiritual focus). Guiding Team members will also practice these things themselves.
Guiding Team Initial Meeting

Welcome to the journey. This process is about connecting more deeply with God, one another, and your neighbors. This document is a guide to your initial congregational team gathering, prior to the kickoff training.

Open with Prayer (2 mins)
Use the following prayer or another one you find suitable:

O God, you have called your servants to ventures of which we cannot see the ending, by paths as yet untrodden, through perils unknown. Give us faith to go out with good courage, not knowing where we go, but only that your hand is leading us and your love supporting us; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.
– Evangelical Lutheran Worship, Evening Prayer

Introductions (15-20 mins)
Share your name, when and how you came to this church, and why you are here on this team.

Sharing of Gifts (20 mins)
What would people who know you well say that you do well?

Organizing for the Journey (15 mins)
Choose a lay member of the team to serve as the Point Person. This person will be the primary organizational coordinator and communication hub of your congregation’s Guiding Team, responsible for setting meeting dates, communicating with team members, and keeping the team moving in its work. Your team will have the assistance of a coach who will be accompanying your team, supporting you, encouraging you, answering questions that may arise, and holding you accountable. If your congregation has a pastor, she or he will be walking with you in this process to help you reflect theologically on what you are discovering but is not responsible for managing the work.

Make sure everyone has on their calendar the three upcoming Sunday training days with the other congregations, which are: (March 3rd / May 5th / October 6th).

Close with Prayer (2 mins)
Use the following prayer or another one you find suitable:

Draw us together, O God, into one great company of disciples, together following our teacher Jesus Christ into every walk of life, together serving in Christ's mission in the world, and together witnessing your love wherever you will send us, for the sake of Jesus Christ our Lord, Amen. - Evangelical Lutheran Worship

Sending
Go in Peace!
Training #1

*Tracing God’s Movement in our Lives and Neighborhoods*

2:00pm Welcome, Prayer, & Overview of process: *Listen, Try, Share*
   - Dwelling in the Word Together (Acts 16:6-15)
   - Introduction to Asking “God Questions”
   - Listening to One Another’s Stories

3:45pm Break

4:00pm Naming God’s Activity
   - Introduction to Listening Practices

5:00pm Planning Next Steps – Your Assignment

5:45pm Where Have You Seen God at Work Today?

6:00pm Adjourn
Dwelling in the Word

Dwelling in the Word is an ancient way of reading the Scripture. Dwelling in the Word is a way of spiritually submitting to the text as one way God speaks to us, with a willingness to be shaped by what God might want to say through the Scripture. In this way, we are being interpreted by the text together as we listen to it.

Three questions guide our listening:

1. What caught your attention?
2. What question would you want to ask?
3. What are we hearing in this text (where might the Spirit be nudging us)?

The process of dwelling in a particular text is as follows.

Listen to the Word Together

- Pray that God would speak to us
- Read the text, slowly
- Allow for silence
- Read again
- Allow for silence

Listen to Someone Else

- Find one person you can share your thoughts about the text with, a “reasonably friendly looking stranger,” someone you maybe don’t know well
- Spend 4-5 minutes each sharing about what caught your imagination, or a question you have, or what you think the Spirit might be saying

Share in a Group

- Share in a group of 4 people what you heard your conversation partner say

What might God be saying to us as a group? What are you hearing?
Dwelling in the Word

Acts 16:6-15

Paul and his companions traveled throughout the region of Phrygia and Galatia, having been kept by the Holy Spirit from preaching the word in the province of Asia. When they came to the border of Mysia, they tried to enter Bithynia, but the Spirit of Jesus would not allow them to. So they passed by Mysia and went down to Troas. During the night Paul had a vision of a man of Macedonia standing and begging him, “Come over to Macedonia and help us.” After Paul had seen the vision, we got ready at once to leave for Macedonia, concluding that God had called us to preach the gospel to them.

From Troas we put out to sea and sailed straight for Samothrace, and the next day we went on to Neapolis. From there we traveled to Philippi, a Roman colony and the leading city of that district of Macedonia. And we stayed there several days.

On the Sabbath we went outside the city gate to the river, where we expected to find a place of prayer. We sat down and began to speak to the women who had gathered there. One of those listening was a woman from the city of Thyatira named Lydia, a dealer in purple cloth. She was a worshiper of God. The Lord opened her heart to respond to Paul’s message. When she and the members of her household were baptized, she invited us to her home. “If you consider me a believer in the Lord,” she said, “come and stay at my house.” And she persuaded us.

Questions:
What catches your attention in this passage?
What questions does this passage create for you?
What do you think God might be saying to you as a group through this passage?
Asking God Questions

The questions we ask shape how we think about God, our congregation, each other, and our neighborhood. We want to learn to regularly ask “God Questions” of each other along this journey.

Examples of “God Questions”

• What might God be up to?
• What might God be saying to us?
• How do we sense God’s presence in our daily lives (in our workplaces and in our neighborhoods)?
• What does God care about in our local communities?
• How might God be leading our congregation to join in something God is already doing?
Listening to One Another’s Stories

Listening to each other is an essential practice for learning to ask different questions. As we learn to listen to each other well, we also increase our capacity to hear what God might be saying to us as well.

Pair up with someone near you. Share a story of a time when you were most spiritually engaged and energized in your experience of your local church.

- What was happening in your life during the time you felt most spiritually engaged?
- What energized you most during this time?
- How did the church play a role in this experience in your life?
Naming God’s Activity

We assume that God is present with us in everything we are doing each
and every day. Sometimes we are more aware of God’s presence than
others!

We want to engage in a practice of listening to our own lives and stories
and wonder together where God might have been present in the midst of
those experiences.

We want to get more comfortable naming what we think God might be
up to in our midst.

Being able to name God’s activity in our midst gives us the chance to join
with what God is presently inviting us into.
Naming God’s Activity Exercise

Take a few moments quietly to reflect on the story you shared. What might God have been up to in that experience? Jot down a few notes. (10 mins.)

- What do you think God might have been doing in this time in your life?
- Was God teaching you something?
- Was God reassuring or encouraging you?
- Was God challenging you? Inviting you into something?

Pair back up and share what you think God might have been up to. (10 mins.)

Share at your table what you heard your partner say. (15 mins.)

We will take time to share as a large group some of what you heard at your tables.
Introduction to Listening Practices

We have three listening practices we’d like to invite you to participate in over the next several months.

- Listening to Scripture through Dwelling in the Word
- Listening to Your Neighborhood (God Sightings, Neighborhood Walk)
- Listening to the Congregation (do what we just did with other people in your church)
Planning Next Steps – Your Assignment

Your Assignment: **Tracing God’s Movement in our Lives and Neighborhoods**

**Gather**
Plan for your Guiding Team to get together 2 times between now and our next training. Plan at least one meeting per month.

**Dwell**
Plan to listen to Acts 16:6-15 several times a week. Email observations about things you are hearing to other members of your Guiding Team. Plan to spend time listening to this scripture whenever you team gathers together (Use “Dwelling in the Word” guidelines in this packet). Write down what you are hearing.

**Walk**
Invite your congregation to walk your neighborhood(s) twice a month between now and our next training. Invite them to take pictures or make notes about what they think God might be doing in their neighborhoods. Post pictures to Facebook or send them to your coach.

**Listen to Others**
Ask people in your congregation about when they have felt most spiritually alive. Try and talk to 8-10 people (total, as a team) in your church community about where they may have seen God working in their lives. Write down some notes you can share with your team (see separate “Listen to Others” worksheet on the next page).

**KEY QUESTION: WHAT MIGHT GOD BE UP TO?**

**Next Training Dates:** May 5th & October 6th, 2019
Listen to Others

Assignment: Ask people in your congregation about when they have felt most spiritually alive. Write down some notes you can share with your team.

Here is a possible introduction to your conversation—“We are trying to learn about how people experience God in their everyday lives. So we’re asking some people in our congregation a few questions about their spiritual lives. Thanks for being willing to talk to me.”

Reflect on a time when you would say you grew spiritually in a significant way. Describe what was happening in that period of your life.

What was it about this time of your life that you think caused you to grow spiritually?

Was there something during this time of your life that you think God was trying to teach you or show you?

Where do you experience God’s presence most often now? (i.e. in worship, in nature, in conversation with friends/family, in prayer, in Bible study, at yoga, etc.)