

Health Through Faith and Community

A Study Resource for Christian Faith Communities to Promote Personal and Social Well-Being

This is an electronic version of the handouts contained within the curriculum book. These handouts may be printed or copied as a learning resource for instructors and participants. To jump to a particular section, click the appropriate link in the table of contents below.

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Handout 1.1 – Questions to consider (page 19)

1. What do the terms “spirituality,” “faith,” and “religion” mean to you? Feel free to give examples.
2. How would you define “health” or “well-being”?
3. In your life experience, in what ways has fostering spirituality, faith or religion affected the health of individuals and communities? Give a brief example.

**Handout 1.2 – Stained-glass window, First United Methodist Church
Lawrence, Kansas (page 25)**



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Handout 1.3 – Personal definitions (page 28)

This exercise is for those who would like to think in more detail about the terms related to health and spirituality. Please briefly describe what the following terms mean *to you* when you hear them or use them. Jot down briefly words or phrases rather than full sentences. If any of these terms are not significantly different from the preliminary definitions provided, feel free to leave that section blank.

Spirituality:

Faith:

Religion:

Physical health:

Mental health:

Social health:

Spiritual health:

Overall well-being:

Handout 1.4 – Jesus’ healing ministry (pages 30-31)

The examples of Jesus’ healing ministry given in the gospels constitute four modes of healing: physical, mental, spiritual, and social. These four modes serve as a source of inspiration for this study guide.

The Gospel of Mark has several references to *physical* healing in its first chapter. Jesus healed the man with the unclean spirit (Mark 1:23-26), leaving the scribes amazed at the power of his authority. Next he healed Simon’s mother-in-law of fever (30-31). Her first action after this healing was to serve Jesus and the apostles. Next, at sundown, people from the city arrived and he healed many who were sick with various diseases as well as cast demons out (32-34). Jesus healed a leper and a man who was paralyzed (40-42; 2:3-12). This healing ministry was a central part of Jesus’ message and is repeated in all the Gospels.

The stories told in Mark of the unclean spirit and casting out of demons are examples of restoring *mental* health. Other examples that display the emphasis include Jesus’ removal of evil spirits from Mary Magdalene (Luke 8:2) and his healing of the Gerasene Demoniac (Mark 5:1-20). In later account, a man possessed by so many demons that even shackles and chains could not subdue him achieved his “right mind” after Jesus ordered the spirits to depart.

Spiritual healing connotes the atonement aspect of his ministry. The atonement or at-one-ment is the holistic relating of being to the world at large: this is our place, made for us, or, as the scientist might say, we have our ecological niche in the universe. We are part of an entire system of life and being. Jesus demonstrated such atonement in Luke 19:2-9. In this passage, he lodged with the tax collector, Zacchaeus, despite the fact that onlookers believed him to be a sinner. As a result of this act, Zacchaeus agreed to give charitable contributions to the poor and to end his fraudulent ways-transformations that Jesus claimed would lead to his salvation.

As Christ came into the world to reconcile humanity to God, that reconciliation includes breaking down our separateness from the world and promoting *social* health. That separation is something we have created through sin, and Christ’s role is to restore us to wholeness by (1) creating the doorway to salvation by his crucifixion and resurrection and by (2) demonstrating God’s love and unity by overcoming barriers of race, class, and all other distinctions.

Jesus’ philosophy of sympathy and kindness is best expressed through the Beatitudes. By blessing “the poor in spirit,” “those who mourn,” “the meek,” “those who hunger and thirst for righteousness’ sake,” “the merciful,” “the pure in heart,” “the peacemakers,” and “those who are persecuted for righteousness’ sake” (Matthew 5:4-10), he demonstrated a concern for social well-being that pervades the Gospels. While transforming the physical, mental, and spiritual aspects of individuals’ health, his ministry to the oppressed and subjugated offers a model for the establishment of the Kingdom of God on Earth. Another example of the accentuation of social health can be found in Matthew 25:34-36, when Jesus stated, “Come you that are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world; for I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me.”

Jesus most commonly healed through words or touch. Healing sometimes occurred when individuals touched him or his clothes, and sometimes the faith of the individuals seemed to be a factor in the healing. Healing occurred on several occasions when Jesus had compassion for people and then proceeded to actively heal them. In fact, the reason he most often healed is

because he cared deeply about people. He loved them and so he healed them. Healing was a natural result of the person he was, both divine and human.

The ministry of Jesus included preaching, teaching, and healing. Therefore, Jesus is today referred to as the Great Physician. Even the adversaries of Jesus did not question the healing power he exerted. Nearly one-fifth of the Gospels are devoted to Jesus' acts of healing (Kelsey, 1987). In fact, his healing ministry was presented as evidence that he was the Messiah: "Go and tell John what you hear and see: the blind receive their sight, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are brought to life" (Matthew 11:4-5).

Note: All biblical citations are taken from the New Revised Standard Version of the Bible.

Handout 1.5 – Joan’s story (page 34)

Joan, in her thirties, has always lived with cystic fibrosis. She considers her personal relationship with God and Jesus as the most important part of her life. Her family, friends, and congregation actively supported her with prayer and loving helpfulness. When Joan and her husband were awaiting a transplant to replace her severely damaged lungs, she was so sick and weak that she actually gave up attachment to life. Yet in the midst of this she vividly felt the intimate presence of God comforting and supporting her like a “circle of protection.” Even in the face of immense anxiety, she felt that God sent an angel-like presence to protect her through the danger and difficulty of a lung transplant.

The awareness of a sacred circle of protection prompted a series of dreams as symbols of the divine powers supporting her. In one dream, Joan was extremely sick and shivered from a cold, strong wind bombarding her. Suddenly, she felt the strong, gentle hand of an angel named Michael. The angel and her husband held her so that she would not be blown away. Then the angel helped her and her husband don rain gear symbolic of protection for the time ahead.

Joan felt this angelic presence encircle, protect, and comfort her throughout the stresses of her sickness and surgery. Even during the pain and grueling treatments, Joan felt a source of supernatural strength. Joan felt very clearly that even if she died on the operating table, she would be all right within the loving embrace of God. When the transplant was over Joan was exhausted. Yet, she also felt born into a new opportunity for an ongoing life of faith and service to other people.

This sense of a circle of protection remained after the transplant. A few times, even years later, Joan would feel a warm sense of joy in her chest that lasted all day. Even Joan thought it sounded odd, but she was certain of the feeling. She said it was as if the Holy Spirit was within her.

Since the transplant Joan has enjoyed greatly improved physical health. However, with greater physical strength, she also has experienced temptations to be distracted from her spiritual commitments. Joan said that she has to remind herself to stay on the path of faith during the good times as well as the bad. She has not felt the intense angelic presence lately but knows for a certainty that God is with her. With a new perspective on life, Joan is not afraid of any physical ailments and knows that this deep sense of connectedness with God will always be with her.

Source: Story adapted from Canda, 2001, 2002.

Handout 2.1 – Learning from illness (page 45)

Think of one or two physical illnesses or injuries you have experienced; then consider the following questions.

Questions to Consider

1. What type of questions/answers relating to your faith did your experience cause you to seek?
2. How did your faith, religious participation, or spirituality help you respond to this ailment?
3. In what manner, if any, did you gain a sense of empathy with others who similarly suffer?
4. How, if at all, did your experience make you better rather than bitter?

Handout 2.2 – Inventory of religiously based positive health habits (page 52)

Risk behaviors avoided:

Healthy behaviors adopted:

Social support networks:

Experience of healing prayer by self and others:

Handout 2.3 – Prayer and healing (page 56)

The following is a testimonial concerning Reverend Matthew H. Gates. It describes the role of prayer for him during his experience preparing for open-heart surgery.

Reverend Gates arrived at Boston Memorial Hospital to undergo open-heart surgery. His doctor briefly visited him two nights before the operation. The doctor stated that he would talk with him again the morning of the operation. The operation was scheduled for the afternoon.

Reverend Gates has long believed that complete health requires a harmony between body and soul. Thus, in the many hours of waiting leading up to the operation, he got to work preparing himself spiritually. He viewed this as his area in which to contribute to the success of surgery.

When the doctor arrived the morning of the surgery, he asked Reverend Gates how he felt. Reverend Gates stated that he was completely at ease and free of anxiety. He described his current state as a “holy calm” that had settled on him. He began explaining that the past two days he had been doing spiritual imaging exercises to help prepare himself for the surgery. He pointed to the four IV bags hanging over his head and explained how he used them to fashion a metaphor. Just as the IV bags, drop by drop, were preparing his body for the surgery, Reverend Gates imagined two spiritual IV bags ministering him. One of the spiritual IV bags came from without, and one came from within.

The spiritual IV from without he described as, “the prayers and thoughts of my family, my friends, and my former colleagues in ministry. They were being gathered at the feet of God, and drop by drop they were feeding into my psyche and my soul, bringing new strength and confidence.” He noticed the doctor listening with interest.

The spiritual IV from within he described as, “all the verses, bits of scripture or hymns, and the lines from great prayers of the church that had been running through my mind. When I couldn’t remember words, I would hum the hymn tune, and the message would get through. Drop by drop by drop, this IV began shaping and strengthening my outlook, my faith, my hope as I focused on the goodness, the love, the caring, and the constancy of God. Together, they made me grateful for all that had been and hopeful for all that was to be.” (p. 82).

Inspired by Reverend Gates’ revelation, the doctor picked up Reverend Gates’ bible and suggested making a covenant between them: “I offer my best surgical skills, you bring your sense of holy calm, and we’ll both trust God to make this a successful surgery” (p. 82).

Reverend Gates reflected that this was the holiest moment of bonding between doctor and patient he had ever experienced.

Source: Adapted from Wagner, 1993, pp. 81-83

Handout 2.4 – Christian tradition and fasting (page 61)

Fasting has a long history within the Christian tradition as an aid to prayer. The Bible has numerous references in this regard, beginning with Moses (Exodus 34:28-29). Beyond merely abstaining from food, it is also a time to express repentance and embrace an abstinence from sins. It is seen as a way to surrender to God and thereby achieve a deeper communion with Him (see Matthew 4:4 NIV: Jesus answered, “It is written: ‘Man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God’”). Fasting is therefore seen as an opportunity for a spiritual “cleansing” – one that mirrors the cleansing of the body.

In addition, taking inspiration from Isaiah 58:7, NIV (“Is it not to share your food with the hungry . . . ?”) by fasting, some people gain a deeper empathy for those who hunger. Consequently, they adapt the practice of donating money they would have spent on a meal(s) to charities that serve the hungry.

Physical Health Benefits of Fasting*

When you fast, you give a break in the workload of your digestive organs (stomach, intestine, pancreas, gallbladder, and liver). This downtime is especially beneficial to your liver. Your liver is the prime organ in charge of producing substances that serve to break down unhealthy chemicals circulating in your body. This process is referred to as *detoxification*. Thus, extra time is spent in cleansing toxins from your blood and lymph nodes.

In addition, as the production of new toxins (from the breakdown of food) is temporarily halted, the toxins stored in areas such as your colon, kidneys, bladder, lungs, and skin are released back into your blood to be cleansed. In fact, every cell in your body is allowed an opportunity to “catch up” on its work of eliminating waste that results from consuming nutrients. This is particularly helpful in countering problems that result from overeating or from a sedentary lifestyle.

This entire process is what lies behind the statement that fasting allows the body to “cleanse” itself. Furthermore, some believe that this cleansing process when observed on a regular basis not only may serve aid in disease prevention but also serve to slightly slow down one’s aging processes.

Note: It is *strongly* recommended that you consult your doctor if you want to fast and plan to do so for more than two days, are pregnant, take medications, or suffer from one of the following conditions: anemia, diabetes, ulcers, cancer, blood disease, hypoglycemia, seizures, or problems with your heart, thyroid, kidney, or colon.

*Adapted from <http://www.healthy.net/scr/Article.asp?ID=1996> (retrieved February 22, 2006).

Handout 3.1 – Wisdom and the Book of Proverbs (pages 74-75)

A proverb is a short pithy saying in widespread use that expresses a basic truth or practical precept. The Book of Proverbs in the Old Testament is an example of wisdom literature. Proverbs, Job, and Ecclesiastes offer advice concerning practical ethical behavior while sometimes addressing ultimate religious questions such as the problem of evil. *Proverb* translates from the Hebrew term *mashal*, which means a “statement of truth” or “standard of appropriate behavior.” These insights can be applied on the personal, community, and social levels and thus offer the opportunity for wide-ranging interpretation and reflection.

Through maintaining continuous focus on issues of mindfulness, knowledge, and understanding, the Book of Proverbs serves as an ancient example of the relationship between spirituality and mental health. Following are some examples.

1. “The beginning of wisdom is this; Get wisdom, and whatever else you get, get insight.” (Proverbs 4:7)
2. “If you are wise, you are wise for yourself; if you scoff, you alone will bear it.” (Proverbs 9:12)
3. “When pride comes, then comes disgrace; but wisdom is with the humble.” (Proverbs 11:2)
4. “Whoever loves discipline loves knowledge, but those who hate to be rebuked are stupid.” (Proverbs 12:1)
5. “By insolence the heedless make strife, but wisdom is with those who take advice.” (Proverbs 13:10)
6. “The wise are cautious and turn away from evil, but the fool throws off restraint and is careless.” (Proverbs 14:16)
7. “A tranquil mind gives life to the flesh but passion makes the bones rot.” (Proverbs 14:30)
8. “The mind of one who has understanding seeks knowledge, but the mouths of fools feed on folly.” (Proverbs 15:14)
9. “Folly is a joy to one who has no sense, but a person of understanding walks straight ahead.” (Proverbs 15:21)
10. “The mind of the righteous ponders how to answer, but the mouth of the wicked pours out evil.” (Proverbs 15:28)
11. “The human mind plans his way, but the Lord directs the steps.” (Proverbs 16:9)
12. “The mind of the wise makes their speech judicious, and adds persuasiveness to their lips.” (Proverbs 16:23)
13. “One who spares words is knowledgeable; one who is cool in spirit has understanding.” (Proverbs 17:27)
14. “A fool takes no pleasure in understanding, but only expressing personal opinion.” (Proverbs 18:2)
15. “Those with good sense are slow to anger, and it is their glory to overlook an offense.” (Proverbs 19:11)
16. “Listen to advice and accept instruction, that you may gain wisdom for the future.” (Proverbs 19:20)
17. “The purposes in the human mind are like deep water, but the intelligent will draw them out.” (Proverbs 20:5)
18. “By wisdom a house is built, and by understanding it is established; by knowledge the rooms are filled with all precious and pleasant riches.” (Proverbs 24:3-4)

19. “Know that wisdom is such to your soul; if you find it, you will find a future, and your hope will not be cut off.” (Proverbs 24:14)
20. “Do not answer fools according to their folly, or you will be a fool yourself.” (Proverbs 26:4)
21. “Four things on earth are small, yet they are exceedingly wise, the ants are a people without strength, yet they provide their food in the summer; the badgers are a people without power, yet they make their homes in the rocks; the locusts have no king, yet all of them march in rank; the lizard can be grasped by the hand, yet is found in kings’ palaces.” (Proverbs 30:24-28)

Note: All biblical quotations are taken from the New Revised Standard Version of the Bible.

Handout 3.2 – About the Book of Job (page 81)

The Book of Job is a masterpiece of religious thought that dramatizes the plight of a human being whose tragic sufferings inspire him to question the ethical nature of a God who permits evil and unmerited pain. The prologue features two scenes in God's heavenly court in which He and the Adversary (Satan) agree to test Job's loyalty. Job is presented as a thoroughly upright and godly man who in no way deserves the evils inflicted on him. As God declares, "There is no one like him on the earth" (Job 1:8). Appearing before the heavenly throne, the Adversary suggests that Job will not remain loyal if deprived of family, property, and reputation. God accepts this challenge and withdraws the protection that has previously shielded Job from misfortune.

After this deal has been struck, bandits sweep away Job's flocks and herds; the "fire of God" consumes his sheep and shepherds; and a fierce wind demolishes the house where Job's children are feasting, killing them all. Stripped of everything he holds dear, Job still blesses God's name (1:13-2:21). Satan next persuades God to infect his faithful worshipper with a painful and disfiguring disease, and, although God initially protests this persecution, it eventually comes upon Job.

In Chapter 3 and following, Job prays to have the process of creation reversed, claiming that it is better not to be born than to endure undeserved pain. The hero is then joined by three friends who insist that his misery must be the result of some unknown sin. Job denies their assertions and begins to question why God would allow bad things to happen to good people.

Beginning in Chapter 9, Job challenges God to appear before him as a human being so that his afflictions may be explained. As he states, "I shall say to God, 'Do not condemn me; let me know why you contend against me. Does it seem good to you to oppress, to despise the work of your own hands and favor the schemes of the wicked?'" (10:2-3). When God does appear, however, it is not in a human form. Speaking from a whirlwind, He emphasizes the enormous distance between divine and human understandings of God. Refusing to answer any of humanity's questions about the ethical principles by which He rules the universe, God calls for humility in the face of His ultimate power and understanding. Finally, Job reaffirms his faith. As he asserts in Chapter 42, "I know that you can do all things, and that no purpose of yours can be thwarted. 'Who is this that hides counsel without knowledge?' Therefore I have uttered what I did not understand, things too wonderful for me, which I did not know" (42:2-3).

Job's concept of God and of the divine-human relationship is radically altered by these revelations. Contrary to his friends' suggestions, Job learns that the God-centered world is not based on justice of retaliation: human misery is not simply punishment for wrongdoing. In the book's epilogue, Job becomes wealthier than before and begets more sons and daughters to replace those who have been killed. However, this restoration and blessing do not fully resolve the perplexing issue of evil and undeserved suffering that continues to pervade human experience.

Note: All biblical quotes from the New Revised Standard Edition of the Bible.

Handout 3.3 – Responses to people with mental illnesses (page 88)

Pathways to Promise has observed various responses of faith communities to members who have a severe mental illness, such as schizophrenia. Some responses are very supportive and helpful while other increase the distress of the person with mental illness and his or her family members. These responses include:

- *The person is fully welcomed in worship and congregational activities.* The person's distinctive spiritual style and behaviors, even if unusual, are included and appreciated. Accommodations are made for the person's experience of a mental disability. Cooperation and collaboration between clergy, congregation members, the person with mental illness, and mental health professionals is well established.
- *The person feels unwelcome and stigmatized in the congregation.* The person is regarded as strange. Congregation members convey feelings of awkwardness, distance, or discrimination. The congregation members do not collaborate with the person, family members, and mental health professionals. In this case, the family members might attend services and leave their loved one who has a mental illness at home.
- *The person with a mental illness and family members feel so unwelcome that they all cease attending services entirely.*

Source: Summarized from Shifrin, 1999, *Pathways to understanding: A manual on ministry and mental illness*, pp. 1-30.

How Jesus Prayed

The Gospels contain many references to Jesus praying, including the following:

- *Matthew 14:23*: Jesus went up on the mountain by himself to pray.
- *Matthew 26:36-44*: Jesus went with three disciples, left them behind, and went further to pray alone. This is a well-known passage in which his disciples fall asleep at Gethsemane prior to Jesus' arrest and execution and is mentioned in all three synoptic gospels.
- *Mark 1:35*: Jesus went to a solitary place to pray.
- *Luke 3:21*: This passage describes how Jesus was baptized and was in prayer when the Holy Spirit descended.
- *Luke 5:16*: Jesus is described as often going to lonely places to pray by himself.
- *Luke 6:12*: Jesus withdrew to a mountainside to pray. Verse 13 implies that he was alone at the time.
- *Luke 9:18*: Jesus was praying alone, with his disciples in the vicinity.
- *Luke 22:41-43*: Jesus withdrew from his disciples "about a stone's throw" to pray by himself.
- *John 16:1-18:1*: Jesus first talked to his disciples, then he prayed, then went with his disciples across the Kidron Valley.

Some Reasons Christian People May Have for Prayer

- The purpose of all Christian prayer is communion with God.
- Prayer is a harmonization of the inward and outward human being.
- During prayer, God promises to hear and answer according to God's will.
- Prayer seeks God's will in faith.
- Prayer has the capacity to change things in God's created universe.
- Prayer offers petitions for guidance and deliverance.
- Prayer shows love and respect toward God.
- Prayer may seek God's grace for issues of personal health, family well-being, community well-being, and world peace.

Handout 4.2 – Spirituality survey (page 106)

This outline is designed to help each participant to assess his or her own current level and quality of spiritual activity. It is intended to provide the individual and the group with a place of reference for planning future goals regarding spiritual activities and to be a vehicle to share experiences and insights with others.

1. What type of spiritual activities (such as Bible reading, prayer, journal writing, listening to inspirational music) do you perform alone? Together with your family at home? With a group, such as at church? Please describe each of these activities.
2. What are the most significant stories, teachings, or symbols that give you guidance in life?
3. What personal experiences have given you a sense of peace, wisdom, or grace?
4. What spiritual supports have helped you the most in a time of crisis?
5. What spiritual supports have helped you the most in a time of great satisfaction or joy?
6. How can you build on or increase your spiritual activities and experiences to promote your continuing spiritual development?

Source: Adapted from Canda & Furman, 1999.

Handout 4.3 – Centering Prayer (pages 112-113)

What Is Centering Prayer?

Centering Prayer is a method of quiet prayer that opens oneself to the Holy Spirit. It is an attempt to present the teachings of earlier times in an updated form. It is not meant to replace other kinds of prayer. It simply offers another way to pray. During the time of centering prayer we consent to the Holy Spirit's presence and action within us. At other times our attention moves outward to discover the Holy Spirit's presence everywhere.

Centering Prayer is

- A relationship with the Holy Spirit and a discipline to foster that relationship
- An exercise of faith, hope, and love
- A movement beyond conversation with Christ to communion
- A process that awakens us to the language of the Holy Spirit that is silent

Centering Prayer Basics

1. Choose a short prayer or prayerful word as the symbol of your intention to consent to the Holy Spirit's presence and action within.
2. Sitting comfortably and with eyes closed, silently introduce the prayerful word as the symbol of your consent to the Holy Spirit's presence and action within.
3. When you become aware of thoughts, return ever-so-gently to the prayerful word.
4. At the end of the prayer period, remain in silence with eyes closed for a couple of minutes.

Further Explanation of Centering Prayer Practice

- I. "Choose a prayerful word as the symbol of your intention to invite the Holy Spirit's presence and action within."
 1. The prayerful word expresses our intention to be in the Holy Spirit's presence and to yield to the divine action.
 2. The prayerful word should be chosen during a brief period of prayer asking the Holy Spirit to inspire us with one that is especially suitable for us.
 - a. Examples: God, Lord, Abba, Jesus, Holy Spirit
 - b. Other possibilities: Love, Peace, Faith
 3. Having chosen a prayerful word, we do not change it during the prayer period, for that would be to start thinking again.
 4. A simple inward gaze upon the Holy Spirit may be more suitable for some persons than the prayerful word. In this case, one consents to the Holy Spirit's presence and action by turning inwardly toward it as if gazing upon it. One can simply be aware of the gentle flow of breath as a point of focus. The same guidelines apply to the sacred gaze as to the prayerful word.
- II. "Sitting comfortably and with eyes closed, silently introduce the prayerful word as the symbol of your consent to the Holy Spirit's presence and action within."

1. By “sitting comfortably” is meant relatively comfortably, not so comfortably that we encourage sleep, but sitting comfortably enough to avoid thinking about the discomfort of our bodies during this time of prayer.
 2. Whatever sitting position we choose, we keep the back straight if possible.
 3. If we fall asleep, we continue the prayer for a few minutes upon awakening if we can spare the time.
 4. Praying in this way after a main meal encourages drowsiness. Better to wait an hour at least before Centering Prayer. Praying in this way just before retiring may disturb one’s sleep pattern.
 5. We close our eyes to let go of what is going on around and within us.
 6. We introduce the sacred word inwardly and as gently as laying a feather on a piece of cotton.
- III. “When you become aware of thoughts, return ever-so-gently to the sacred word.”
1. “Thoughts” is an umbrella term for every perception, including sense perceptions, feelings, images, memories, reflections, and commentaries.
 2. Thoughts are a normal part of Centering Prayer.
 3. By “returning ever-so-gently to the prayerful word,” a minimum of effort is indicated. If not using a prayerful word, simply return to awareness of the breath.
 4. During the course of our prayer, the sacred word may become vague or even disappear.
- IV. “At the end of the prayer period, remain in silence with eyes closed for a couple of minutes.”
1. If this prayer is done in a group, the leader may slowly recite the Lord’s Prayer during these two or three minutes, while the others listen.
 2. These two or three minutes give our minds time to readjust to the external stimuli and enable us to invite the Holy Spirit into our daily lives.

Some Practical Points

The minimum time for this prayer is fifteen minutes. Two periods are recommended each day, one first thing in the morning and one in the afternoon or early evening.

Points for Further Development

During this prayer, we avoid analyzing our experience and we do not harbor expectations or aim at some specific goal. For example, we do not force ourselves to:

- Repeat the sacred word continuously
- Have no thoughts
- Make the mind a blank
- Feel peaceful or consoled
- Achieve a spiritual experience

Extending the Effects of Centering Prayer into Daily Life

- Practice two periods of Centering Prayer daily.

- Practice Centering Prayer as a prelude to reading from the Bible.
- Study other important books about prayer, meditation, and the spiritual life.
- Join a Centering Prayer support group or follow-up program (if available in your area).
 - It encourages the members of the group to persevere in private and together.
 - It provides an opportunity for further input on a regular basis through tapes, readings, and discussion.
- Attend weekend, weeklong, or even longer prayer retreats.

Source: Adapted from Keating, 1994, 2002.

Handout 5.1 – Church relationship checklist (page 123)

Circle a number for each of the questions below according to the following scale:

1	2	3	4	5
Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Usually	Always

1. Is your congregation a welcoming congregation to guests and new members?

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

2. Is there room for theological differences to be voiced?

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

3. Are children effectively engaged?

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

4. Are children included in intergenerational activities or in age-specific learning experiences?

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

5. Are the needs of older adults addressed?

1	2	3	4	5
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6. Are individuals who may be sexual minorities welcome in the congregation?

1	2	3	4	5
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7. Are people from racial and ethnic minorities equally welcomed and included in all worship experiences and other activities?

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

8. Are individuals of many social classes represented?

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

9. Do clergy, lay staff, and congregation members cooperate in a spirit of mutual appreciation and support?

1	2	3	4	5
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Total =

Total Possible= 45

Handout 5.2 – Congregational role structures (page 130)

Role structures result from predictable patterns (Whitehead & Whitehead, 1986). At first, roles may be openly advertised. However, as tasks are repeated, other members become aware that these individuals are doing a good job, and roles are stabilized into defined role structures. For example, Karen may be comfortable with offering an opening prayer publicly, while Bill may be willing to bake food for the meeting. The same holds true for leadership roles. This system benefits the health of the congregation in that peers recognize individuals' strengths, and the group places people in areas where they build on their current strengths.

If not attended to, however, in time these role structures may become unchangeable and rigid. The roles then begin to be viewed as automatic and exclusive to particular individuals. This may be unfair to both the individual assuming the role (a duty voluntarily embraced becomes expected) and to other members (who may not have the opportunity to share their skills or develop new ones).

Developing a role structure helps meet the goals of the group, but, when roles become fixed and rigid, the congregation loses the flexibility that is necessary as structures change. It is beneficial to the congregation's health for new individuals and old ideas to be challenged. This can serve to validate existing structures as well as promote change. It is also how new leaders emerge and receive training. Structures that encourage change of power at intervals allow for this type of congregational growth and flexibility.

Handout 5.3 – The parish nurse’s story (page 134)

Helen’s first visit as a parish nurse was a truly memorable experience. It affected her so profoundly that she viewed it as an affirmation from the Lord of her ministry. One Friday afternoon, she received a call from the church secretary. The secretary informed her that one of the parishioners was at the hospital. She was currently in labor; however, the baby was dead. The pastor happened to be out of town, so she requested that Helen visit.

Helen prayed during the entire trip to the hospital, asking God to help her bring comfort to this family. She soon arrived at the hospital and met the young woman, Laura, and her concerned husband and family members. Helen discovered from the husband, Dan, that on Tuesday the baby had stopped moving. An ultrasound examination on Wednesday confirmed their worst fears. Originally, the doctor assumed that labor would start spontaneously; however, it did not. Laura was admitted to the hospital, and labor was induced on Thursday. Helen had arrived late Friday afternoon, and Laura was still in labor.

Helen, being a nurse, was allowed into the delivery room and spoke words of encouragement and support to both Laura and Dan between Laura’s contractions. Then, Helen offered to pray with them. It was just a simple prayer, “Lord, we don’t know why this is happening. Our hearts are just breaking, but we know that you are in control and that you promise to be with us always. We pray that you will deliver this baby quickly and support Laura and Dan with your love and comfort” (p.57). Helen left the hospital soon after the prayer. She received a call from Dan the following morning, who told her, “Thank you so much for coming-what a miraculous answer to prayer; about two minutes after you left Laura delivered the baby!” (p.57).

Helen continued to minister to Laura and Dan over the next weeks. She made regular visits, shared in prayer, and linked them to a number of resources. Although her first experience as a parish nurse is a sad story due to the loss of the baby, when Helen reflected on it, it also brought comfort and inspiration to her. She felt a real sense of how God might call on her as a Christian woman and as a nurse.

Helen views her role as a parish nurse in the following way. Her mission is not to preach or teach to a multitude of persons in a gathering. She holds one hand at a time, hugs one person. She may support one family wrestling with the impending death of a parent, or she may sit with one family awaiting a loved one to emerge from surgery. She will never minister to a huge number as a parish nurse, but, for her, parish nursing will always be a ministry of mercy, a ministry of one person at a time.

Source: Adapted from Carson & Koenig, 2002, pp.56-58.

Handout 6.1 – Faith-based community organizing (page 153)

Thousands of congregations across the country have engaged their members in collaborative efforts to improve schools, promote economic development, fight crime and violence, and build affordable housing. Jesus carried a message of peace and did not wait passively for the future, but actively organized for change. Jesus was a community organizer, advocating for the poor and the oppressed.

For example, historically, African-American communities have utilized the church as their primary vehicle for spiritual, social, and economic empowerment. The prominence of the church throughout the Civil Rights Movement is well-known. The Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. helped lead the African-American church into the forefront of the struggle for equal opportunity. The success of this church-based model for social change was unprecedented. The Civil Rights Acts of 1964 and 1965 contained historic changes in voting rights, public accommodations, and fair housing opportunities for African Americans.

In the 1960s and 1970s, some churches built houses, established homeless shelters, and began the process of community revitalization. A rising number of African-American church communities began to take an active role in revitalizing their neighborhoods. For example, since the 1980s, the Reverend Dr. Johnny Ray Youngblood and the East Brooklyn Churches organization have led a massive effort to build more than 2,000 single-family affordable homes through the Nehemiah Project in New York City.

In general, various churches have identified many social issues in their communities as appropriate to address; some examples are:

- Affordable housing
- Day care programs
- Computer training centers
- Welfare-to-work programs
- Youth empowerment programs
- After-school programs
- Sponsoring refugees' resettlement
- Food for the hungry

Addressing social problems in the community from a faith perspective is not necessarily always done as a group or solely within the church congregation. Many people of faith have jobs in which they are responsible for attending to social problems or volunteer in various capacities. Some may want to combine these individual activities in the community with a formal community-outreach project of the church. Faith-based initiatives for social service have become widely encouraged. These may involve government and religious cooperative programs, such as refugee resettlement and youth support programs.

**Handout 6.2 – Social health in the Christian community:
An example from Habitat for Humanity (page 162)**

In many large cities the number of affordable housing units that are in good condition is small and growing smaller. A recent study by the National Low Income Housing Coalition found that the average cost of renting a two-bedroom apartment and paying for utilities is so high in most states that a person with a minimum-wage job would be unable to find anyplace to live. The social health of a community is clearly influenced when some members struggle to meet basic housing needs.

Habitat for Humanity International (HFHI) was established in 1976 with a goal of eliminating poor housing construction and homelessness. This movement also seeks to make decent shelter a matter of conscience and action. This nonprofit organization is nondenominational and has a Christian foundation. Since its beginning, more than 125,000 houses have been built in eighty countries, including roughly 45,000 houses in the United States.

This program follows what they term the “theology of the hammer.” Denominational differences fall into the background as groups that may include individuals of several denominations experience the challenge of channeling faith into action in a common purpose. The program also emphasizes the “economics” of Jesus, which involves sharing resources with those in need while recognizing the ability of those who receive the resources to contribute equally to the community.

Key components of this program include the following three conditions: (1) Future homeowners and volunteers work together under supervision to build a house. (2) The house is sold without profit, and the homeowner is not charged interest on his or her mortgage. (3) Corporations, faith communities, and individuals provide financial support. Local habitat affiliates select partner families based on their ability to repay the no-interest mortgage, their demonstrated need, and their commitment to work with Habitat. Families are chosen without regard to race, ethnicity, or religious affiliation. Payments for housing by partner families (varying from seven to thirty years) are then used to fund the construction of other Habitat houses.

An interesting feature of this program is that affiliate organizations are asked to tithe, giving ten percent of their contributions to fund housing construction in other countries. An ecumenical, international board of directors determines policy and oversees and guides the mission of Habitat for Humanity International. Local affiliates mirror this structure by maintaining their own volunteer boards (Habitat for Humanity International, www.hfhi.org).

Handout 7.1 – Noah and the flood (page 182)

According to Jewish rabbinical tradition, during the twelve months that Noah was on the Ark, he had no time to sleep. His restlessness, however, was not the product of the flood or his search for land. Instead, it is said that he was so busy tending to the needs of animals that there was no time for a break. In addition, the *Midrash* (a collection of Jewish commentaries on the Hebrew Scriptures written between 400 BC and AD 1200) cites a dialogue in which Abraham tells Noah and his sons that they survived the flood because of the faithfulness with which they cared for animals on the Ark.

Throughout Noah's journey he learned lessons of care and compassion, attention and responsibility. Wisdom and sympathy were nurtured within the Ark as its captain became a sustainer of life – a steward for God's creation.

As recounted in Genesis 9, God and Noah enter into a covenant after the rains ceased. God states, beginning in verse 12, "This is the sign of the covenant that I make between me and you and every living creature that is with you, for all future generations: I have set my bow in the clouds and it shall be a sign of the covenant between me and the earth. When I bring the clouds over the earth and the bow is seen in the clouds, I will remember my covenant that is between me and you and every living creature of all flesh; and the waters shall never again become a flood to destroy all flesh" (Genesis 9:12-15, NRSV).

Dr. Patrick Dobel, Professor of Public Affairs at the University of Washington, addressed notions of Christian stewardship of the earth's resources in the *Christian Century*. He wrote, "We must use the vast ethical and conceptual resources of the Judeo-Christian tradition to develop a God-centered ecological ethic which accounts for the sacredness of the earth without losing sight of human worth and justice" (1977, p. 906).

Handout 7.2 – War and peace: Christianity’s just-war theory (page 190)

For 1,600 years, Christian theologians have attempted to answer the questions, “When is it permissible to wage war?” and “What should be limitations of the ways we wage war?” These notions were originally addressed by Augustine in the fifth century AD when he claimed that war was a logical extension of the act of governance and that governments themselves were ordained by God. In the thirteenth century, Thomas Aquinas greatly expanded upon this theory in his *Summa Theologica*. There Aquinas wrote that for war to be just it must be waged under the authority of a sovereign leader rather than a private individual; it must have a just cause; and it must have the intention of advancing good and avoiding evil. In the modern day, just-war theory is commonly said to consist of four parts derived from Augustine, Aquinas, and other Christian thinkers. These include:

1. proper authority,
2. proper cause,
3. a reasonable chance of success, and
4. proportionality (that harm caused by a response to aggression does not exceed the harm caused by the aggression itself).

Since the introduction of just-war theory by Augustine and Aquinas, many denominations have added to these principles within formal proclamations. For instance, the United Methodist Council of Bishops issued a statement in 1986 titled “In Defense of Creation.” Here, the Council claimed that a just war must meet the following conditions:

1. just cause
2. just intent
3. last resort
4. legitimate authority
5. reasonable hope of success
6. discrimination
7. proportionality

Similarly, Roman Catholic bishops promulgated a statement in 1983 titled “The Challenge of Peace: God’s Promise and Our Response.” In the section labeled as “Jus ad Bellum,” the bishops claimed that a just war must have the following:

1. just cause
2. competent authority
3. comparative justice
4. right intention
5. last resort
6. probability of success
7. proportionality

For more information, see United Methodist Council of Bishops. *In Defense of Creation: The Nuclear Crisis and a Just Peace*. Nashville, TN: Graded Press, 1986; National Conference of Catholic Bishops. *The Challenge of Peace: God’s Promise and Our Response*. Washington, DC: United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 1983; and Moseley, “Just war theory,” <http://www.iep.utm.edu/jjustwar.htm>.

Handout 7.3 – Taking a home-based ecological inventory (pages 193-195)

This handout contains a list of tips regarding numerous environment-friendly practices.

Reducing Toxic Chemical Use

Facts: Roughly 75,000 man-made chemicals are now in use. Many have not been adequately tested for the threats they may pose to human and nonhuman species (World Wildlife Fund, www.worldwildlife.org).

Reflections: What are the everyday chemicals that you use? How might they impact the environment after their use? What steps can be done to reduce the amounts you use?

How you can help:

- Look for the words “nontoxic” or “biodegradable” on the labels of products.
- Buy mercury-free rechargeable batteries; check with your local government for hazardous waste disposal sites.
- Grow disease- and pest-resistant plants.
- Use compost and mulch to improve soil health and reduce the need for pesticides and fertilizers.

Stopping Global Warming

Facts: Increasing evidence suggests that as pollution increases, so does the world’s average temperature. Global warming forces rapid changes in human and animal habitats. Human industries and activities produce the world’s air pollution, most of it carbon dioxide and other “greenhouse” gases that result in global warming. The United States releases approximately 40,000 pounds of carbon dioxide per person each year (World Wildlife Fund, www.worldwildlife.org).

Reflections: What daily activities in your own lives contribute to the release of “greenhouse” gases? How might you take steps to reduce these amounts?

How you can help:

- Buy a car that gets at least thirty miles to the gallon. This reduces carbon dioxide 2,500 pounds per year more than a car that gets twenty miles per gallon.
- Replace standard light bulbs with energy-efficient fluorescents. This reduces emissions by 500 pounds per year per light bulb.
- Wrap your water heater in an insulating jacket. This reduces emissions up to 1,000 pounds per year.
- Install low-flow showerheads that use less water. This reduces emissions up to 300 pounds per year.

Protecting Forests

Facts: Forests stand as great storehouses of natural life. However, nearly two-thirds of the world's original forests are gone. Forests fall to the chainsaw at an accelerating pace driven by an international timber trade (World Wildlife Fund, www.worldwildlife.org).

Reflections: How can you protect forests during your everyday lives? What daily activities contribute to the depletion of forests?

How you can help:

- Use electronic communications and nonpaper learning resources.
- Buy recycled paper products.
- Use and promote convenient and practical paper recycling.
- Buy firewood from "downed wood" sources.
- Purchase wood products certified by the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC). You can find information about these products at www.fscus.org. Ask your home builder, remodeler, or architect to use FSC-certified products. Inquire with your local building materials retailer about products that are FSC certified.

Saving Water

Facts: Water is a precious resource in our environment. Growing populations and ongoing droughts are squeezing our water resources dry, causing natural habitat degradation and impacting our everyday use of water. On average, Americans use 150 gallons of water per person per day (Earth 911, www.earth911.org).

Reflections: Do you think about your daily water use? If so, what steps do you take to reduce water consumption while at home? What might be the chief sources of water consumption in your household?

How you can help:

- Check for toilet leaks by adding food coloring to the tank. If the toilet is leaking, color will appear in the bowl within thirty minutes. Avoid unnecessary flushing. Dispose of tissues, insects, and other similar waste in the trash rather than the toilet.
- Take shorter showers. Do not let the water run while shaving, washing your face, or brushing your teeth.
- Minimize the use of kitchen sink disposals; they require a lot of water to operate properly. Start a compost pile as an alternative method of disposing food waste.
- Don't over water your lawn. As a general rule, lawns need watering only every five to seven days in the summer. A hearty rain eliminates the need for watering for as long as two weeks. Do not leave sprinklers or hoses unattended. Your garden hose can pour out 600 gallons or more in only a few hours. Use a kitchen timer to remind yourself to turn the water off.

- Raise your lawn mower blade to at least three inches. A lawn cut higher encourages grass roots to grow deeper, shades the root system, and holds soil moisture better than closely clipped lawns.

Lessening Consumer Impact Through Reducing and Reusing

Facts: In 1998, Americans generated 220 million tons of garbage – an increase of 4 million tons over the previous year. This equates to approximately 4.46 pounds per person, per day (Waste Management, Inc., <http://www.mn-wastesolutions.com>).

Reflections: How could you reduce the amount of trash that you send to the landfill? What items do you put out for the trash that could be reused or recycled?

How can you help:

- Reduce the volume of packaging you buy, and reuse what you can.
- Buy quality products and keep them for a lifetime.

Lessening Consumer Impact Through Recycling

Facts: Enough aluminum is thrown away to rebuild America’s commercial air fleet four times every year. Glass can be reused an infinite number of times, and, according to the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), over 41 billion glass containers are made each year. Every year enough paper is thrown away to make a twelve-foot-high wall from New York to California. According to the EPA, Americans use enough paper wrap to wrap all of Texas every year. According to the Steel Recycling Institute, enough iron and steel is discarded in the United States to continually supply the nation’s automakers (Office of Waste Management, University of Massachusetts-Amherst, <http://www.umass.edu/recycle/index.html>).

Reflections: Do you recycle? If so, what types of materials? If not, why? Is there a recycling center close to your home? Does your city have a curbside recycling program? What steps can you take to either increase the amount of materials you recycle or begin a recycling “habit”?

How you can help:

- *Aluminum* is easy to recognize and recycle. Clean aluminum containers only with enough water to prevent odors. The high temperature of processing deals easily with contamination caused by leftover foods or liquids.
- All colors of *glass* are recyclable. Glass bottles must not be mixed with other types of glass, such as windows, light bulbs, mirrors, glass tableware, Pyrex, or auto glass.
- Most types of *paper* can be recycled. The key to recycling is collecting large quantities of clean, well-sorted, uncontaminated, and dry paper. The entire newspaper, including inserts, is acceptable, except accompanying plastic, product samples, and rubber bands.
- *Plastic* recycling faces one huge problem: plastic types must not be mixed for recycling, yet it is impossible to tell one type from another by sight or touch. The plastic industry has responded to this problem by developing a series of markers commonly placed on the

bottom of plastic containers. You should put in your bin *only* those types of plastic listed by your local recycling agency.

- Recycle everything that your local recycling center accepts.