

Dwelling in the Word

The Christian practice of Dwelling in the Word is a regular part of Yellowstone's meetings and broader process of discerning the mind of Christ, God's call & vision for Presbytery, Council and sessions.

1. The New Testament makes it clear that it is the Holy Spirit that calls, gathers, and enlightens both the Church universal and particular churches, in all time and space. One of the most frequent activities of Jesus' apostles and disciples was time spent in prayer, waiting for the leading of the Spirit. □

□2. In the 20th century most of our congregations (and mainline denominations) adopted organizational development models and processes from the business world to conduct their planning, to help them make decisions, and to reorganize themselves.

3. An unintended consequence of this practice has been to mightily reduce the activity of the Holy Spirit among us...something that we pay "lip service" to, rather than invite the Holy Spirit into our lives, our meetings, groups and the lives of our congregations to guide, direct, form, and empower us. □

4. How do we open ourselves again to the leading of the Holy Spirit? By turning to the Word of God, prayerfully and reflectively, so that instead of using the Bible as a tool for teaching, preaching, or supporting a position or agenda, we discover that it interacts with us in a different way, using us for God's purposes.

5. Over the centuries, the church (through its reforming movements) has returned again and again to dwelling in the Word as a spiritual practice that helps us pause to consider what God is up to--in the text that we read over and over, and in our lives. It is not a critical reading of the Bible, as most of us understand Bible study to be. Instead, it is an opening-up of ourselves to allow the Spirit to speak to us through all the musings of the group as it is encountered by a text.

□6. By involving the Sessions as well as the Presbytery (and its Council, committees, ministry teams...) as a whole, Dwelling in the Word begins the process of spiritual discernment--listening first to the text, then to each other, letting the text live in and shape our thoughts, and coming to new insights, together.

The Rev. Marianne Rhebergen, Ph.D. □ Marianne served as a very part-time consultant to Yellowstone for some of our visioning process until taking the call as the Transitional Executive in Cayuga-Syracuse. She also serves as a Senior Consultant □ The Center for Parish Development.