



Hungryhearts

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*Ten Years of Feeding
Hungryhearts*

Editor's Reflections

Having never spent much time in Kentucky, every day is full of new information about this place I've called home for the past few months. Shortly after moving here, the local newspaper carried a large story on the 1801 Cane Ridge Revival, which drew over 20,000 people. I had no idea the site was so close to Louisville, but even more surprising was the involvement of Presbyterians in the affair. The six-day event, which ended only when both humans and horses ran out of food, began spontaneously at a Presbyterian Communion service. It is hard to imagine our passing of silver trays and plastic cups leading to wails and convulsions! The noise, according to one eyewitness, was "like the roar of Niagara... shrieks and shouts that rent the very heavens."

There had been revivals before Cane Ridge, but American Christianity has not been the same since August 1801, in relation to understandings of both God and church. The Presbyterian Church suffered two schisms in the midst of debates over doctrine and discipline, other denominations rose and fell, and "user-friendly hymns, plain-language sermons" became the order of the day.

I have long wondered if we, the Presbyterians of today, are in the midst of a revival of our own. The numbers may not show it, but when Jesus takes five loaves and two fish to feed 5,000, we know numbers can be overrated. It seems illogical that through conflict the church could come out for the better, but the God whom we worship chose to go through death to give us life, so clearly logic has its limits.

Are we in the
midst of a revival?

In 1983 two denominations re-joined, re-membered, after 122 years apart. Seven years later the new *Presbyterian Hymnal* was published, facing controversy over language but still more "user-friendly" for many who felt they were forever singing songs in a foreign land. The *Book of Common Worship* came out in 1993, offering ritual in the best sense of the word, a means by which we might further worship together as Presbyterians in specific, and as Christians on the whole. Congregations around the country are considering new ways that really are old ways of participating in the Sacraments and ordering liturgy.

Now, perhaps, the Spirit is leading us into a third movement, the hunger so many feel being recognized for what it truly is, the need and desire for a deeper relationship with God. There is no one way to love God, any more than we should love parents, spouse, children and friends the same way. But there is the way each of us has been called, and is being called. Individuals are exploring and praying, groups are forming in congregations and presbyteries — dandelions all, whose seed is blowing and growing and spreading.

I began by looking back two hundred years, at an event whose impact we still feel today. Presbyterians are excellent at looking back, keeping minutes and rolls, maintaining a historical society, and most importantly, our *Book of Confessions*. But let us never forget that these confessions are not merely history to show where we have been, but intended as the grounding for who we will become.

When the prophet Isaiah says, "Do not remember the former things, or consider the things of old. I am about to do a new thing; now it springs forth, do you not perceive it?" (Isaiah 43:18-19), he is reminding us that we are not to look back just for the sake of looking back. Rather, our looking back on what God has done is meant to open our eyes to what God is now doing. In fact, the prophet is so sure of God's promises and that they are being fulfilled right now, that he can see them before his eyes. His challenge is for us to do the same, to be, as the prophet Habakkuk put it, "astonished and astounded, for things are being done around us that we would not believe if we were told" (Habakkuk 1:5).

A student who recently visited the site of the Cane Ridge Revival had words that offer promise to us today as much they describe events of two hundred years ago. He said, "It's just that a bunch of people who trusted God got together here, and God did something big. To be able to see where it started, that's pretty cool."

As we consider where we have been and where God is taking us, may we be blessed to say the same.

Peace,
Steve

Hungryhearts: A Second Decade Begins

For the many Presbyterians interested in spiritual formation, the notion that Hungryhearts began in 1991 may be a surprise, either at how little or how much time has passed. To gain some perspective on where we have been, and to anticipate where we are going, we asked a panel of folks who have contributed to the spiritual life of the church for their thoughts.

Fred Cunningham is a spiritual director with a Doctor of Ministry in spirituality. He has served the church in Maryland, Michigan, and India, both as a pastor and as director of a center for spiritual formation.

Julie Johnson is the Director of Spirituality Programs at Columbia Theological Seminary, after serving as an Associate Pastor in Atlanta. She now utilizes her Doctor of Ministry degree in spirituality to teach spiritual formation to Master's of Divinity students, serve as a spiritual director, and to lead workshops.

Tim Jones is currently the Interim Executive Presbyter for the Presbytery of Lake Michigan, after serving as a pastor and executive presbyter throughout the Midwest. As a certified spiritual director, he not only directs individuals, but all governing bodies of the church in their spiritual growth, as well as those preparing for ministry.

Dick Junkin was the first editor of *Hungryhearts news* while he was Associate for Discipleship and Spirituality with the General Assembly. He has served the church at the congregational and General Assembly level in several capacities, as well as spending thirteen years in a number of posts at Austin Seminary after receiving his Doctorate in Church History. He is also the former dean of the Institute for Christian Formation at Stony Point, New York.

Elizabeth Liebert is Professor of Spiritual Life at San Francisco Theological Seminary (SFTS), where she has been the Director of the Program in Christian Spirituality. A widely published author with much pastoral experience, Elizabeth has been on the faculty at SFTS since receiving her doctorate in Religion and Personality.

Anne Bateman Noss is a Presbyterian elder called to a ministry of retreat leadership, teaching, and spiritual direction. She obtained a master's degree in formative spirituality before serving the national church as Associate Director of the Christian Faith and Life area of the Congregational Ministries Division. Before retiring in 1998, she had responsibility for the offices of theology and worship, theological education, and spiritual formation. She is currently serving as an elected member of the Ghost Ranch governing board.

Wayne Purinton is the Executive Presbyter of the Presbytery of Minnesota Valleys. He was a member of the original "Faith Development and the Reformed Tradition" task force which developed *Growing in the Life of Christian Faith* and has long been involved with spiritual formation in the denomination.

Loretta Ross-Gotta is a Presbyterian author and playwright whose primary ministry is *The Sanctuary*, a center for prayer and spiritual nurture in Topeka, Kansas.

Hungryhearts: What changes have you seen over the past ten years in the church regarding spiritual formation?

Wayne Purinton: The changes are in the expectations of individuals. There are resources and persons who can guide and coach, and you can expect to find continuing education experience and degree programs that train and equip persons. We are no longer just talking about the importance of spiritual formation — we are now engaging persons in their spiritual growth.

Fred Cunningham: At the 1990 spiritual ministries gathering in Nazareth, Kentucky, some of those present were skeptical of this new thing called spirituality and spiritual formation. We now know that these are not at odds with the Reformed tradition. So what changes have I seen in ten years? Near unanimity in the recognition that the journey inward and the journey outward need to be considered together.

Elizabeth Liebert: We've been trying to change the notion of formation so it ceases to look like it doesn't belong to the Reformed tradition, because it does. But people need to see *how* it is a central focus of the Reformed tradition. That has been the biggest change in twenty years: spirituality doesn't seem to be such a strange entity.

Julie Johnson: Over the past ten years in the PC(U.S.A.) there has been for many a restlessness, and a growing thirst for living water. Presbyterians have been searching for something more than programs, committee work, material gain, or numerical growth. These dehydrated souls are hearing the invitation of the Spirit to come to the waters and drink deeply from the well of the spiritual tradition. Through our Certificate in Spiritual Formation at Columbia Seminary, we've had several participants who have felt that they were in a desert in their local congregation — just doing the “business” of the church. They come seeking an oasis and tools to help others when they return. We are also seeing seminary students who are seeking “first lessons” about the spiritual life. Many are hungry and thirsty for personal guidance about how to pray, read scripture, and engage in mercy and justice, and instruction on how to lead others to do the same.

Tim Jones: Ten years ago only a handful of people in the denomination were thinking or talking about spiritual formation. Many in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) at that time saw those of us who were intentional about spiritual formation as weird, or at least “different.” Today, through the work of the Office of Spiritual Formation and a growing number of pastors and congregation members, many in the church are taking seriously the call to spiritual formation.

This response has been demonstrated through the corporate life of the church as much as in the lives of individuals. The denomination has added to the *Book of Order* a new requirement, G-14.0306(a) (2), that Committees on Preparation for Ministry be responsible for the spiritual growth of inquirers and candidates. Several seminaries have developed programs in spiritual formation, and almost all of them have at least one faculty member with experience and/or training in spiritual formation. For those seeking a call, it is rare to read a Church Information Form that does not include “spiritual formation” among the required skills for pastoral leadership. And it is now common for churches and middle governing bodies to have a committee responsible for spiritual formation, providing retreats, workshops, and leadership events. In the past, most of us had to attend these events in Roman Catholic or Episcopal settings.

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importance of spiritual formation —
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Hungryhearts: What have been some of the catalysts for this change?

Loretta Ross-Gotta: The grassroots cry for something more — a generalized awareness that “something was missing,” that the church needed to respond to a culture that had forgotten Sabbath, that we needed to balance social justice and action with reflection and prayer. The “new age” movement, despite its many failings, spoke of a deep need in some people that the church was not meeting, and forced us to more carefully define and understand what comprises Christian spirituality, and specifically Reformed spirituality.

That first spiritual formation gathering in Nazareth, Kentucky was a very powerful coming together of people interested in this issue. I will never forget Marjorie Thompson addressing the group about the needs of our denomination and saying we didn't know much about how to pray. The gathering was very heartening to many like myself who had felt so alone in fashioning a ministry of spiritual guidance.

But the cry for something more has been heard. There was the leadership of Dick Junkin and Anne Noss in what is now the Office of Spiritual Formation. Howard Rice's *Reformed Spirituality* and Marjorie Thompson's *Soul Feast*. And there has been the development and proliferation of centers for training.

Julie Johnson: I don't think there is one reason that we can cite specifically...but there does seem to be a shifting going on within North American Christian churches. I don't think we can simply say that it's due to falling membership numbers or in response to conflict over important issues. This seems too reactionary. I do agree with many who are helping us to see that we are living in a post-modern era — in other words, the American culture no longer equals Christian faith. Along the way, I believe that many local congregations lost their identity and mission as baptized disciples of the living spirit of Jesus. Scholars talk about this in regard to missiology. Many have simply become dis-oriented, dis-tracted, dis-placed, dis-integrated. Many are simply “running programs” or “taking care of people,” but seem to have forgotten who they are or who they've been called to be as a disciple community. I believe God is in the midst of all of this, that the Spirit is moving and disrupting old patterns and ways of being, and inviting us to something new. In the restlessness, God is inviting us to remember to whom we belong — to reclaim our baptism and mission as Christ's people. God is placing a hunger within us that neither the culture nor the institutional church can satisfy. The Holy One is offering us the bread of life that will satisfy us and empower us to create/renew Christian community. So the catalyst for change? The Holy Spirit.

Elizabeth Liebert: When the Association of Theological Schools (ATS) required that theological institutions provide formation opportunities [in 1996], we'd already been doing that for sixteen years at SFTS. For them to say this is important suggests a major change. For the seminaries, ATS' statement was the catalyst. Different places have taken it in different directions. Some seminaries connect formation with the rest of the educational program, integrating it into everything they do, while others have a faculty member.

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Hungryhearts: What significant mileposts have you observed?

Tim Jones: Along with the establishment of the Office of Spiritual Formation, *Book of Order* additions, and developments in seminaries and governing bodies that I mentioned before, there are two other mileposts that may not be as evident. Several key Presbyterian leaders have chosen to move from installed positions into ministries of spiritual formation in recent years. The second is that discernment is being used by many in the church as a way to discover God's call in Jesus Christ as we seek to be faithful in this new century. Although there are many who use the word “discernment” to describe what is basically a planning process, I have seen numerous situations in which real discernment is being used.

Loretta Ross-Gotta: When “spiritual director” became an ecclesiastical designation in 1989. People used to call or write about how they might do what I was doing, sharing stories about struggles to be ordained to this ministry, working with presbyteries who did not see the purpose of such a ministry. Sometimes they had a dream or a vision to share, sometimes they needed encouragement. I very rarely get such calls now, and I think it is because these days there are many places to get such questions answered, and this ministry is much more generally accepted.

Julie Johnson: The Certificate in Spiritual Formation at Columbia Seminary began in the Fall of 1995. To date we have more than fifty “graduates,” and these current and future church leaders continue to bear witness to how their lives and ministries have been formed and even transformed by an intentional study in spiritual formation. We are witnessing God's re-structuring of people's lives, worldviews, and visions about ministry. These leaders have been reminded of their baptism and the call to listen for God. It's an honor to see God at work!

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1981-2001: Two Decades of Spiritual

- 1981** San Francisco Theological Seminary begins program in Christian Spirituality.
- 1983** Reunion creates the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.).
- 1987** General Assembly commissions “Faith Development and the Reformed Tradition” task force to study faith formation.
- 1988** Discipleship and Spirituality made part of the Theology and Worship Ministry Unit.
- 1989** *Growing in the Life of Christian Faith* approved and published by the 201st General Assembly. Spiritual Director is added as #784 in the list of Authorized Ecclesiastical Occupational Designations.
- 1990** First gathering of those engaged in spiritual formation ministries takes place in Nazareth KY. First Spirituality Conference at Montreat Conference Center, Montreat NC. San Francisco Theological Seminary begins Masters of Divinity concentration in Christian spirituality
- 1991** 203rd General Assembly approves *Hungry Hearts, Hungry Minds: The Quest for a Reformed Discipleship and Spirituality*.
Growing in the Life of Faith reprinted with study guide.
First issue of *Hungryhearts news* published.
Howard Rice’s *Reformed Spirituality: An Introduction for Believers* is one of the year’s top ten religious books.
- 1993** San Francisco Theological Seminary begins the graduate program in the Art of Spiritual Direction.
- 1994** Over 150 people gather in Montreat NC for an Advent gathering celebrating ministries of spiritual formation.
Book of Order is amended to make explicit the presbytery’s responsibility to oversee the spiritual growth of candidates in preparation for ministry [G-14.0306(a) (2)].
- 1995** Marjorie Thompson’s book *Soul Feast* becomes a bestseller for Westminster/John Knox Press. Columbia Theological Seminary (Decatur GA) establishes program in spirituality.

Formation in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)

- 1996** First class of trained spiritual directors graduates from San Francisco Theological Seminary. Association of Theological Schools requires theological institutions to provide opportunities for personal spiritual growth.
- 1997** First “Journeying Together” conference held, connecting preparation for ministry to spiritual formation.
Resource Team for Spiritual Formation created, its eight volunteer consultants working to identify and support spiritual growth in the church nationwide.
“Project in Congregational Spirituality” receives a two-year Lilly Foundation grant.
The denominational curriculum “Covenant People” includes spiritual practices as a component of all lessons.
San Francisco Theological Seminary receives a Lilly grant for its “Youth Ministry and Spirituality” project.
- 1998** “Taste and See! A Celebration of Ministries of Spiritual Formation” is held in San Antonio TX. The “Come Away and Rest Awhile” conference for presbytery moderators is held in Louisville KY. A work group is created to explore issues of Sabbath keeping.
- 1999** *Presbyterians Today* begins a regular column on “Spiritual Fitness.”
- 2000** The 212th General Assembly approves “Invitation to Sabbath: Rediscovering a Gift.”
- 2001** Retirement of the Resource Team for Spiritual Formation.
Creation of the Spiritual Formation Leadership Network.
Office of Spiritual Formation is expanded to four full-time staff.
Publication of *John Calvin: Writings on Pastoral Piety* in the Classics of Western Spirituality series.

Elizabeth Liebert: The Program in Christian Spirituality is celebrating its twentieth anniversary. It was launched in 1981, and then in 1982 we began the “Companions on the Inner Way” conference. It takes place several times annually, and hundreds have participated. That single event has done a great deal to affect the ethos of the church, with lots of pastors and lots of students taking part; some come back year after year.

The Spiritual Director program was established in 1994. It was the first course-based program in spiritual direction, rather than experience-based. We work as a holistic project, and I say with all modesty that we have one of the best programs in the country. From the very beginning we tried to allow Presbyterians, and Protestants in general, to think about spiritual direction from their own theological perspective.

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worldviews, and visions about ministry

Hungryhearts: What was lost by the lack of attention on spiritual formation in the past?

Loretta Ross-Gotta: Our hearts. It seems to me our attention to practical matters of ministry, our emphasis on biblical and theological scholarship in seminaries, and the influence of corporate business styles on church administration tended to neglect the matters of the heart and personal experience of God.

Wayne Purinton: The lack of attention on spiritual formation led to individuals seeking such help in other denominations, at times working with groups that had no particular orientation other than spirituality. The responsibility to help people grow in their faith disappeared, and many times we answered the question by putting people on committees or giving them jobs to do.

Tim Jones: For me what was not present in the past was a deep sense among all of us that in our baptism we have been called and set apart to be in ministry with and for Jesus Christ. Our baptism started us off on a journey of growing in faith and faithfulness. For too many in the past, that growth stopped with confirmation. The spiritual formation movement in the church has helped many of us reclaim the idea that life is a spiritual journey. Spiritual formation gives us tools to traverse that journey.

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Hungryhearts: What impact has the emphasis on spiritual formation had on the PC(U.S.A.)?

Tim Jones: Many members and pastors are taking seriously their need to continue growing in their relationship with Jesus Christ. The number of people in spiritual direction has grown tenfold in the last five years. The use of materials relating to spiritual formation and development has proliferated in the church and in bookstores. I believe that this is a movement of the Holy Spirit as the church continues to change and grow.

Elizabeth Liebert: A clue that something has changed is that there are specific calls at hand. For pastors seeking a church call, wisdom on the street had been “Don’t check this box [for spiritual formation] if you want a job.” That is no longer the case. There is desire for good leadership in this area both in the local church and the church as a whole. Students are now able to say, “I have specific knowledge in this area.”

Hungryhearts: Where is spiritual formation going in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)?

Julie Johnson: First, I hear people asking “How can I do this in my church?” Many are benefiting from retreats and conferences, but want to know how God might transform our congregational “life together.” In other words, how can Christian spirituality and spiritual formation infuse all that we do?

Second, there is a shift in regard to justice and mission, a reclaiming that the spiritual life is about both the inward and outward journey. For too long we have seen spiritual formation and social justice at two opposite ends of the spectrum. Many are now trying to learn the faithful dance of prayerful service and missional worship. In our world that is so in need of Christ’s compassion and the precious gift of holy hope, we need to be prayerful bearers of Good News.

Tim Jones: At the congregational and presbytery level there is a lot of passion around spiritual formation. The church is moving from a secular, bureaucratic model to one that is more similar to how the early church organized itself. Members and pastors are more willing to respond to using spiritual gifts and passions, and a sense of calling in deciding where to put their time and energy. We will see more “ministry teams” rather than committees in the future, and the role of pastors will most likely return to teaching members how to do ministry rather than pastors being the sole minister. I sense that, like the Peacemaking program, the important changes and movements in the future will happen at the local level.

Wayne Purinton: Spiritual formation is no longer an add-on to adult education, and unavailable for children and youth. The future will bring spiritual growth to members of the church as the natural growth process of faith. I would hope that retreat and conference centers for adults would become a major factor for everyone’s faith journey.

How can Christian spirituality
infuse all that we do?

Hungryhearts: What role has Hungryhearts played, and what role do you see it playing in the future?

Anne Bateman Noss: Before I ever thought of coming to Louisville, *Hungryhearts* seemed to me to be a refreshing breeze signifying that some Presbyterian winds of change were beginning to blow. Through it I learned that there actually *was* an Office of Spiritual Formation, that Dick Junkin was available to help us in thinking about spiritual formation from a Reformed viewpoint, and that there were others who joined me in yearning for a more intimate experience of the movement of the Holy Spirit within our tradition. It was personal, it was inspiring, it gave me tacit permission to pursue my call within the Presbyterian Church.

Ten years ago my impression was that each person working in spiritual formation within the PC(U.S.A.) felt very much alone, without much support or understanding from the institutional church. Spiritual formation seemed the province of the Episcopalians and the Roman Catholics. *Hungryhearts* was a tangible, reassuring link between those of us pursuing our rather lonely call out in “the field” and the denomination.

After coming to Louisville, my dream was that *Hungryhearts* would be a valued resource for the growing number of Presbyterians called to spiritual formation ministry, and that it would contain essays, poems, and a comprehensive calendar of events. I think that under Kris Haig’s direction that goal is being achieved. In the future I envision it becoming a respected, often-quoted voice within the denomination. Its continued presence is an important metaphor for the church’s commitment to spiritual formation. Over the years the Office of Spiritual Formation has fostered a measure of community among those who feel called to ministries of spiritual formation and, to some degree, *Hungryhearts* is a tie that binds us all together. And with the Spiritual Formation Leadership Network, there will be even more effective outreach. And that’s critical in these days of terrible uncertainty. People are reaching out to each other, heart to heart. In the midst of our efforts to help those in need, we must continue to mature in faith by caring for our interior life with God.

Dick Junkin: My guess is that *Hungryhearts'* greatest contribution has been neither its articles nor its listings of upcoming events, but its very existence. At the time we were giving birth to it, and perhaps still today, there were many in the church who were asking questions and struggling with issues we now identify with the word "spirituality." Not a few of these sensed that they were getting little if any understanding in their quest, much less help, from the congregations or the church at large. There were lots of "hungry" — and lonely — people. In that context, the coming into existence of *Hungryhearts* had, I believe, a powerful symbolic effect. It said to such people that their concerns and yearnings were heard, understood and valued by the denomination at large, and that the former were therefore not only not alone but formed a part of a community of seekers. Perhaps people even received some help along the way as they read the articles and discovered upcoming events in which they might have an interest. But I am guessing that the biggest help was that through the existence of *Hungryhearts* people felt their hands being held by Christian brothers and sisters as they sought to make sense of, and respond to, the questions and longings arising from deep places within. I'm glad to have been able to play a part in those early days. 🙏



The Reformed Spirituality Network

The Reformed Spirituality Network is a group of leaders from the Reformed tradition of the Christian faith who have a vision to support the Christian community in Reformed spirituality through networking, educating and resourcing. They believe that Reformed spirituality helps people:

- to respond to God's call to grow in godliness,
- to deepen their own union with Christ, and
- to be transformed by the Holy Spirit

The Network was founded by Tom Schwanda, Minister in the Reformed Church in America and currently a professor of spirituality at Reformed Bible College, Grand Rapids, MI. After conversations with John Ackerman, a Presbyterian pastor in Minneapolis, and Dick Junkin, then Associate for Discipleship and Spirituality in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), the first Gathering was held in 1993. The first two presenters were Dick Adams, Presbyterian pastor in Pennsylvania and founder of Sabbath House, and Don Postema, Christian Reformed pastor and noted author. Since then, five Gatherings have been held, with prominent speakers such as Howard Rice, John Bell of the Iona Community, Marjorie Thompson, and Ben Campbell Johnson.

Participants in the Network have been members and agencies of the Christian Reformed Church in North America, the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) and the Reformed Church in America. The Design Team for future Gatherings and retreats is composed of people from these three denominations. Information about the Network can be obtained by visiting their web site: www.geocities.com/refspnet/index.html or writing to Tom Schwanda, 6125 Capitan SE, Grand Rapids, MI 49546, e-mail tomschw@iserv.net. If you wish to add your name to the mailing list for the RSN newsletter, send an e-mail message to Sue Van Eerden: marthamry@aol.com.

Nearing Incompletion

The Spiritual Formation Leadership Network

The Spiritual Formation Leadership Network is nearing incompletion. Very soon, the first edition of the directory of Presbyterians who can provide spiritual formation ministries will be on-line and available in printed form at Presbytery and Synod resource centers.

When the directory is available, you will be able to locate people in a variety of ways. On-line, you will be able to locate someone geographically by state. You will be able to locate people by their particular ministry such leading workshops or providing individual or group spiritual direction. You will also be able to find the people who are able to provide leadership on certain topics such as Sabbath keeping, Reformed spirituality, or Centering Prayer. Names of persons who have experienced the leadership of a particular network member will also be available, as will other references. The next issue of *Hungryhearts* will provide more detailed information about using the directory.

Why is this notice entitled “Nearing Incompletion?” For one reason, it has taken more time than we had envisioned creating it, and therefore, it is not quite finished. **But more importantly, this directory will never really be finished.** New people will be added as they discern their call to this ministry. Contact information will change. The on-line version of the directory will be updated continually so the information there will be as accurate as possible. The printed directory will be updated periodically.

For more information about the directory, please contact Brad Kent, Associate for Spiritual Formation by e-mail at BKent@ctr.pcusa.org; by phone at 502-569-5384 or 1-888-728-7228, ext. 5384 (toll free); or by surface mail at 100 Witherspoon Street, Louisville, KY 40202-1396.

Insites Beliefnet



www.beliefnet.com

What can I say? Beliefnet.com is a guilty pleasure, the sort of thing one does, but doesn't brag about. If it is variety you are looking for, this site puts Baskin-Robbins 31 flavors to shame. The links to sacred texts alone go from *Bahai* to *Zhuan Falun*. But quantity does not assure quality. Along with articles from the Religious News Service, one can also read about the religious beliefs of supermodel Christy Turlington and hardrocker Marilyn Manson (You can read about him on your own time).

And yet this site does have its value. Where else could you find quizzes on topics such as “What kind of a Bible hero are you?” or “How hip is your church?” I wouldn't use this material seriously, but to get a conversation started I can't imagine anything better to reach a very computer literate generation. And it should also be said that Beliefnet can be very funny — and a good sense of humor is a wonderful gift of God.

If you are looking for real information on this site, it may be there, but be careful not to believe everything you read. But if you are looking for a little fun, or a way to engage an otherwise quiet group of teens (or adults), Beliefnet may just be the place to turn.

Beliefnet: 

Scale:  sheds a lot of light
 lights out

For a complete **Insites** review, go to www.pcusa.org/spiritualformation and click on “Hungryhearts”



On the Horizon

Due to the numerous events taking place throughout the year and around the country, our complete list of upcoming events has been moved to www.pcusa.org/spiritualformation; please use the **calendar** link. Send information on your events to SShusset@ctr.pcusa.org. Include a brief description of the event, along with where it is to be held and how to get more details.

New Paradigms in Spiritual Direction A conference sponsored by *Spiritual Directors International* April 5-7, 2002. Namaste Retreat and Conference Center, Wilsonville, OR. 541-929-9562 or www.sdiworld.org

This ecumenical and interfaith conference will include a wide variety of institutes and workshops. Explored will be topics such as "The Enneagram and Kabbalah," "The Sacred Labyrinth," "Body Prayer," and "Taizé Prayer."



Exploring Celtic Spirituality

April 21-25, 2002. Montreat Spirituality Conference, Montreat NC. 800-572-2257.

Discover a spirituality for today based on the practices of Celtic Christians through the centuries. Workshops include "The Iona Community — A Contemporary Celtic Community" and "Composing Celtic Working Prayers." *Lectio divina* groups, a labyrinth, and spiritual directors will also be available for those who are interested. Event leaders include J. Phillip Newell and Brad Kent, with music led by Celtic Ceilidh and Tom Fellenbaum.



Companions on the Inner Way Retreat: *Pastor as Spiritual Guide*

April 23-27, 2002. San Francisco Theological Seminary, San Anselmo, CA. 415-258-6583 or apope@sfts.edu.

At this retreat fresh approaches to pastoral ministry will be discussed, new spiritual self-care skills will be learned, and a deeper understanding of spiritual guidance will be offered. Each day will include lecture and dialogue with Howard Rice, afternoon worship with Holy Communion and evening prayer. Opportunities for communing with God through art and nature, contemplating spiritual readings, times of silence and contemplation will also be available.



Journeying Together

Spiritual Formation for the Process of Preparation for Ministry for Committees on Preparation for Ministry, inquirers, candidates, and others involved in the process

July 11-14, 2002. Toddhall Retreat and Conference Center, Columbia, IL. 502-569-5708 or 888-728-7228 x5708

When a presbytery committee on preparation for ministry (CPM) becomes a community of spiritual practice, the care process offers rich opportunities for spiritual growth for committee members themselves, for those inquirers and candidates for whom they bear responsibility, and for the larger church on whose behalf they exercise this responsibility. Participants will experience a process for spiritual discernment that can be used with inquirers and candidates. Leaders include Kris Haig, Coordinator for Spiritual Formation of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.); Evelyn Hwang, Associate for Resourcing, CPM; and presbytery executives and seminary representatives such as Garnett Foster, Julie Johnson, Tim Jones, Jack Robinson and Daniel Yeazel.



Give us a word...

In the early days of the church, pilgrims in search of wisdom would seek out desert mothers and fathers, often presenting themselves with the request, "Give us a word." Those with the gift of wisdom and insight may no longer tend to live in the wilderness, but their words speak to us still.

Listening to God

Spiritual Formation in Congregations

by John Ackerman

Alban Institute. ISBN 1-56699-245-1. \$14

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It is one of the ironies of ministry and church leadership that there is so much time and energy spent on the nuts-and-bolts business of the church that spiritual formation, ostensibly the priority of Christian ministry, often gets relegated to the sidelines. This is true for individuals within the church as well as for congregations as a whole. John Ackerman's book *Listening to God* addresses this issue in a practical and insightful manner. His direction and models for congregations can help them to undergo a process of prayer and discernment, of both listening to and doing God's will.

Ackerman begins with an overview of contemporary understanding of spirituality and the changes in the church's view of itself over the last 50 years. He moves on to consider stages of spiritual growth as they apply to congregations and their leadership, and how a consideration of these stages can facilitate spiritual growth. He also reflects on different spiritual styles, the knowledge of which can bring new insight and encouragement to congregations who are seeking both self-understanding and growth. In Ackerman's process, the wisdom gained through discussing these growth stages and spiritual styles is then placed in the service of discernment, a process that Ackerman sees as essential to the spiritual development and revitalization of congregations. The goal of this entire process, and according to the author the goal of spiritual growth in congregations, is to be open as a group to God's leading and direction for the future.

The Appendices make up almost a third of the book, and they contain valuable information about undergoing a spiritual formation and discernment process within a congregation. They offer a step-by-step guide to implementing the ideas presented in the text. The exercises and handouts are especially helpful resources and are easily adaptable for use in a variety of church situations. Any pastor or church leader could, with the help and guidance of this book, guide a congregation to a greater sense of vision and spiritual direction.

The strength of this book is the ease with which its ideas may be assimilated in a congregational setting. However, this simplicity sacrifices some theological depth in the interest of pragmatism. At times Ackerman too easily utilizes management models and language without regarding the theological assumptions underlying such popular corporate tools. Ackerman refers to his book as a "map" which is an appropriate image. A map of the sea will not give you the subtlety, depth, or inspiration of a picture of an ocean sunset, but it will get you where you want to go and is invaluable for navigation. So it is with *Listening to God*. It is a useful tool for anyone interested in leading a community of faith to deeper awareness of itself and its mission. It can also help congregations learn to pray and grow together in the Spirit, which is certainly a voyage worth embarking upon.

Our reviewer, Larry Bowald, is the pastor of the Cynthiana Presbyterian Church, in Cynthiana, Kentucky

Give us a word. Let us know what you are reading. What books have really spoken to you, and which texts have changed you? Send your thoughts and comments to Steve Shussett at SShusset@ctr.pcusa.org.

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The Network connects Presbyterians who want spiritual formation leadership with those who can provide it. Members are qualified to lead retreats and workshops, consult with congregations and governing bodies, or provide spiritual direction. A directory will soon be available on the website and at presbytery resource centers.

You can also contribute to the work of the Office of Spiritual Formation through the Spiritual Formation Fund, which is a permanent endowed fund through the Presbyterian Foundation.
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Spiritual formation is the activity of the Holy Spirit which molds our lives into the likeness of Jesus Christ. This likeness is one of deep intimacy with God and genuine compassion for all of creation. The Spirit works not only in the lives of individuals but also in the church, shaping it into the Body of Christ. We cooperate with this work of the Spirit through certain practices that make us more open and responsive to the Spirit’s touch, disciplines such as sabbath keeping, works of compassion and justice, discernment, worship, hospitality, spiritual friendships, and contemplative silence.

Office of Spiritual Formation, Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)

Readers/Writers

Presbyterians in Contemplative Prayer

“Last year I had a call to contemplation. After much spiritual consultation and guidance, and a lot of study and prayer, I honored the call and established a contemplative prayer group at my church. We call it “Common Ground,” and have had groups of six and ten people. Last year I also did a thirty day silent retreat, using the spiritual exercises of Ignatius.”

V. Masters

“You asked about our own individual and devotional habits. At present the pattern is to read one of the Psalms upon rising, and then move into intercessory prayer. At breakfast my wife and I read from the Gospels, then have joint prayer. Because I normally awake before my wife, I am able to have a snack beforehand. As Earl Palmer of University Presbyterian Church in Seattle says, ‘Have some comfort food before soul food so you don’t keep thinking about when you are going to eat!’

“I have a part-time job during the summer at a local golf course, located high on a hillside. From that viewpoint I can see the locations of about 55 churches in the presbytery. This gives me a time of intercession for the congregations in the Presbytery, even those that are out of sight.”

Chuck Jenner

“For the past three years I have been on an adventure in prayer, steeped in the contemplative tradition. My life has been transformed, and continues to be so. I have found Thomas Keating’s works to be most helpful, as well as Teresa of Ávila and John of the Cross, among others. I have recently finished the Spiritual Guidance program with the Shalem Institute in Bethesda, Maryland.

“For an extrovert like myself, it took awhile to find my way into a life of prayer without words or images, but it has been enriching and deepening in ways I never imagined. I have found my anger subsiding, my need to control loosening, my racing mind and heart stilled. I think my wife and children and parishioners like me a whole lot more! Life has also become much simpler for me, with love becoming the measure of success.

“I am only a beginner on the journey, and I suspect I always will be. I can live with that. There’s nowhere else I’d rather be.”

Langdon “Buddy” Hubbard

Many have called or written since our last issue to share of their experiences in contemplative prayer, whether individually or in a group. A few have discussed the witness it would present to the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) to discover the many who are involved in different types of such restful prayer.

If you are engaged in a method of contemplative prayer, whether it is centering, breath prayers, or another type, contact me by email at SShusset@ctr.pcusa.org, or surface mail at Steve Shussett, Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), 100 Witherspoon Street, Louisville KY 40202-1396, or by calling toll-free at 888-728-7228, ext. 5157. Let us know what your practice is. Are you with a group, and is it a church group? How many are involved? Would you be interested in knowing of others engaged in contemplative prayer who might be in your general area, and would you mind if we let others know of you?

Even if you have contacted us before with such information, we would like to hear from you again.



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Ten Years of Feeding

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<i>Editor</i>	Steve Shussett
<i>Circulation</i>	Cathy Duncan
<i>Mailing Address</i>	100 Witherspoon Street Louisville KY 40202-1396
<i>Toll free</i>	888-728-7228, ext. 5306
<i>Direct dial</i>	502-569-5306
<i>Website</i>	www.pcusa.org/spiritualformation

The Office of Spiritual Formation

<i>Coordinator for Spiritual Formation</i>	
Kris Haig	KHaig@ctr.pcusa.org
<i>Spiritual Formation Leadership Network</i>	
Brad Kent	BKent@ctr.pcusa.org
<i>Hungryhearts</i>	
Steve Shussett	SShusset@ctr.pcusa.org
<i>Administrative Assistant</i>	
Cathy Duncan	CDuncan@ctr.pcusa.org

