



Credence & Co.

SUPPORTING LEADERS, TRANSFORMING ORGANIZATIONS



November 2, 2019

Living into God's Call

Mennonite Church Alberta

Betty Pries
Credence & Co.



Encountering, Embracing, Embodying Christ

Lectio Divina

1. Set your intention; ready yourself; notice what is stirring in you today. Honour this stirring. Then, still your mind to listen.
2. Hear the Word. Notice what catches your attention. Do not assign meaning to what you have read.
3. Hear the Word again. Meditate on what caught your attention. Allow the text to speak to you.
4. Talk with God regarding what you have received from the Word.
5. Spend time in silence as you allow the Word to continue to speak to you.
6. Break your silence with a short closing prayer.



Introduction

Goals

- To review the outcomes of November, 2018 and March, 2019
- To outline MCA's 3-year Dream & Plan
- To launch MCA's Year 1 commitment, to deepen & strengthen MCA



Introduction

But First... A Few Opening Words

- How do we listen for God's call?
- How do we read the signs we are seeing?



Introduction

A Few Opening Words

- How do we listen to God's call?
- How do we accurately read the signs we are seeing?



Introduction

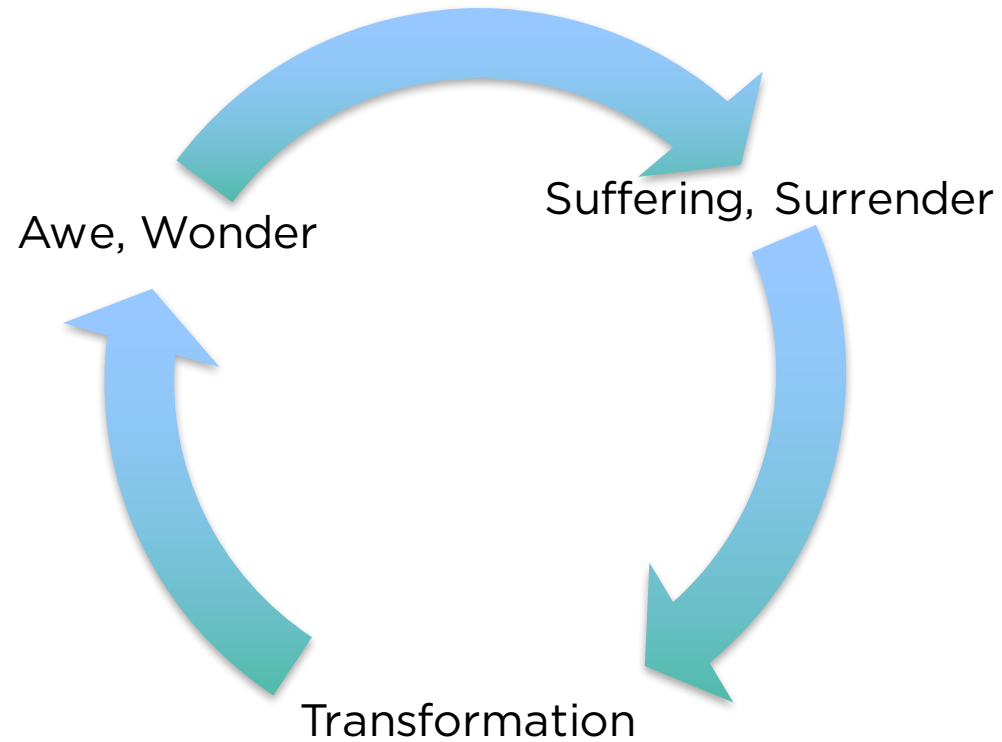
A Few Opening Words

- A conversation: Is God “disrupting” us? Is God in this chaos?

YES

Introduction

November 2018: Grand Narrative





Introduction

A Few Opening Words

How is God calling us
during this time?



Introduction

A Few Opening Words

To answer God's call
we face two further questions:

Who are we **now** and why are we here
in this time and in this place?



Introduction

A Few Opening Words

God leaves footsteps behind,
crumbs that show us the way.

Wisdom is found in
learning how to see.



Introduction

Beatrice Bruteau

[To understand the stories of
Scripture],

we have to understand that what they
are ultimately doing is revealing the
deep truth about ourselves.



Introduction

Beatrice Bruteau

It is to *us* that the angel of the Annunciation proclaims that through the power of the Holy Spirit we will bring forth from our emptiness divine life...

The secret of the divine life is already within us and needs only to be accepted and nurtured.



Introduction

Beatrice Bruteau

It is to *us* that the baptismal voice is addressed, saying,
“You are my beloved child,
with whom I am well pleased.”

And if we *really hear* that, we will be driven into a wilderness wherein we will struggle with the question of what that means and what its implications are.



Introduction

Beatrice Bruteau

And eventually we will discover,
as was foreshadowed at our birth,
that we are there – lying in the manger,
as food for the world.



Introduction

MCA's Call

What if MCA knew deep in its bones
that it is beloved of God?

And what if that deep knowledge drove
MCA into a wilderness of wrestling with
God to discover its call?

And what if MCA discovered that its call
was found in the discipline of giving
of itself to become food
for a world of hunger and longing?



Introduction

MCA's Call

Today represents a stop along the journey of remembering God's love, wrestling in the wilderness and listening for how MCA is called to pour itself out for the world.



Review

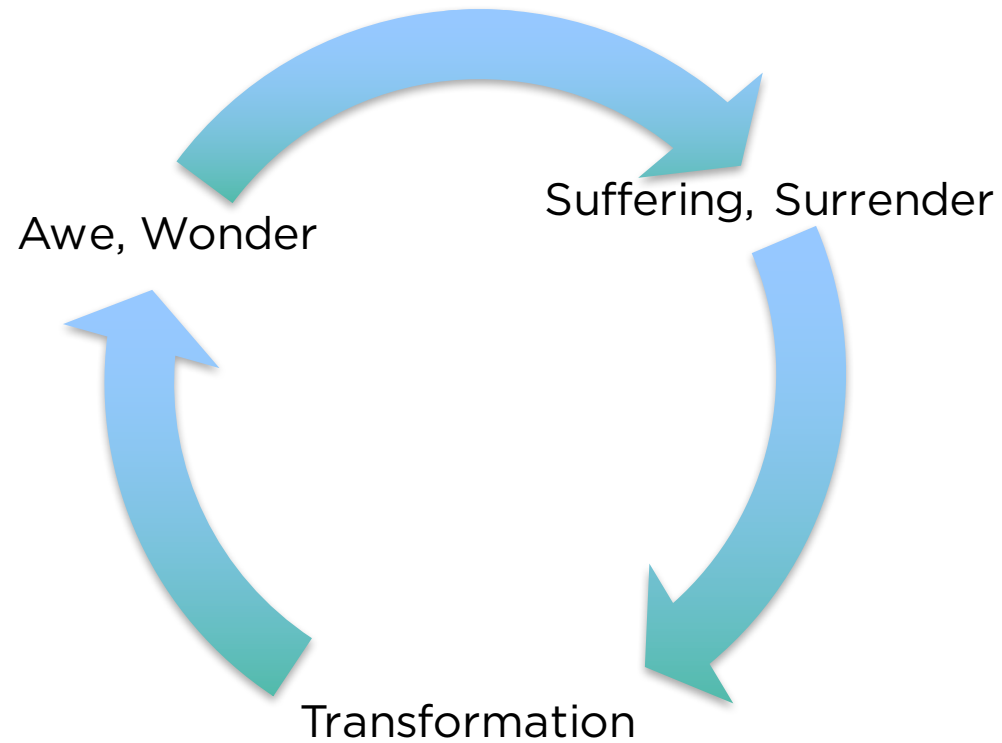
November 2018: Church in 21st C

A time of great upheaval in our society

- Longing for meaning, purpose, belonging and rest.
- Longing for something bigger than me and a solid place to stand.
- Longing to know we are loved.

Review

November 2018: Grand Narrative





Review

November 2018: Spirituality of Renewal

- Renewal is a spiritual journey – personally and collectively.
- Renewal calls on us to reconnect with the God who has called us into life.
- Renewal invites us to practice the spiritual disciplines that open ourselves to God.



Review

November 2018: Invitation to Prayer

What is God calling us to release?

What is God calling us to embrace?

- How might we open ourselves to the movement of God's spirit?
- How might we overcome our fears, losses, and self-judgement?
- How might we address the deep longing of our time?
- How might we live more fully into being God's people?



Review

March 2019: Harvesting the Season of Prayer

- Invitation to share from what each person and each congregation heard regarding how God is calling MCA.



Review

Emerging Directions: Release

1. Absence of prayer
2. Need to box people in; trappings that do not define core
3. Clan way of being & exclusivity
4. Past conflicts, feeling small, external measures of success



Review

Emerging Directions: Embrace

1. Prayer & Prayer Practices
2. Core Commitments + Engagement with deep longings
3. Deep Community
4. Character
5. Ministries



The Dream & the Plan

What did RG do?

- RG gathered & sifted the feedback from March 2019 to create a 3-year dream & plan
- RG set a direction for Year 1...

- The 3-year plan... (drumroll)...



Encountering, Embracing,
Embodying Christ...

In Life; in Community;
in the World



The Dream & the Plan

How will the 3 years work?

- Each year = different theme
- Year 1: Encountering, Embracing, Embodying Christ... **In Life**
- Year 2: Encountering, Embracing, Embodying Christ... **in Community**
- Year 3: Encountering, Embracing, Embodying Christ... **in the World**



The Dream & the Plan

Encountering, Embracing, Embodying Christ... 3 Phases





Year 1

Encountering, Embracing, Embodying Christ... In Life

- How do we nurture our relationship with God?
- How do we reclaim prayer & spiritual disciplines?
- How do we remember that we are deeply beloved?
- How are we formed so we are able to give ourselves to the world?



Year 1

Encountering, Embracing, Embodying Christ... In Life

- Four “Locations”
- Four Lists
- Four Callings

Committees

Invite your committees to choose one item from this list.

Personal

Invite your people to choose one item from this list.

Congregations

Choose one item from this list.

MCA

Choose one item from this list.





Year 1

Goal

To reknit ourselves to God so that we can be poured out for the world.

To be on this journey together as MCA.

To report back through the year.



Year 1

Four Lists

In your group, review the 4 lists.

- What questions does the list raise?
- What would you add?
- What feels hopeful?
- What feels hard?



Year 1

Congregational Groups

In your congregational group, what commitments could you see your congregation, your committees and your people taking up?

What support do you need from MCA / one another to take on this challenge?



Encountering, Embracing, Embodying Christ

Contemplative Prayer

Set your intention; ready yourself; notice what is stirring in you today. Honour this stirring. Pour your heart out to God - take time to speak your prayers. Then, still your mind to be in God's presence in silence.



Encountering, Embracing, Embodying Christ

Contemplative Prayer

Allow yourself time for silence in God's presence.

When your mind wanders, do not judge yourself. Simply notice the wandering and return to silence – to God.

You may wish to choose a word to guide you back (e.g. “Lord have mercy.” or “God, I am here.”)



Encountering, Embracing, Embodying Christ

Contemplative Prayer

Break your silence with a prayer of thanks.



Encountering, Embracing, Embodying Christ

Contemplative Prayer in a group

Set your intention; ready yourself; still your mind.

“Be Still and Know that I am God” (1x)

Silence

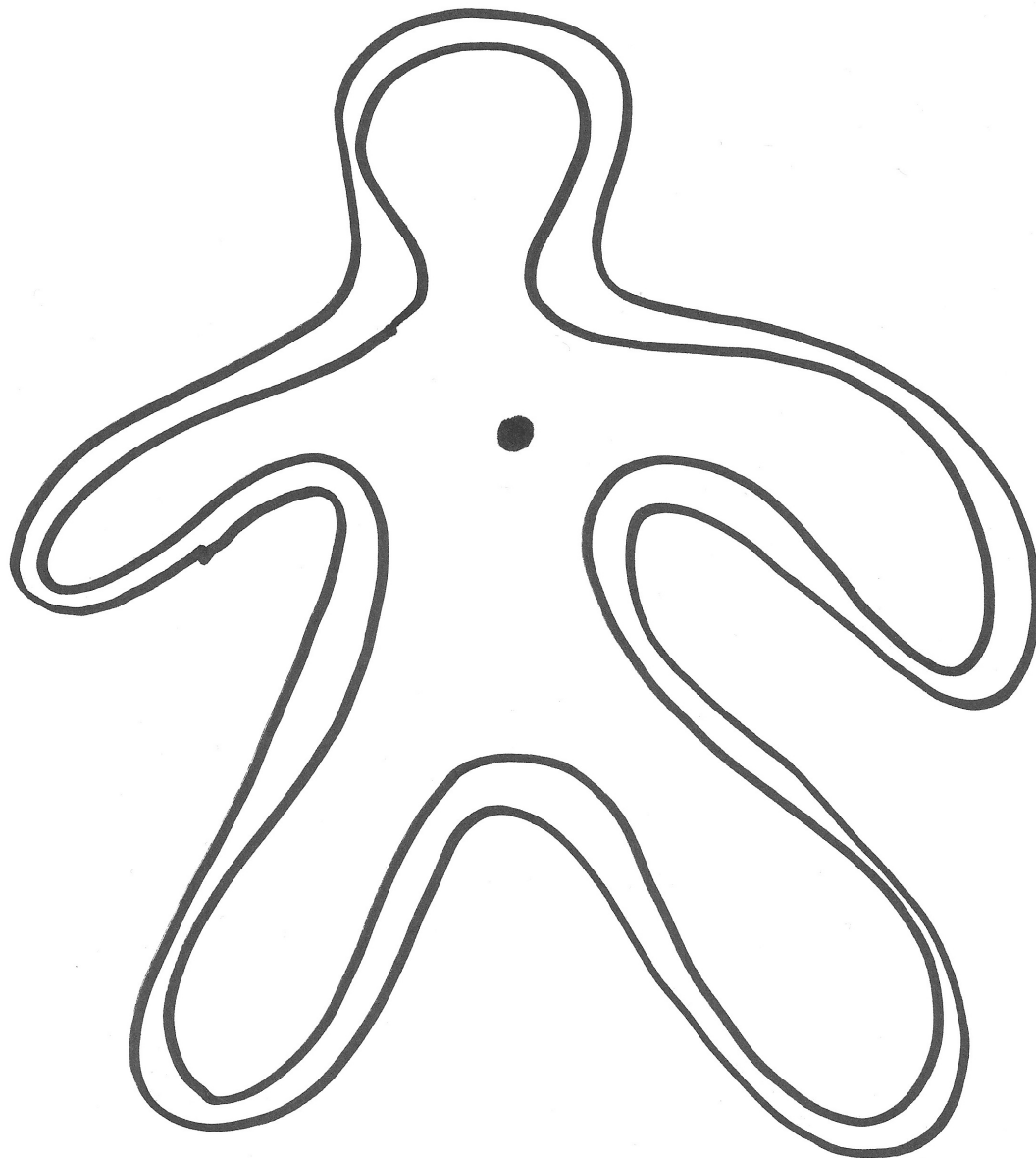
“Be Still and Know that I am God” (3x)

The Lord’s Prayer



Re-Knitting Ourselves to God

Architecture of Selfhood





Re-Knitting Ourselves to God

Architecture of Selfhood

- The Descriptive Self is perfectly neutral – not bad nor better than another person’s Descriptive Self. It simply is.
- It is our strengths, our limitations, our characteristics, life histories and core needs.



Re-Knitting Ourselves to God

Architecture of Selfhood

- The Descriptive Self is not neutral in the eyes of the world. Some descriptors are seen as more valuable than others; some as less valuable.
- We become attached to our descriptors – even our less-loved ones. We cover our descriptors with ego and shame. When we do this, we build a Defended Self (false self).



Re-Knitting Ourselves to God

Architecture of Selfhood

- The Defended, False Self is like a second skin that grows around our first skin, the Descriptive Self.
- And because we don't want people to see our ego and shame, we cover our second skin with third and fourth skins until we become quite "defended."



Re-Knitting Ourselves to God

Architecture of Selfhood

- The Deeper Self is the breath of God in each person. This is the Genesis 1 promise. It is God alive in each person.
- Here we are not our past, nor our future, not our strengths nor limitations, not even our gender. It is the house of God within each person.



Re-Knitting Ourselves to God

Architecture of Selfhood

- Our Descriptive Self is the container that en-fleshes the Deeper Self.
- Our Deeper Self needs the Descriptive Self to have form.
- Our Descriptive Self needs the Deeper Self to have breath.



Re-Knitting Ourselves to God

Architecture of Selfhood

- Our Deeper & Descriptive Selves mirror the unity in Jesus between Jesus' humanity and divinity.



Re-Knitting Ourselves to God

Architecture of Selfhood

- The Deeper Self is the birthplace of goodness, generosity and grace.



Re-Knitting Ourselves to God

Architecture of Selfhood

- When we put the center of our identity at the place of the Deeper Self, Selfhood is never at risk.



Re-Knitting Ourselves to God

Architecture of Selfhood

- When we place the center of our identity in our attachments, Selfhood is always at risk. What others say that hurts causes defensiveness because we must protect our Selfhood.
- If our Selfhood is at the Deeper Self, we can be discerning re: how to respond. And, Selfhood is not at risk.



Re-Knitting Ourselves to God

Architecture of Selfhood

- At the level of the Descriptive Self, we are unique, different from one another.
- At the level of the Deeper Self, we are one (because the breath of God is not divided).



Re-Knitting Ourselves to God

Architecture of Selfhood

- When we live in fidelity to our Deeper Selves, we see with God's eyes and hear with God's ears...
- That we are beloved.
- That the pain of the world is God's pain *and* becomes our pain.



Re-Knitting Ourselves to God

Architecture of Selfhood

- When we live in fidelity to the breath of God within us, we recognize ourselves as part of the Body of Christ and like Christ, we are able to ‘pour ourselves out’ for the world.



Re-Knitting Ourselves to God

Architecture of Selfhood

- All preaching seeks to return us to our home in God from which we turn our face with God to care for the world.



Re-Knitting Ourselves to God

Architecture of Selfhood

- The proposed spiritual practices MCA, MCA congregations, committees and people are invited to consider are practices that build a pathway from the Defended Self to the Deeper & Descriptive Self.



Re-Knitting Ourselves to God

Acceptance Prayer in 4 Stages

- I *allow* myself to feel what I am feeling.
- I *accept* my feeling (i.e. I do not deny these feelings)
- I *release* my feeling into God's care.
- I *rest* in God's love for me.



Re-Knitting Ourselves to God

Acceptance Prayer in 4 Stages

- I *allow* myself to feel what I am feeling.
Because our feelings are real.



Re-Knitting Ourselves to God

Acceptance Prayer in 4 Stages

- I *allow* myself to feel what I am feeling.
Because our feelings are real.
- I *accept* my feeling (i.e. I do not deny these feelings)

Because what we resist we entrench.



Re-Knitting Ourselves to God

Acceptance Prayer in 4 Stages

- I *allow* myself to feel what I am feeling.
Because our feelings are real.
- I *accept* my feeling (i.e. I do not deny these feelings)

Because what we resist we entrench.

- I *release* my feeling into God's care.
Because we can't let go what we haven't accepted as our reality.



Re-Knitting Ourselves to God

Acceptance Prayer in 4 Stages

- I *allow* myself to feel what I am feeling.
Because our feelings are real.

- I *accept* my feeling (i.e. I do not deny these feelings)

Because what we resist we entrench.

- I *release* my feeling into God's care.
Because we can't let go what we haven't accepted as our reality.

- I *rest* in God's love for me.

Because God loves us unconditionally.



Re-Knitting Ourselves to God

Acceptance Prayer Example

- I *allow* myself to feel this pain.
- I *accept* that I am feeling pain regarding this situation.
- I *release* my pain into God's care.
- I *rest* in God's love for me.



Re-Knitting Ourselves to God

Acceptance Prayer

- The Acceptance Prayer is a way of returning to the “house of God” in the midst of daily life and tough situations.
- The Acceptance Prayer does not mean we do not act. Quite the opposite. It means we place the center of our identity in the house of God; from where we can best discern how best to act.



Re-Knitting Ourselves to God

Acceptance Prayer in 4 Stages

“Everyone must have two pockets, so that they can reach into the one or the other, according to their needs. In the right pocket are to be the words: ‘For my sake was the world created,’ and in the left: ‘I am earth and ashes.’”

Rabbi Bunam

Spiritual Disciplines

Acceptance Prayer	Stance of watching (noticing moments of awe and wonder)
Contemplative Prayer (meditation, guided prayer, walking prayer)	Daily Examen (at the end of each day, noticing where God has been present and where you have sensed distance)
Fasting / Sabbath	Spoken Prayer (alone and together)
Stance of waiting – listening for the still, small voice of God	Practices of Community, Hospitality and Welcome
Lectio Divina / Scripture Reading	Spiritual Reading
Gratitude Journal	Singing Together



Re-Knitting Ourselves to God

The Spiritual Discipline of Wonder

- Trims us of the layers that surround us with distraction, cynicism, workaholism, self-importance...
- Trains us to see God's activity – not only in the good and right but also sometimes in what is disruptive.
- Trains us to notice our contribution to harm.



Re-Knitting Ourselves to God

The Spiritual Discipline of Wonder

May we become open
to seeing the face of God

in the creation
in our neighbour
in ourselves