

Sample Proposals

Peer Learning. Suppose that pastors and musicians from at least four congregations desired to learn about the history and meaning of Lord's Supper practices, to choose Scripture texts and music that would help the congregation engage in the Lord's Supper in new ways, and reflect together on how this learning might bring renewal in the congregations. If the congregations were from different cultures, how might this impact the learning?

Visual Arts. Your congregation has been considering the visual messages that are conveyed in your worship space. You would like to engage the congregation in a study of resources related to space and visual art. As a part of the learning process you will invite an artist who has experience in nurturing the gifts within a congregation. Welcoming members of all ages to participate, you will study specific Scripture passages and create visual art that will be used in worship.

Scripture in Worship. Your congregation delights in Scripture reading but you have sensed that there may be ways to help them engage more deeply in the passages that are used in worship. You would like to develop a year long project to consider creative ways to present Scripture in worship that will use the gifts of people of all ages and integrate Scripture into the daily lives of worshipers.

Development of Local Gifts. The more you look over your congregation, the more you become convinced that the Lord has distributed many gifts and abilities that are not presently being developed and used in worship. You begin to imagine how it will enrich your worship life when more worshipers make themselves and their gifts available to play instruments, sing, lead in prayer, readings and Scripture. So you gather a group who share your desire and dream. You will develop a plan for instructing people in the Biblical teachings about their gifts, give the congregation opportunities to identify their gifts, provide ways to coach them in developing their gifts further, and foster an environment in which they will be free to step forward to be used. You envision the day when you will be able to provide insights and materials to other congregations so they can join you in drawing many others into satisfying roles of leadership.

Worshipping in Silence. Imagine worship that would be based on a rhythm of sound and silence, opening the worshipers to finding God in multiple ways in church and at home, in work, or leisure. Worship leaders would participate in a retreat during which they would experience and learn about silence. A take-home packet of materials would be developed by an intergenerational volunteer group who would meet weekly for two months under a staff coordinator; these packets would be given to each household/family in the congregation during a one-hour session explaining their use. The packets would include age-specific suggestions and activities. The grant year would conclude with a congregation retreat during which stories about the congregants' silence experiences would be shared followed by discussion about how these experiences have enhanced their worship experience and ability to find God in new ways.

Christ's Mystery, Our Mystery. Suppose a worship leadership team of five congregations from different denominations would be committed to writing a common mission statement for worship, developed out of a theology of the paschal mystery and the baptismal priesthood of all the faithful, and would engage the members of the congregations in the development of the statement. The process might include a day of learning/retreat attended by a core group of at least six people from each of the five congregations, facilitated by a liturgical scholar/teacher. These groups would then facilitate a similar day for members of their congregations. At the end of these events time would be given the participants to complete a written reflection consisting of sentence completions. These reflections would be evaluated by the six core groups and a draft of a worship mission statement would be written, returned to the members of the congregations for feedback, another draft written, returned ... this process continued until a final statement is reached.

Cultural Change. The neighborhood around your church is changing. Many people have worshiped in this building for many years but new people are coming in large numbers. There is a growing divide between

longtime members and new worshipers. Many are of different generations but there is growing differences that come from the variety of cultures, education and economic stability. Varied worship experiences of these people are raising questions about worship in the congregation. Pastors and lay leaders would like to create a learning process to determine how the church can fulfill its mission while it preserves meaningful connection to past cultural strengths.

Sabbath Rest. Your church is busy engaging in significant ministry both within the congregation as well as in the community; however, you have been unable to create and sustain meaningful patterns of Sabbath rest to uphold and continue your ministries. You are seeing increased signs of “burn-out” in some leaders. You wonder if it may be important to actually practice Sabbath rest rather than only talking about it. You would like to invite two other local congregations to study Sabbath rest and explore realistic ways to practice it in spite of demanding schedules.

Contextual and Counter-cultural. Your church has survived some “worship wars” but there continues to be tension surrounding worship issues. With many new members coming into the church, the temptation to adapt to culture rather than to be counter-cultural is very strong. You plan to invite the congregation into a study of Biblical worship. Throughout the study, opportunities will be created for intergenerational groups to explore new ways to lead worship using a variety of gifts. You expect that this process will help your church remain faithful to its beliefs and to being counter-cultural in worship and congregational life.

Strong Leadership. You have observed the damage that has been done in churches where the leadership is too strong or not strong enough. In some congregations this tension has been most noticeable in worship. You would like to help the congregation develop a system for maintaining healthy, reciprocal leadership that is understood and sustainable. You propose to invite members of all ages into a study of Biblical leadership. Members will use the learning to consider how to best prepare for worship, and how to achieve solid, continual leadership, rather than heroic, non-sustainable leadership models. As a leader yourself, you understand the importance of modeling healthy leadership.