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TOO MUCH?

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Cultivating Change in Small Town and Rural Communities

www.PRCLI.org

July 27, 2023



Outcomes

Remember God continues to create... in our lives, our congregations and our communities every day.

Faithful innovation participates in God's creating work.

Sustaining and disruptive leadership serves the Gospel fueling the love of all our neighbors (in ministry and mission).

Gracious God, we thank you for making the earth fruitful, so that it might produce what is needed for life: Bless those who work in the fields; give us seasonable weather; and grant that we may all share the fruits for the earth, rejoicing in your goodness; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Prayer for Agriculture (adapted from the Episcopal Book of Common Prayer)

Mark 4

4 Again he began to teach beside the sea. Such a very large crowd gathered around him that he got into a boat on the sea and sat there, while the whole crowd was beside the sea on the land. 2 He began to teach them many things in parables, and in his teaching he said to them: 3 “Listen! A sower went out to sow. 4 And as he sowed, some seed fell on a path, and the birds came and ate it up. 5 Other seed fell on rocky ground, where it did not have much soil, and it sprang up quickly, since it had no depth of soil. 6 And when the sun rose, it was scorched, and since it had no root it withered away. 7 Other seed fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up and choked it, and it yielded no grain. 8 Other seed fell into good soil and brought forth grain, growing up and increasing and yielding thirty and sixty and a hundredfold.” 9 And he said, “If you have ears to hear, then hear!”

God's Ongoing Creation

How you think about God matters.

Cultivating Change - Remember
Theology

Our Constantly Creating God

Farmers, ranchers, foresters, and other rural people's spirituality has a strong connection to the first articles of the Apostles' or Nicene Creeds.

The Apostles' Creed speaks about our God as the "creator of heaven and earth." The Nicene Creed lifts up this same theme. God is the "maker of heaven and earth, of all that is, seen and unseen".

God breathes life into our lives ... and communities ... and world.

What has God been creating in
your life lately?

What has God been creating in
your community lately?

What has God been creating in
your faith
community lately?

God cares about
small town and
rural people and
their lives.

The earth is the Lord's
and all that is in it,
the world,
and those who live in it;

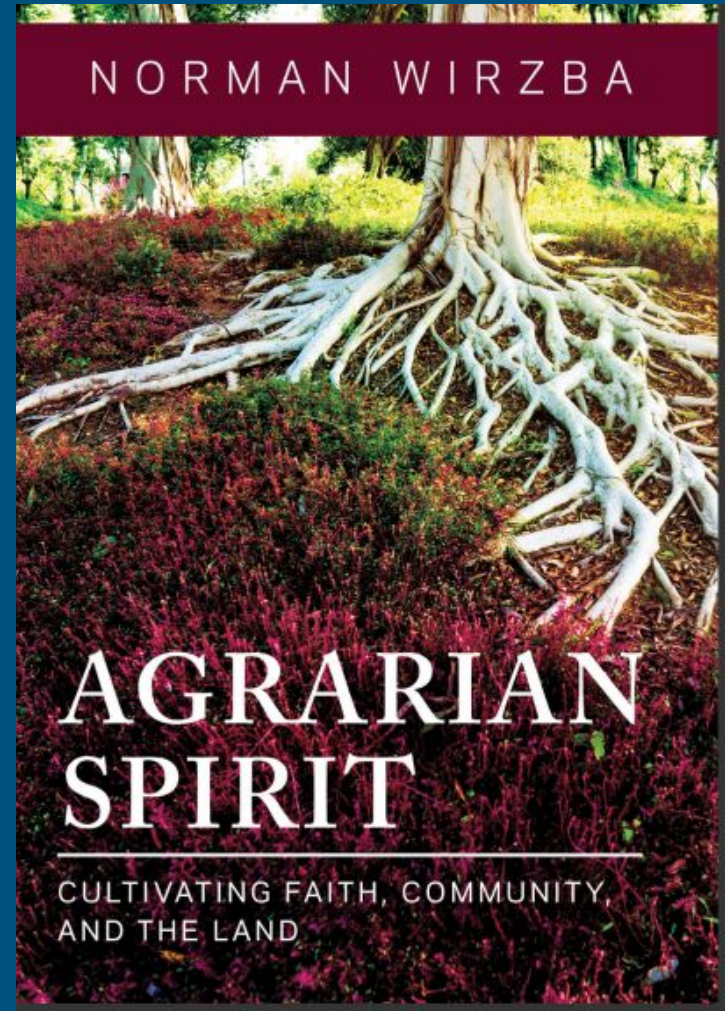
Psalm 24.1



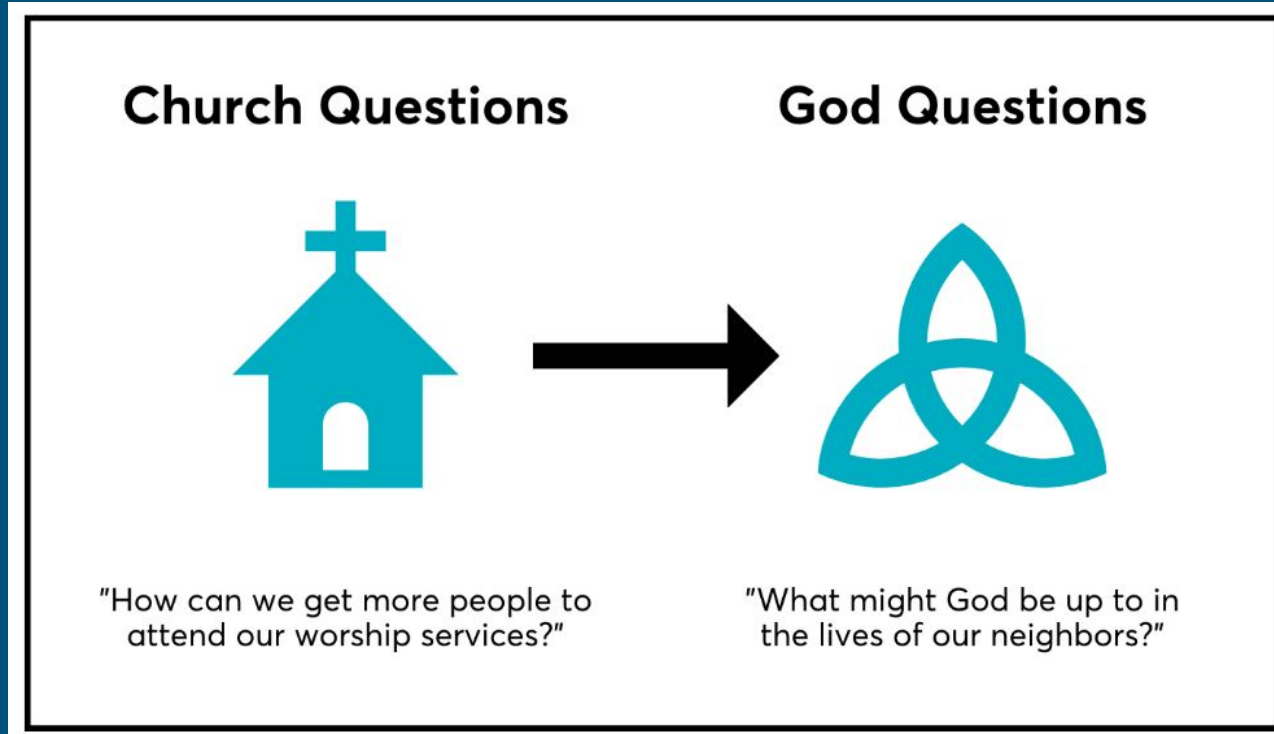
Great Acceleration - Wirzba

Garden to remember we are not machines...

“If God is the primordial and essential Agrarian - the one who creates and sustains the world by planting, gardening, farming and shepherding life - and if spiritual practice refers to a person growing (yet always imperfect participation in God’s ways of being with creatures, then the cultivation of distinctly agrarian spiritual exercises become a matter of the greatest social, practical and theological significance.” p. 9



Cultivating Change- Change the Questions



What comes to mind when
you hear the word, “Cultivate?”



[Farmall C cultivator - Technical IH Talk - Red Power Magazine Community](#)



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Cultivate -

[Cultivate Definition & Meaning - Merriam-Webster](#)

Cultivate verb

cul·ti·vate 'kəl-tə-,vāt

cultivated; cultivating

Synonyms of *cultivate* - *transitive verb*

1 to prepare or prepare and use for the raising of crops

also : to loosen or break up the soil about (growing plants)

2 **A** to foster the growth of

B - CULTURE sense 2a *cultivate* oysters for pearls

C : to improve by labor, care, or study : REFINE

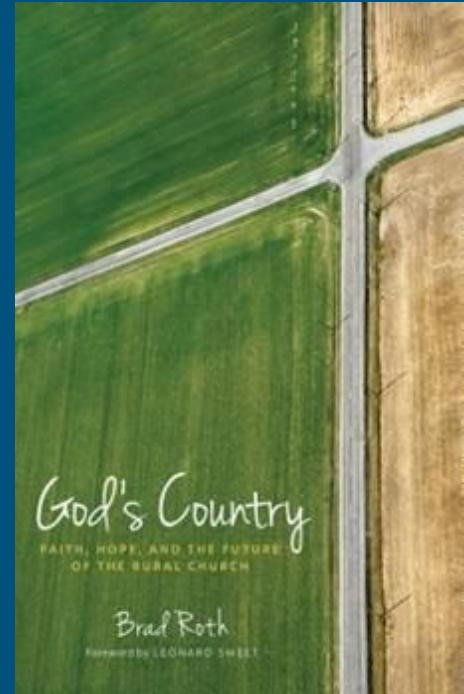
3 FURTHER, ENCOURAGE

4 to seek the society of : make friends with

God's Country - Brad Roth

God cultivates small town and rural contexts

Here's the problem: as rural places are devalued or even despised, rural pastors and lay leaders can experience burnout and despair, rural congregations can become overshadowed by a diminished sense of significance and self-worth. I am convinced that one way we discover a cure is by coming to recognize that God delights in and is present in rural places and all places can offer authentic praise to God. p. 38



What is “rural”?

How would you define “rural”?

Latin -“rus - ruris”

early 15c., of persons, "living in the countryside," from Old French rural (14c.), from Latin ruralis "of the countryside," from rus (genitive ruris) "open land, country" (from PIE *reue- (1) "to open; space;" see room (n.)).

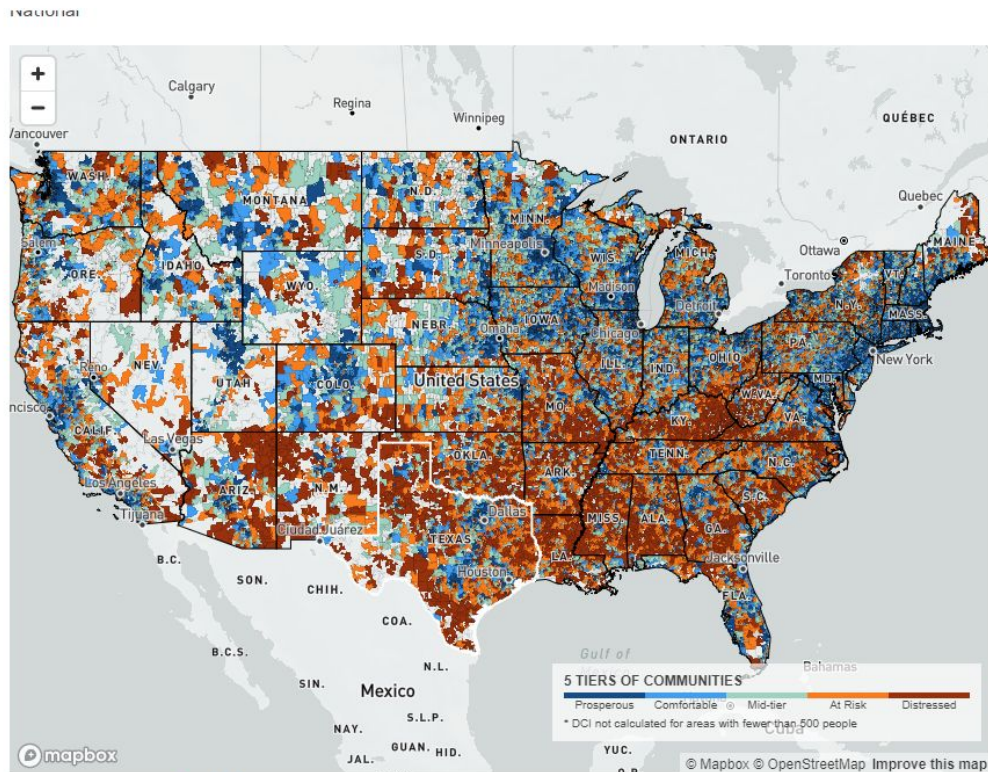
[Etymonline](#)



What is rural? - Four ways

- ★ Economic
- ★ Population - Demographic
- ★ Cultural
- ★ Environmental





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Download PDF

What is rural? Demographic

First define urban... Over 5000 people

Urban Cluster - 5000 to 50,000

How do you define rural? Rural is what is not urban.

Would you consider a town of 5,000 "urban"?

Population - less than 10K ELCA

ELCA in 1990: 5,000 or less

Allen Stanton

"Place with cows...

Dollar generals

45 miles from a Target or Walmart"

People in Twin Cities - Often anyone not in city

In Western MN - Rural - open country - towns or cities even if less than 100 people in town

Frontier - 7 people per square mile

Underserved populations

Cultures - Ethnicity

Specific communities
in the SW MN Synod

Dakota

German

Swedes - Norwegian - Pietist and
Orthodox - Danes - Pious and Happy
- Icelandic

Somali - South Sudanese - Nuer -
Ethiopian

Latino - Mexican, Honduran, Mayan

Hmong - Laotian - Micronesian

What kind of rural context?

Translate into each...

Economic

1. Agriculture - Agribusiness farming
 2. Grazing - Ranching
 3. Lumber - Timber
 4. Light Manufacturing
 5. Mining
 6. Fishing
 7. Recreation
 8. Mix
-

Rural Economic Life - It takes a lot of forms...

Agriculture



Photo by [Jan Kopřiva](#) on [Unsplash](#)

Ranching

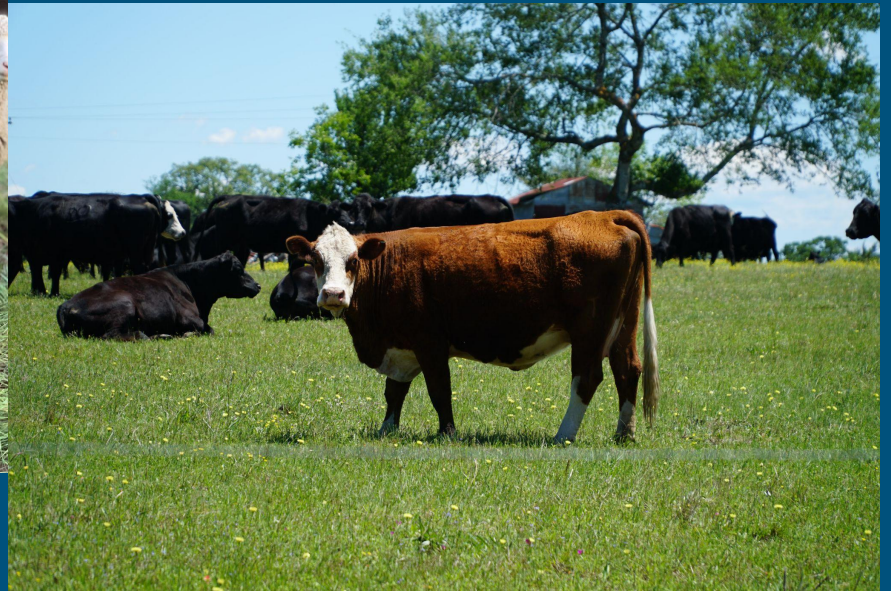


Photo by [Tanner Yould](#) on [Unsplash](#)

Photo by [Thomas Park](#) on [Unsplash](#)

Forestry



Photo by [Alex Belogub](#) on [Unsplash](#)

Small Manufacturing



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Recreation



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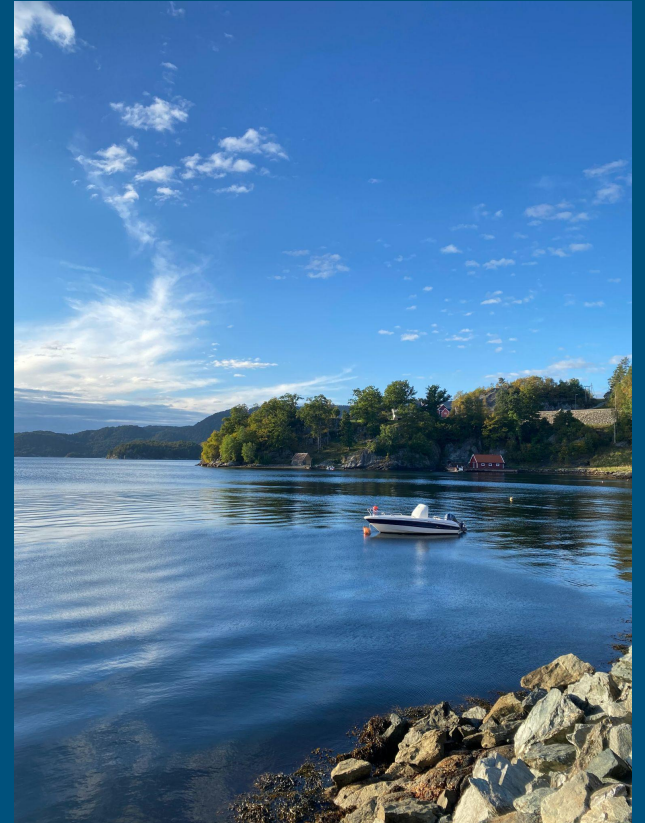


Photo by [Christine Valle](#) on [Unsplash](#)

Fishing



Photo by [Mitchell Griest](#) on [Unsplash](#)

Mining



Photo by [Wim van 't Einde](#) on [Unsplash](#)

Our constantly creating God stirs us up to
faithfully innovate.



Questions?



Good planning comes
out of
“Holy Stewing!”

Leading Change in Rural and Small Town Communities

Dialect matters -

Oral Culture

Translate business concepts

History matters

How you define success matters

Redefine Success - Wheelock

Learn from local change leaders

Losses and gains - Change brings

Be sensitive to allergies and fears -

Leading Change in Rural and Small Town Communities

Nostalgia or Living Memory - Mark Hanson

“Memory embraces the past in order to understand and inform the present, (while)

... nostalgia dwells in an idealized past (that is) unattainable and thereby disparages the present,”

Look for Assets - Treasure Hunting

Listen

The Five Steps of Faithful Innovation



Listen



Reconnect



Define



Reframe

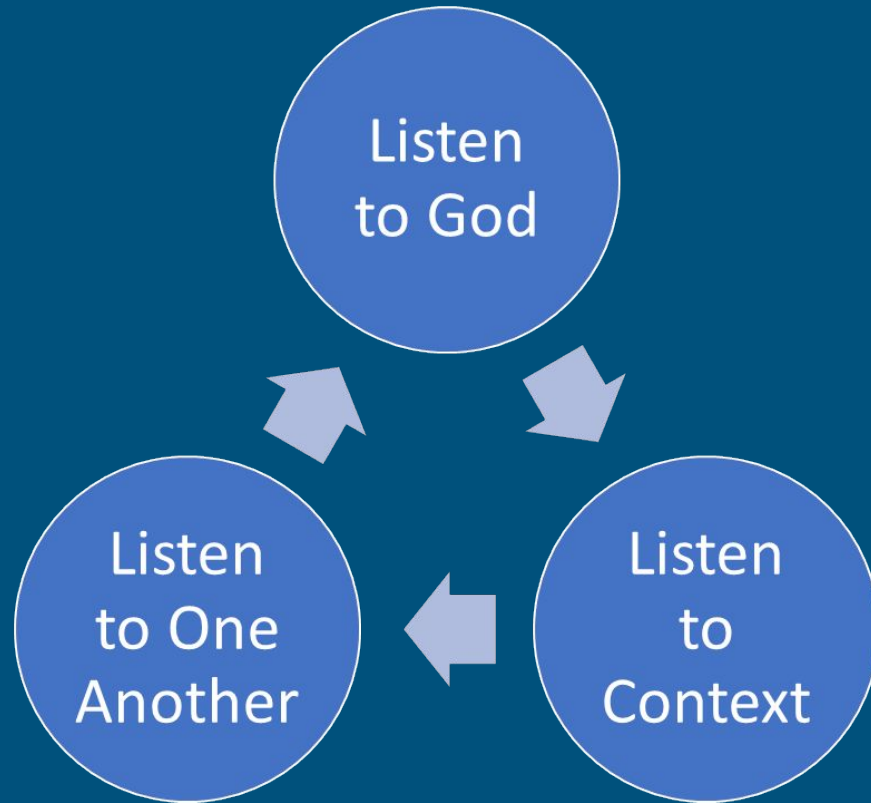


Cultivate

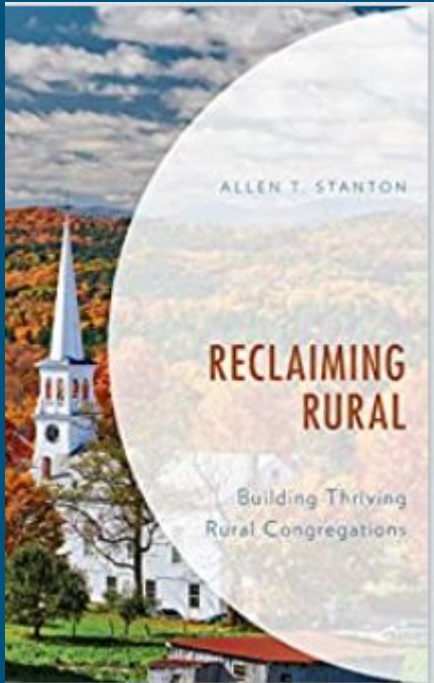
The Faithful Innovation Process



Listening Matters



Cultivating Change - Listen and notice how community and congregations are intertwined



“The life of the rural community and rural congregation are necessarily intertwined.”

They share a people, history and context.

Church is an anchor institution...contribute to the economic and social fabric of community... hospitals, universities, businesses and non-profits.
P. 11.

Spiritual Practice

What keeps you up at night?

God called people into deeper community.

What are these things personally? -

Invite your congregation to share in an anonymous way. You will learn about losses and longings. What keeps you up at night?

Avoid churchification and focus more on lives of people and community.



What Keeps You Up at Night?

Ministry leaders face many different challenges, both in their work with their congregations and in balancing their personal lives. This exercise is designed to help you reflect on what is impacting you personally, as a leader, in your everyday life.

Take a minute and reflect on these two questions. Write down your answers and prepare to share some of your thoughts with a listening partner and others who support you. This will require some vulnerability!

What's one thing that "keeps you up at night?"

Why do you think this is something you're worried or concerned about?

What do we listen for?

Do we listen to the things that are important to our **congregations** or do we listen to the things that are important to our **people/communities**?

Where do you focus?

—Robert Wuthnow

Wuthnow's research

Work

Focus on congregation

Money

Health

Focus on people's lives

Family

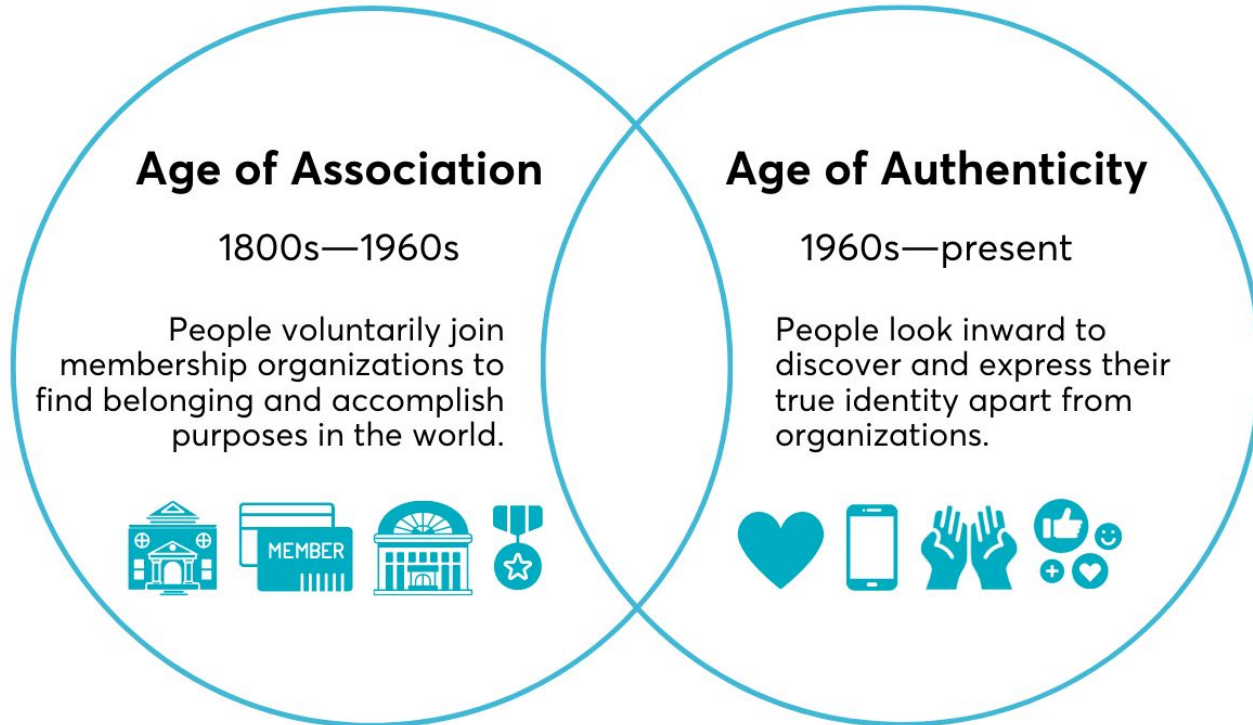
Loneliness

What serves the mission ?

Blended Spirituality

What are longings or a losses you notice in your rural and small town ministries?

Context – The Two Ages From the Age of Association to Authenticity – Faith+Lead

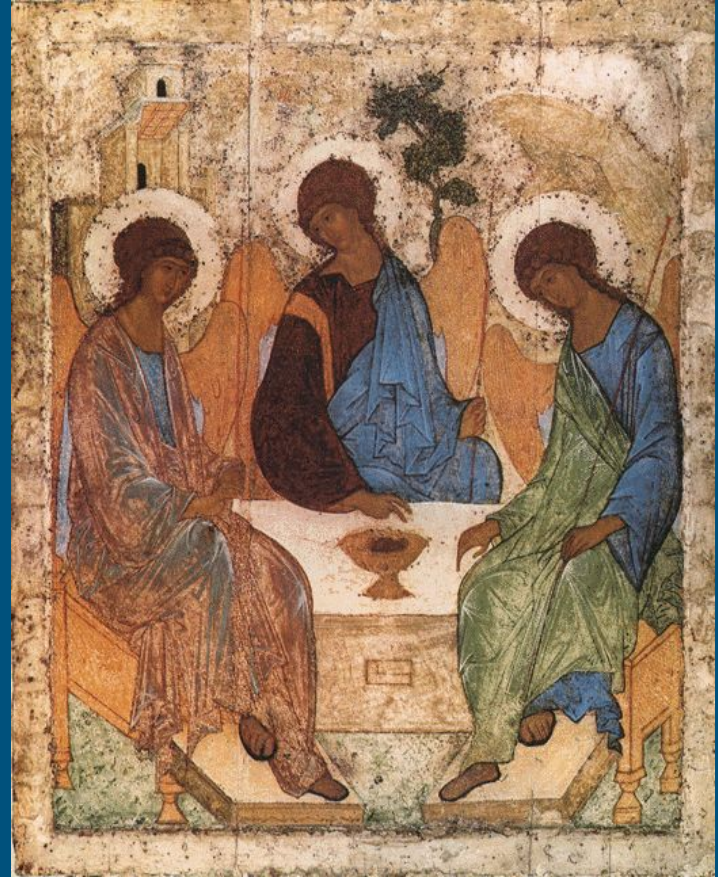


The Faithful Innovation Process



Identifying Our Source of Energy and Hope - The Holy Trinity

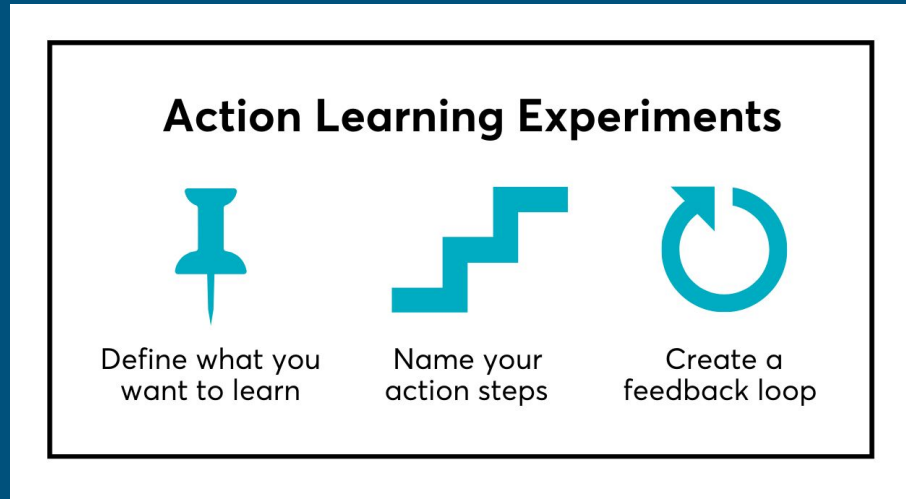
Angels in Abraham and Sarah story. Symbolize the Holy Trinity in Rublev's icon.



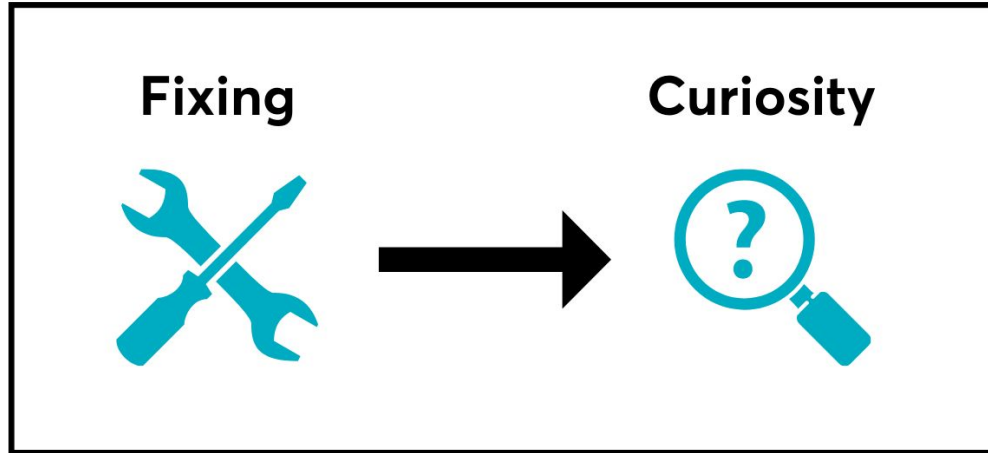
Andrei Rublev, The Holy Trinity

Act Learning to Ride a Backwards Bicycle – Faith+Lead

- Small, inexpensive experiments
- Arising from listening
- Investing presence and relationship with neighbors



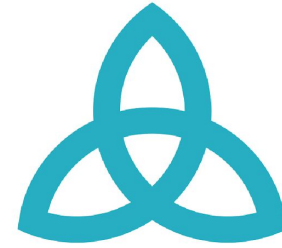
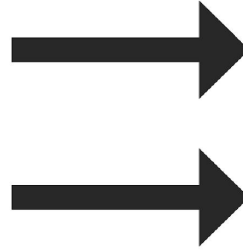
Posture: From Fixing to Listening, Discerning, Experimenting



Shifting Our Focus



Fixing the Church



Listening to God



Listening to Lydia

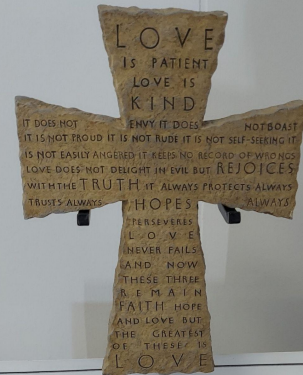
(our unaffiliated spiritually
curious neighbor)

Acts 16

Reframing Expectations

Models of Ministry

	Performative	Formative
Leaders	Primarily perform faith for the people in the congregation	Primarily cultivate discipleship among the whole people of God
People	Focus on supporting the institutional church	Actively own their spiritual growth



The Equipment Room

Become an Equipping Church



Equipping is first the work of God's Spirit.

Secondly, it is the work of the whole community. How might you invite them to join you?

- Identifying,
- Encouraging,
- Experimenting,
- Growing.

Invite other eyes to help you see - visit with your governance council, key committees, task forces

Notice who has the gift of growing Christians and leaders for God's Church.

Love people systematically? One experiment in each sphere...

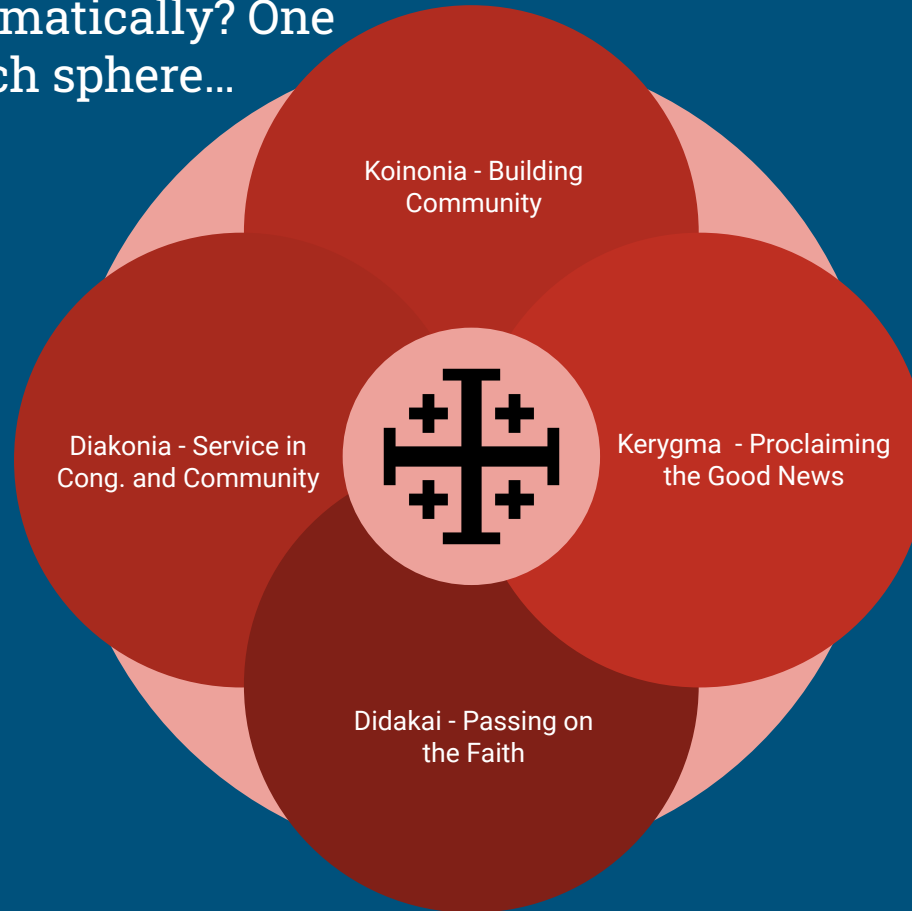
A cognitive map.

Koinonia

Kerygma

Didakai

Diakonia



Our constantly creating God stirs us up to
faithfully innovate.



Questions?

The Faithful Innovation Process

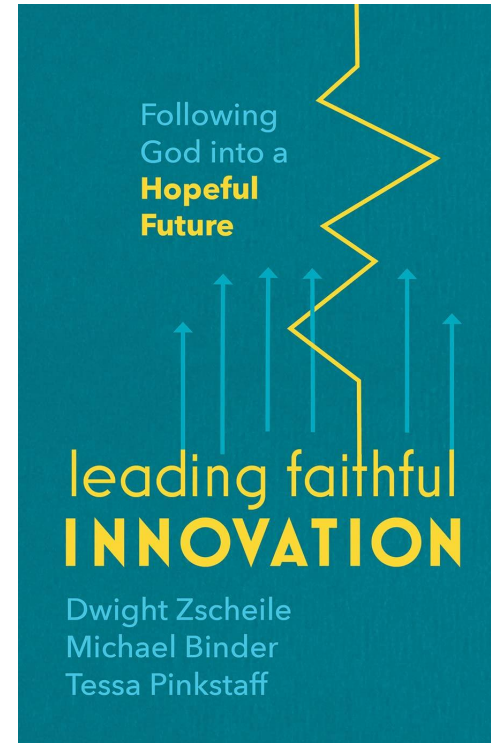


Cultivate Relationships and Innovation



Leadership: From Clergy-Led/Lay-Supported to Lay-Led/Clergy-Supported

- Lay-led is already reality across church
- Professional model of ministry eroding
- Clergy will engage, equip networks of lay-led communities



Powe and Weems

Sustaining While Disrupting: The Challenge of Congregational Innovation

SUSTAINING
WHILE
DISRUPTING

THE
CHALLENGE
OF
CONGREGATIONAL
INNOVATION

F. DOUGLAS POWE JR.
LOVETT H. WEEMS JR.

We need to sustain the life and forms of our communities of faith that serve the Gospel....

We need to disrupt our traditions and patterns that are not serving the Gospel of Jesus.

Copyrighted Material

SUSTAINING WHILE DISRUPTING

THE
CHALLENGE
OF
CONGREGATIONAL
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Sustaining While Disrupting: The Challenge of Congregational Innovation

Traditioned Innovation

Assumptions constrain innovation

Incremental Change

Governance

Clear Process

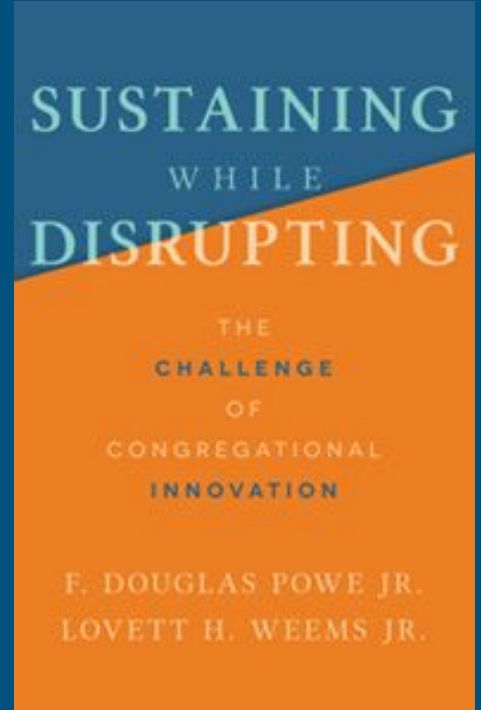
Governance

Pace - Move swiftly

God's preferred future

Tension - Management and Leadership

Good Mistakes



How Can We Better Serve the
Mission of Christ Jesus in
Rural and Small Town
Communities?



Staying focused on God and God questions
- helps you not get stuck.



Trinity, Gaylord - Tractor Roll In - Pr. Scott Richards



Asset Based Planning

What assets has God placed
in you...
your leaders...
your congregation...
your community....
your area?

Catalog assets for assets based planning
and affirming the congregation and
community.

Longer videos

[Asset Based Community Development
\(ABCD\) 101](#)

[Small Church Webinar: Asset Based
Community Mapping](#)

Cultivating Change - Cultivating Around Change

Population - use the
data online

Aging demographics

Financial

Cultivate

- Discernment - what is God up to?
- Open-ness - Love all our rural neighbors - Interfaith
- Cultural capacity / Inclusion
- Collaboration
 - Parish alliance - partnerships
- Interdependence - Rural urban divide
- Vocations - congregation's / people's
- Confidence - with faith
 - Fear - Anger- Hate - Suffering

Web site [Life of Faith Initiative](#)

[Life Of Faith Final.](#) 16 minutes.

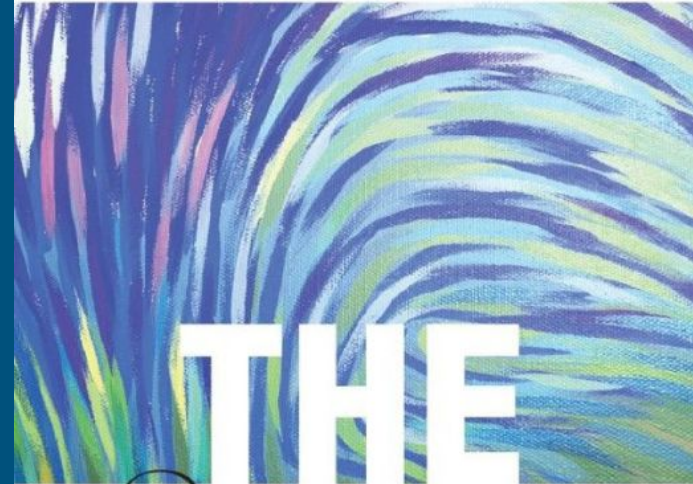
“Churchification” or Vocation

Vocations - Plural

Gathering - Scattering



Imagining a Church that Connects Faith and Life



Scattering

DWIGHT L. DUBOIS

foreword by Craig L. Nesson

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Dietrich Bonhoeffer

“He who loves his dream of a community more than the Christian community itself becomes a destroyer of the latter, even though his personal intentions may be ever so honest and earnest and sacrificial.”

“Only that fellowship which faces such disillusionment, with all its unhappy and ugly aspects, begins to be what it should be in God’s sight, begins to grasp in faith the promise that is given to it. “

Thinning Apples



Photo by [Jen Theodore](#) on [Unsplash](#)

Our constantly creating God stirs us up to
faithfully innovate.



Questions?

Faithful Innovation Leader Companion



faith+lead

LUTHER SEMINARY

faithlead.org

faith+lead | LUTHER SEMINARY

Now What? All Courses - Faith+Lead

Planting Seeds #10

25% off

The screenshot displays the Faith+Lead Academy website interface. The browser address bar shows the URL faithlead.org/academy/all-courses/. The website header includes the Faith+Lead logo and navigation links: Connect, Learn, Faith+Lead For, Resources, and About. A secondary navigation bar lists Academy Home, Courses (highlighted), Live Learning, Webinars, and Learning Communities. The main content area features a grid of six course cards, each with a representative image, title, format, provider, price, and a 'Register Now' button.

Course Title	Format	Provider	Price
You've Been Asked to Preach: Now What?	On-Demand	Tell the Story	\$55
Overflow: An Introduction to Growing in Faith	On-Demand	Connect with God	\$55
Rediscovering Hope: Encouragement for Rural Ministry	On-Demand	Connect with God	\$55
Entering Rural Ministry: Rural Curiosity	On-Demand	Cultivate Community	\$55
The Gospel of Matthew: Life in the Way of God	On-Demand	Tell the Story	\$55
Telling the Story: A crash course in digital marketing for churches	On-Demand	Tell the Story	\$49.00

Good Courage Prayer

O God, you have called your servants to ventures of which we cannot see the ending, by paths as yet untrodden, through perils [and joys} unknown. Give us faith to go out with good courage, not knowing where we go, but only that your hand is leading us and your love supporting us; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen. -

Adapted - Evangelical Lutheran Worship: Evening Prayer



Go in peace and serve the Lord...
someplace else



Pr. Jon Anderson

Director of Rural Ministry at Luther Seminary

janderson008@luthersem.edu

Facebook - <https://www.facebook.com/jon.anderson.986>

www.faithead.org

Sources

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- [Leading Change in Rural and Small Town Communities](#)
- [From the Age of Association to Authenticity - Faith+Lead](#)
- [Sustaining vs. Disruptive Innovation: What's the Difference?](#)
- [Redefine Success - Wheelock](#)
- [Learning to Ride a Backwards Bicycle - Faith+Lead](#)
- [Life of Faith Initiative](#)
- [Life Of Faith Final.](#)
- [Asset Based Community Development \(ABCD\) 101](#)
- [Small Church Webinar: Asset Based Community Mapping](#)
- [www.dialogworks.org](#)
- [All Courses - Faith+Lead](#)
- [#10 July 2023 Planting Seeds - Resources for Small Town and Rural Ministry](#)
- [https://alban.org/archive/its-about-discipleship-two-alban-consultants-say-vitality-is-about-more-than-numbers/](#)
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