

www.themissionalnetwork.com

LEADER'S GUIDE

Leading Out of COVID





Welcome

This resource provides a roadmap for listening and discerning with your leaders. It gives you a way to help name together what you want to carry with you into this next stage of being a congregation. This resource will help you to name a starting place from which you can plan actions together.

**May you listen well to God and
one another.**

The TMN Team

Resource Outline

Begin to name your new normal through discovering God's way forward for your congregation.



Getting Started

Getting ready to facilitate and work alongside leaders in your church using *Leading Out of COVID*.

01 SESSION

Our Stories

Discover the stories amongst you and begin to wonder together about how and where God is at work.

02 SESSION

Discovering Stories Beyond Our Own

Deepen learning about the stories of what is happening in your neighbourhoods. Begin to name what these stories are revealing about what God is doing.

03 SESSION

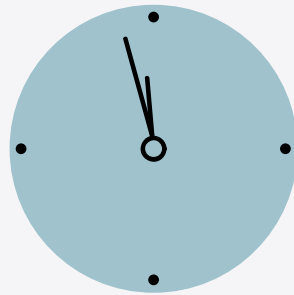
Connecting Our Stories and Church Life

Reflect on your stories and beginning to name what you don't want to lose as you look ahead.

04 SESSION

Beginning to Discover a New Normal

Name some ways to invite others into what you have been learning and discerning in order to shape your new normal together.



Getting Started

Get ready to facilitate and work alongside leaders in your church using *Leading out of COVID*.



What if this is not a time for fixing or getting new programs into place but of attending to, of listening, of discerning what the Spirit is saying to us? When COVID started, we realized that so many of our normal practices and activities as clergy and congregations needed to stop. Many of us dove into planning and organizing ways of responding. We had to work out, quickly, how to put services on-line, how to be with those we cared for in social distancing, how to manage the sudden drop in finances - a whole list of “how-to’s” that needed to be done. It was all quite hard work that, strangely, made us even more stretched than before. But now, this other question is being asked.

What comes next?

If there isn’t going to be a return to things as they were before, if our roles are going to change, if something is happening to our own people through this period - how do we as clergy prepare for the next chapter and how do we lead our people into it and through it in ways that discern and integrate into our life what the Spirit is saying to us?



3 Postures

Your people are starting to wonder about what church will look like moving forward. Like the rest of us, you also have questions about what's next.

As you begin **Leading out of COVID**, these three postures will help you begin to discover your new normal.

01 Don't get caught up in to-do lists

Avoid the plentiful misdirected responses to the question, "What comes next?" There are already numbers of the usual "27 Things You Need To Do To Prepare For What Comes Next" or "12 Things You Should Do Before People Return" and so on. The problem with these approaches isn't that they don't offer some sound advice. The problem with these lists is that they:

- Direct our energies solely toward technical issues which, while necessary, are not the only issues that we need to be paying attention to.
- They often assume we can know, predict and, therefore, manage what lies ahead. Lists of technical things to do give us a false sense that we are in control, managing and fixing our world which leads to a third problem.
- They automatically turn the work that needs to be done *by and among* our people into something we, as clergy, do *for* our people. They turn people's attention to the default of technical fixes only, rather than the work of discerning *with* our people what God is saying to us in this disruptive space.

There's nothing wrong with having lists in the background. There are housekeeping things we'll need to think about but there is far more at stake here than the technologies of getting worship services back to normal.



02 Focus on the work of your people

There are substantive issues at stake for our congregations and the formation of our people in the coming months. Beyond the technical focus on getting worship services started again are these questions of how we lead our people to discern what has been happening and what it means for being God's people in your community.

You can assist your leadership to reflect on what they are experiencing so that they can name the learning you need to address together in order to find ways of integrating this learning into the life of your congregation.

03 Reflect together on your experiences

You can invite your leadership to reflect on their experiences over the past months and discern what these experiences might mean for being the church in a world we can't predict. This kind of reflection will be something of a new experience for many because they tend to see their roles as carrying out the "business" of the congregation. They will be focused on the technical lists of what to do, how to meet the regulations about gathering, etc.

All of this is good. But this crisis also presents you with an opportunity. You can invite your leaders to reflect on what it might look like to be church when you won't be carrying on with business as usual. It is a gift to pause and listen to what God is saying to us.

These are the kinds of questions that you need to engage with your leaders:

- Questions that are not amenable to "To-Do" lists.
- Questions that are crucial to discerning with your people what the Spirit is saying to you.
- Questions that are about beginning with your own people's experiences not the proposals of experts.
- Questions that are not focused on the organization and its management but your experiences and stories.
- Questions that take into account a recognition that the source of transformation originates from your own people.
- Questions that have within them a conviction that the answers to "What's next?" are present in your people.

This is about creating spaces to call forth from the stories of your people what God is calling you to do next.



Your Leadership Team

Your formal leadership team (Board, Session, Elders, Vestry, etc.) is composed of people responsible for making decisions on behalf of the congregation. They are no doubt feeling the weight of this responsibility in addressing the questions of the next steps that now need to be taken as we begin to emerge from the pandemic. There will be decisions that need to be made with respect to how your church will be operating going forward. Some of these decisions will only impact the short term whereas others will have longer term implications.

Alongside all the technical decisions that will need to be made, there are bigger questions to ask:

- What are we learning about our neighbourhoods and communities as we pay attention to how people all around us have been responding to the pandemic?
- What does this learning suggest to us about what we might want to pay attention to as a church as we figure out how to move forward?

These questions need to be a part of the plans that you are making together. It is important to work together as a leadership team to explore these questions together in order to give shape to the kind of congregation you want to become together.

Don't forget the **flyer** available on the TMN website that you can share with your team as you introduce this resource.

www.themissionalnetwork.com/leading-out-of-covid



Elements

Each of the **4 Sessions** include the following elements:

01 Dwelling in the Word

Listening to God through one another and Scripture

02 Storytelling

Listening to God through one another's stories

03 Reflection Questions

Interacting with one another with what each person brings to share

04 In Between Work

Equipping for work to be done in between gatherings

How and When to Meet

Scheduling

You may want to map out a schedule that you will all commit to to work through the resource together. There are four sessions with work to be done in between. You can work through them weekly, bi-weekly or monthly, whatever makes the most sense for your leadership team.

Virtual or In Person

You will need to determine together how best to gather for the sessions. This resource can be used in either a virtual or in person gathering.



01

SESSION

Our Stories

Discover the stories amongst us and begin to wonder together about how and where God is at work.



Dwelling in the Word

Before you begin the steps below to practicing *Dwelling in the Word*, here are some helpful things to share with your group:

- We are going to do this every time we are together
- We are going to spend this time in the same passage of Scripture. This may feel strange to some of us as we are used to using Scripture differently.
- Let's be open, curious and ready to hear from God through each other as we live with this passage together.

01 Read

1. Ask for two volunteers in the group (male and female) to read the passage aloud. Invite people to be open to the Spirit through these questions:
 - a. *Where did your imagination stop?*
 - b. *Are there words, phrases, ideas that grasp you?*
 - c. *How do you think the Spirit of God might be nudging you?*
2. Invite the first reader to read the text, followed by a brief time of silence.
3. Read the questions again.
4. Invite the second reader to read the text again, followed by a longer period of silence.

02 Listen Together

1. Invite people to share what they heard as they listened to the text and reflected on the questions.
2. Wonder together as a group if there might be any specific ways the Spirit was speaking to you together through the text.



John 21: 1-14

Afterward Jesus appeared again to his disciples, by the Sea of Galilee. It happened this way: 2 Simon Peter, Thomas (also known as Didymus), Nathanael from Cana in Galilee, the sons of Zebedee, and two other disciples were together. 3 "I'm going out to fish," Simon Peter told them, and they said, "We'll go with you."

So they went out and got into the boat, but that night they caught nothing.

4 Early in the morning, Jesus stood on the shore, but the disciples did not realize that it was Jesus.

5 He called out to them, "Friends, haven't you any fish?"

"No," they answered.

6 He said, "Throw your net on the right side of the boat and you will find some." When they did, they were unable to haul the net in because of the large number of fish.

7 Then the disciple whom Jesus loved said to Peter, "It is the Lord!" As soon as Simon Peter heard him say, "It is the Lord," he wrapped his outer garment around him (for he had taken it off) and jumped into the water. 8 The other disciples followed in the boat, towing the net full of fish, for they were not far from shore, about a hundred yards. 9 When they landed, they saw a fire of burning coals there with fish on it, and some bread.

10 Jesus said to them, "Bring some of the fish you have just caught." 11 So Simon Peter climbed back into the boat and dragged the net ashore. It was full of large fish, 153, but even with so many the net was not torn. 12 Jesus said to them, "Come and have breakfast." None of the disciples dared ask him, "Who are you?" They knew it was the Lord. 13 Jesus came, took the bread and gave it to them, and did the same with the fish. 14 This was now the third time Jesus appeared to his disciples after he was raised from the dead.

New International Version. Holy Bible, New International Version®, NIV® Copyright ©1973, 1978, 1984, 2011 by Biblica, Inc.® Used by permission. All rights reserved worldwide.



Dwelling Questions

Where did your imagination stop?

Are there words, phrases, ideas that grasp you?

How do you think the Spirit of God might be nudging you?

A large, empty rectangular area with a light gray background, intended for reflection and writing in response to the dwelling questions.



Beginning with Stories

01 Sharing Stories

Invite the group to consider the following question:

What are you noticing that is different in your neighbourhood due to COVID-19?

Invite each person to share their response.

02 What are you hearing about what is happening in your neighbourhoods?

Once everyone has had the opportunity to share their observations, ask the group the following questions and capture responses.

1. *What are some of the common themes that you are hearing across the observations that have been shared?*
2. *How do you think these observations might be important?*
3. *Where might we be hearing God in what is happening in our neighbourhoods?*

IN PERSON capture responses on a whiteboard or newsprint.
VIRTUALLY take notes to be shared with the group at the end of the session.

What Are You Experiencing?

Share with the group that before you meet again, each of you will spend some time reflecting on your own personal experiences during the pandemic, considering these questions:

1. *What have you observed happening in your community or neighbourhood?*
2. *What has struck you about these things? Why do you think you have noticed them?*
3. *What is a story you can share that captures something of what you have been experiencing for yourself or among people in your community?*

FOR NEXT TIME

Much of the work you will be doing together in **Session 2** will build upon the questions outlined in *What Are You Experiencing* above. Encourage your leadership team to complete the handout and bring it with them to the next session.



02

SESSION

Stories Beyond Our Own

Deepen learning about the stories of what is happening in our neighbourhoods. Begin to name what these stories are revealing about what God is doing.



Dwelling in the Word

John 21: 1-14

With the three steps from **Session 1**, dwell together in John 21:1-14.

Afterward Jesus appeared again to his disciples, by the Sea of Galilee. It happened this way: 2 Simon Peter, Thomas (also known as Didymus), Nathanael from Cana in Galilee, the sons of Zebedee, and two other disciples were together. 3 “I’m going out to fish,” Simon Peter told them, and they said, “We’ll go with you.”

So they went out and got into the boat, but that night they caught nothing.

4 Early in the morning, Jesus stood on the shore, but the disciples did not realize that it was Jesus.

5 He called out to them, “Friends, haven’t you any fish?”

“No,” they answered.

6 He said, “Throw your net on the right side of the boat and you will find some.” When they did, they were unable to haul the net in because of the large number of fish.

7 Then the disciple whom Jesus loved said to Peter, “It is the Lord!” As soon as Simon Peter heard him say, “It is the Lord,” he wrapped his outer garment around him (for he had taken it off) and jumped into the water. 8 The other disciples followed in the boat, towing the net full of fish, for they were not far from shore, about a hundred yards. 9 When they landed, they saw a fire of burning coals there with fish on it, and some bread.

10 Jesus said to them, “Bring some of the fish you have just caught.” 11 So Simon Peter climbed back into the boat and dragged the net ashore. It was full of large fish, 153, but even with so many the net was not torn. 12 Jesus said to them, “Come and have breakfast.” None of the disciples dared ask him, “Who are you?” They knew it was the Lord. 13 Jesus came, took the bread and gave it to them, and did the same with the fish. 14 This was now the third time Jesus appeared to his disciples after he was raised from the dead.

New International Version. Holy Bible, New International Version®, NIV® Copyright ©1973, 1978, 1984, 2011 by Biblica, Inc.® Used by permission. All rights reserved worldwide.



Dwelling Questions

Where did your imagination stop?

Are there words, phrases, ideas that grasp you?

How do you think the Spirit of God might be nudging you?

A large, empty rectangular area with a light gray background, intended for reflection or writing in response to the dwelling questions.



Continuing with Stories

01 Sharing stories

Ask everyone to take out their handouts from **Session 1**. Invite each person to share one of their stories. Ask them to tell the story and respond to the following questions:

1. *What aspect of the story has stuck with you?*
2. *What insights have you gained from this story?*

AT THE SAME TIME

As each story is being shared, ask the group to listen using the following questions:

- *Where did your imagination stop?*
- *What reported observations capture your attention?*
- *Where might God be in this story?*

02 What are we hearing?

Once everyone has had the opportunity to share their story, ask the group the following questions and capture the responses:

- *What are some of the common themes that you are hearing across the stories that have been shared?*
- *How do you think these stories might be important?*
- *Where might we be hearing God across these stories?*
- *What are some ways our reflections coming out of Dwelling in the Word are connecting with these stories?*

IN PERSON capture responses on a whiteboard or newsprint.
VIRTUALLY take notes to be shared with the group at the end of the session.



What Experiences Do We Need to Not Lose Sight Of?

Before the next session, take some time to reflect on the following questions:

- *Are there one or two experiences coming out of stories of the past year that you don't want to lose?*
- *Are there one or two experiences coming out of our experience of church life over the past year that you don't want to lose?*
- *Out of each of these experiences, what do you want to make sure we take with us? (You don't need to have 'solutions' for how to do this, simply name what you don't want to lose.)*

FOR NEXT TIME

Much of the work you will be doing together in **Session 3** will build upon the questions outlined in *What Experiences Do We Need to Not Lose Sight Of?* above. Encourage your leadership team to complete the handout and bring it with them to the next session.



03

SESSION

Our Stories and Church Life

**Reflecting on our stories and beginning to name what we
don't want to lose as we look ahead.**



Dwelling in the Word

John 21: 1-14

With the three steps from **Session 1**, dwell together in John 21:1-14.

Afterward Jesus appeared again to his disciples, by the Sea of Galilee. It happened this way: 2 Simon Peter, Thomas (also known as Didymus), Nathanael from Cana in Galilee, the sons of Zebedee, and two other disciples were together. 3 “I’m going out to fish,” Simon Peter told them, and they said, “We’ll go with you.”

So they went out and got into the boat, but that night they caught nothing.

4 Early in the morning, Jesus stood on the shore, but the disciples did not realize that it was Jesus.

5 He called out to them, “Friends, haven’t you any fish?”

“No,” they answered.

6 He said, “Throw your net on the right side of the boat and you will find some.” When they did, they were unable to haul the net in because of the large number of fish.

7 Then the disciple whom Jesus loved said to Peter, “It is the Lord!” As soon as Simon Peter heard him say, “It is the Lord,” he wrapped his outer garment around him (for he had taken it off) and jumped into the water. 8 The other disciples followed in the boat, towing the net full of fish, for they were not far from shore, about a hundred yards. 9 When they landed, they saw a fire of burning coals there with fish on it, and some bread.

10 Jesus said to them, “Bring some of the fish you have just caught.” 11 So Simon Peter climbed back into the boat and dragged the net ashore. It was full of large fish, 153, but even with so many the net was not torn. 12 Jesus said to them, “Come and have breakfast.” None of the disciples dared ask him, “Who are you?” They knew it was the Lord. 13 Jesus came, took the bread and gave it to them, and did the same with the fish. 14 This was now the third time Jesus appeared to his disciples after he was raised from the dead.

New International Version. Holy Bible, New International Version®, NIV® Copyright ©1973, 1978, 1984, 2011 by Biblica, Inc.® Used by permission. All rights reserved worldwide.



Dwelling Questions

Where did your imagination stop?

Are there words, phrases, ideas that grasp you?

How do you think the Spirit of God might be nudging you?

A large, empty rectangular area with a light gray background, intended for reflection or writing in response to the dwelling questions.



Connecting Stories

01 Share Responses

Ask people to take out their handouts from **Session 2**. Invite each person to share their responses to each of the three questions.

IN PERSON capture responses to each question on a separate piece of newsprint. **VIRTUALLY** each person captures responses on the worksheet in the *Handout*.

1. *Are there one or two experiences coming out of stories of the past year that you don't want to lose?*
2. *Are there one or two experiences coming out of our experience of church life over the past year that you don't want to lose?*
3. *Out of each of these experiences, what do you want to make sure we take with us? (You don't need to have 'solutions' for how to do this, simply name what you don't want to lose.)*

02 Reflect on Responses

Ask the group to reflect on the following questions together:

Where are the connections between the response to questions #1 and #2?

IN PERSON capture these connections on newsprint. **VIRTUALLY** capture these connections in a shareable way (ie: chat feature, screen share, etc.)

After you have captured these connections, invite them to further reflect with these questions.

- *What are some ways our reflections coming out of Dwelling in the Word are connecting with our experiences?*
- *Can we name what God's Spirit might be saying to us out of these responses?*
- *Where is the God language in this?*
- *Is there a biblical story that we are seeing threads of here?*
- *Are there biblical images that are emerging?*



Prayer & Liturgy

Before the next session, set aside time each day for one week to read through this simple liturgy and daily prayer. Each day, make some notes in response to the following question:

What comes to mind as I read through this liturgy and pray this prayer?

After you have finished your week of reading and reflecting on the prayer and liturgy, look back on your week's notes and respond to the following:

- *What strikes you the most about what you have recorded each day?*
- *What stands out most for you across your week?*
- *What have you learned/discovered from this time of listening?*

Liturgy

In these in between times filled with disruption,
loss and new life;
Lord, awaken me to your presence.

In our new rhythms of daily life, with family,
friends, neighbours and church;
Lord, awaken me to your presence.

In our looking backwards and reaching forward,
wondering what is next;
Lord, awaken me to your presence.

In our growing openness and wondering what new
future you are leading us into;
Lord, awaken me to your presence.

Prayer

As we continue to discover our part in God's
mission right here in this place;
May I listen with expectation that God is present.
Always ahead, always beside,
Always guiding, everlasting.
Amen.

FOR NEXT TIME

Much of the work you will be doing together in **Session 4** will build upon the activity outlined in *Prayer and Liturgy*. Encourage your leadership team to complete the handout and bring it with them to the next session.

04

SESSION

Discovering a New Normal

Name some ways to invite others into what you have been learning and discerning in order to shape your new normal together.



Dwelling in the Word

John 21: 1-14

With the three steps from **Session 1**, dwell together in John 21:1-14.

Afterward Jesus appeared again to his disciples, by the Sea of Galilee. It happened this way: 2 Simon Peter, Thomas (also known as Didymus), Nathanael from Cana in Galilee, the sons of Zebedee, and two other disciples were together. 3 "I'm going out to fish," Simon Peter told them, and they said, "We'll go with you."

So they went out and got into the boat, but that night they caught nothing.

4 Early in the morning, Jesus stood on the shore, but the disciples did not realize that it was Jesus.

5 He called out to them, "Friends, haven't you any fish?"

"No," they answered.

6 He said, "Throw your net on the right side of the boat and you will find some." When they did, they were unable to haul the net in because of the large number of fish.

7 Then the disciple whom Jesus loved said to Peter, "It is the Lord!" As soon as Simon Peter heard him say, "It is the Lord," he wrapped his outer garment around him (for he had taken it off) and jumped into the water. 8 The other disciples followed in the boat, towing the net full of fish, for they were not far from shore, about a hundred yards. 9 When they landed, they saw a fire of burning coals there with fish on it, and some bread.

10 Jesus said to them, "Bring some of the fish you have just caught." 11 So Simon Peter climbed back into the boat and dragged the net ashore. It was full of large fish, 153, but even with so many the net was not torn. 12 Jesus said to them, "Come and have breakfast." None of the disciples dared ask him, "Who are you?" They knew it was the Lord. 13 Jesus came, took the bread and gave it to them, and did the same with the fish. 14 This was now the third time Jesus appeared to his disciples after he was raised from the dead.

New International Version. Holy Bible, New International Version®, NIV® Copyright ©1973, 1978, 1984, 2011 by Biblica, Inc.® Used by permission. All rights reserved worldwide.



Dwelling Questions

Where did your imagination stop?

Are there words, phrases, ideas that grasp you?

How do you think the Spirit of God might be nudging you?

A large, empty rectangular area with a light gray background, intended for reflection or writing in response to the dwelling questions.



What's Next

01 Share Responses

Ask people to take out their handouts from **Session 3**. Invite each person to share their reflections. Capture their responses.

Ask the group to consider all the responses and your practice of *Dwelling in the Word* over the past sessions and reflect together on the following question:

What are the themes that keep rising to the surface that we want to take forward as we consider what our new normal might look like?

IN PERSON capture these connections on newsprint. **VIRTUALLY** capture these connections in a shareable way (ie: chat feature, screen share, etc.)

02 What Do We Do Now?

Beginning to shape a new normal for your congregation coming out of the pandemic cannot be the work of only a select few. There is also important work to be done to test out how the themes that you have named together might be lived out in concrete action in your congregation. Here are two next steps for you to consider:

1 Share with others in your congregation what you have done together.

Here are some questions to consider:

- *Who are the stakeholders in your congregation that you need to have conversations with about the themes that you are naming?*
- *What are the ways that you can talk with them about what you are learning?*
- *Are there other broad communication pieces that should include some reflections on what you are discovering?*
 - *What should those communications look like?*
 - *Who will put them together?*

2 Name some simple actions that you could take to test out what you are learning.

Here are some questions to consider:

- *As you share what you have been learning, who in your congregation is energized and curious about what might come next?*
- *How could you gather those people with the purpose being to begin to brainstorm together some simple actions that you might take to test out what you're learning?*



Thanksgiving

Invite each person to share a word of thanksgiving as this part of your work together draws to a close. Read aloud together this closing liturgy and close in prayer. *Italicized lines* can be read aloud by different people in turn. The rest of the liturgy can be read in unison.

Closing Liturgy

We believe and trust in God the Father Almighty.

We believe and trust in Jesus Christ His Son.

We believe and trust in the Holy Spirit.

We believe and trust in the Three in One.

We believe and trust in God the Father Almighty.

Creator God you are faithful and continue to shape us,

Form us and call forth life from among us.

We believe and trust this day.

We believe and trust in Jesus Christ His Son.

Lord Jesus Christ you came and dwelt among us,

Inviting us to join you in the making-of-all-things new.

We believe and trust this day.

We believe and trust in the Holy Spirit.

Spirit of God you fill the whole earth, even our neighbourhoods,

Creating new life and renewing our hope.

We believe and trust this day.

We believe and trust in the Three in One.

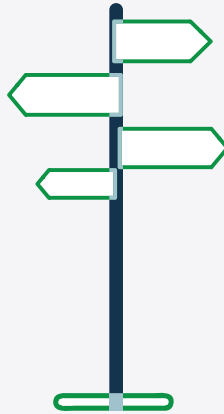
Triune God, your kingdom comes, often disorienting,

But filled with wonder, justice, grace and mercy.

We believe and trust this day.

Final Words

WHAT'S NEXT?



You have begun a journey with your leadership team in **Leading out of COVID**. You have paused to listen to one another and the stories coming out of your experiences in order to discern together what you want to carry with you into this next stage of being a congregation.

You are not alone in this work. You are a part of a movement of leaders discovering congregational life beyond business as usual and into the new normal that is unfolding.

Please don't be a stranger.

Share what you are learning. Share your questions. Share your experience and make a contribution to what we can all be learning about how God is shaping and calling us forward together.

STAY CONNECTED

Send us an email @ office@themissionalnetwork.com

Connect with us on Facebook @ www.facebook.com/themissionalnetwork

or Twitter @ <https://twitter.com/themissionalnet>