



September 2016 Message for Congregations and Lay and Rostered Leaders

Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ –

Throughout 2016 I invite you to reflect with me on the theme of “Practicing Our Faith” as you gather for church council, adult study, youth group, coffee group, choir rehearsal and are engaged in learning, discernment and reflection together. Dorothy Bass has edited an excellent resource published several years ago by Jossey-Bass, *Practicing Our Faith*, which I will be using as a primary resource. Together with Don Richter, Dorothy Bass has also edited a second book, *Way to Live: Christian Practices for Teens*, published by Upper Room Books, which is also an excellent resource. Each article will include a Scripture reference, thematic reflection, questions for consideration, and a prayer. Part 1 was available May 2016.

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*Sing to the Lord a new song.  
God's praise in the assembly of the faithful.  
Let Israel be glad in its Maker;  
...Let them praise God's name with dancing.  
Making melody to God with tambourine and lyre.*

Psalm 149:1-3

### ***Singing Our Lives – Part 2***

At this past summer's National Anglican-Lutheran Worship Conference, *Formation & Reformation: Worship, Justice, and God's Mission*, presenter The Rev. Dr. Stephen Larson posed several questions as he began his first keynote address.

These questions stirred up my memory and caused me to reflect. Questions like: What is the first childhood prayer that you remember? What was your earliest awareness of the liturgy? When did you memorize hymns? Who are your musical mentors? Your liturgical mentors? What is the most meaningful season or day of the church year for you? What are your favorite hymn, carols, songs?

This last one sent me on a deep trip down memory lane. There are so many I thought. In fact, I have a list of favorites. “Children of the Heavenly Father” sung at every family funeral that I can

remember. “Joy to the World” proclaimed on the Eve of Christmas. “Beautiful Saviour” sung without accompaniment and in four-part harmony...or more. The beauty and simplicity of “Jesus, Remember Me.” “Holy, Holy Holy” sung in Spanish and with friends from Colombia or El Salvador. Oh, the list goes on!

Over the course of my lifetime these texts and melodies have shaped my faith. I’ve sung them “by heart,” in the heart, and from the heart. Through the practice of singing, the dispositions and beliefs expressed in the words of the hymns – gratitude, praise, trust, lament, joy, hope – have been knit into my body, as integral parts of the theology by which I live.

These hymns and songs are carried – profoundly – deeply – within my bones.

This formation of an embodied theology happens whenever congregations sing, even though they do so in a great variety of ways from one culture to another – from one congregation to another.

**Read and Reflect:** Colossians 3:16

**Discuss and Reflect:**

What in this reading leads you to say, “I wonder about...”, or, “I noticed...”

Consider sharing (and singing) a song from childhood that is part of your faith tradition. What is the most powerful memory the song evokes? What does it say about the faith of your childhood? Are there connections to the faith of your adulthood?

Reflect on the various ways in which music is sung in worship.

Comment on the following: “Over the course of my lifetime these texts and melodies have shaped my faith.”

**Pray together:** *Maker of creation's choir, you sing the Song of Love to us. Breathe your Spirit into our singing until the rhythm of your mercy shapes all our music-making and we join with one another to give you thanks and praise. Amen.* (Susan Briehl)

*The God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit (Romans 15:13).*

In Christ Jesus –  
Shalom,  
+Larry

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***Spirit -Led Leadership - Hope-Filled Discipleship - Innovative Tradition - Collaborative Partnerships***