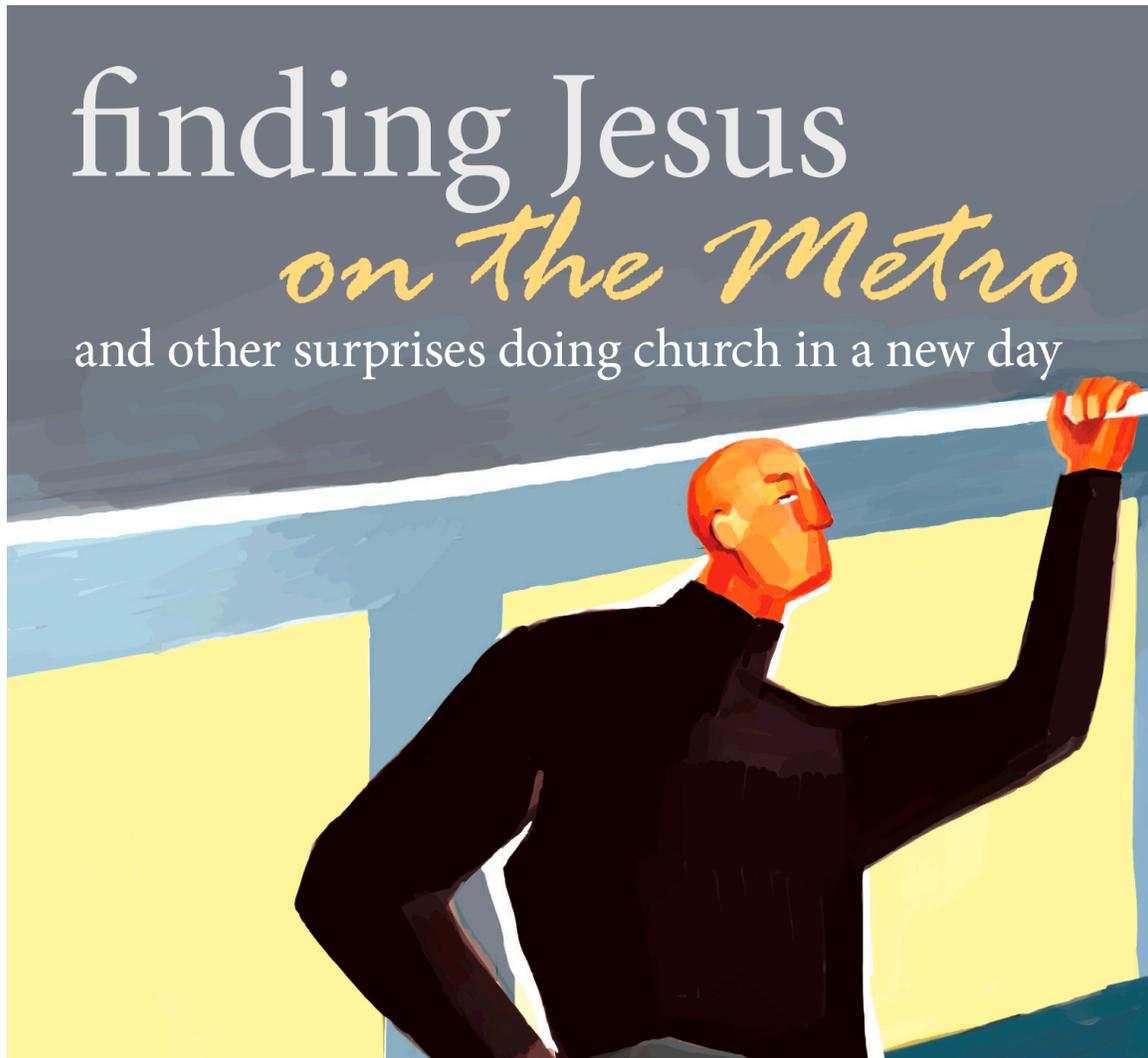


STUDY GUIDE:
FINDING JESUS ON THE METRO
A Group Exploration in 3 or 5 sessions



This study guide will be most beneficial if group members each have a copy of Paul Nixon's book *Finding Jesus on the Metro*. This is Paul Nixon's latest book, coming on the heels of his bestseller, *I Refuse to Lead a Dying Church*. Both books are designed to provoke much-needed conversations about ministry among leaders and participants in local churches in North America. *I Refuse to Lead a Dying Church* is about six pro-active choices that churches can make that will point them toward

life and a vibrant future. *Finding Jesus on the Metro* builds on that foundation, moving beyond issues of ministry survival, seeking to help churches adapt to unprecedented social change in North America and get into vital engagement with younger adults. *Finding Jesus on the Metro* raises issues relevant to nearly every congregation, ranging from a 150-year old church in the process of re-inventing its ministry to a brand-new launch team for a church plant not yet worshipping on a weekly basis. This is a book *about the journey of congregational ministry into uncharted social terrain* of the twenty-first century.

I Refuse to Lead a Dying Church is geared more to the church that has been around a while, seeking to avoid decline or to turn around decline. If your church is in that category, we recommend that you consider taking your church leaders first through a study of *I Refuse to Lead a Dying Church* and then proceed to *Finding Jesus on the Metro* as a second phase of your revitalization conversation.

If your church is relatively young or has a recent history of solid growth, you can start with *Finding Jesus on the Metro*, and expect a spirited conversation among your leaders, challenging any assumption that your future ministry will be simply a repeat of what you have done well in the recent past.

Both books are available from Pilgrim Press and from major online booksellers. The study guides for both books may be downloaded from the Paul Nixon's website, www.epicentergroup.org.

CHOICES!

You, as a group leader, will need to make some choices up front with this study.

First of all, will you use the three-session or the five-session format? The three-session format will require a 60-minute first session (Module A) followed by a two hour second session (Modules B/C) and a two-hour third session (Modules D/E). The five-session format will require a 60-minute first session (Module A) and four 75 to 90 minute sessions

with one Module per time (B thru E). (With the three-session format, we recommend giving folks a five to ten minute break in the middle of the two-hour sessions.)

Next, will you seek to schedule the sessions over a period of one to two months OR will you seek to complete the study in a retreat setting where all the conversations can be completed in 24 to 48 hours. Any answer can be a good answer to these questions, but there are a few things you may wish to consider:

Is your group a bit overwhelmed and intimidated by social change which threatens business as usual at your church? Or is your median age over 55? If the answer to either question is yes, you may wish to spread the conversation out over 5 sessions, to allow adequate processing time.

Does your church see itself as an alternative to tradition-bound churches in some respects or does it thrive on the challenge of radical change? Some churches, especially young churches, will find this book extremely energizing. In these places, the conversation could take place over three weeks or in a retreat setting – since participants may be able to process the ideas quickly without significant internal resistance or grieving.

Are your people so busy that you have a much better shot of getting them to complete the conversation in a 24-hour retreat than to spread it out over five different dates? If so, announce the dates well in advance and go with the retreat format, using either the 3 or 5 session approach within the retreat itself.

If in doubt about any of the above, then read the book your self before deciding. Once you have experienced it, you might be better able to assess how your sisters and brothers at church will experience it.

If you use the three-session or the retreat format, it will be helpful to distribute the books in advance so that participants may read the whole book prior to the first session. They may choose to re-read certain chapters or passages later as you process the material together. If you

use the five-session format, you can either distribute the books in advance or distribute them at the first session.

With the hundreds of study groups that have convened around the previous book, *I Refuse to Lead a Dying Church*, many amazing and transformational conversations have occurred – but the process only works well when group members each have a copy of the book and they read the book. Many group members report that they initially dreaded having to read the book. However, within a few pages, most people find themselves quite engaged – and quite a few are unable to put it down until they finish.

So, encourage people to read the book. Encourage them to argue in the margins if they need to. Even if they find themselves disagreeing with significant points in the book, they will probably enjoy the read. And, afterwards, they will be more ready for a constructive conversation about important matters.

If you are a discussion leader for the sessions outlined here, please do walk through the questions and activities in an exact, wooden or awkward manner. Relax with the material – the quality of the conversation is more important than the degree to which you are faithful to every twist and turn with the suggestions in this study guide.

Finally, in the event that you choose a retreat format – you design that format in whatever way seems reasonable to you. Please include worship time, play time and free time in the schedule so that the group is rested and fresh for each segment of the conversation. If it's a retreat, please – have fun! If at all possible, allow for an overnight component, so that the group can sleep on the ideas that get cooking.

THE STUDY MODULES

Module A – Introduction

Reading assigned in advance: Introduction (pp. vii-xiv)

Themes: Journey, Faithfulness, Change, Learning, Prayer, Young Adults, Diversity

Icebreaker: *15 minutes.* It is important that participants know one another. Even when we worship together for years or serve on the same committees, we may not know one another well. Start this process by inviting members of this study group to share: *If there are more than eight people in the study, share the following around tables of four or five, not as a large group. As you invite people to share, give only one question at a time.*

- Why do you go to church in a time when a lot of spiritually minded people choose not to go to church?
- How did you come to our church of all churches?
- Why are you in this conversation group?
- On a scale of one to ten – how would you rate our church’s readiness for ministry in the world of the twenty-first century (one being totally unprepared, and ten being that we are living into our finest hour)? Why?

Scriptural Foundation: *15 minutes.* Read Genesis 12:1-8 and Hebrews 11:8-12. Ask the group: As you think about Abraham and Sarah’s amazing journey out of their homeland and its culture into an unknown place with a largely unknown God, what practices or characteristics may have helped them make such a journey?

After discussion, move to another angle, pausing after each question to allow people time to reflect and discuss:

- Have you ever thought about our church as people on a journey?
- Where do you think we are coming from? Where do you see us to be going?
- What can Abraham and Sarah teach us?

It might be helpful for the group to write or journal about these latter questions for a few minutes before launching into group discussion.

Processing Ideas and Experiences: *30 minutes.* Prepare 4X6 note cards for the group, each labeled in large letters with one of the five following words: CHANGE, LEARNING, PRAYER, YOUNG ADULTS, and DIVERSITY. If you have ten people, then you can have 15-minute conversations in pairs around each word, with five conversations simultaneously, so that each participant shares in one of the conversations. If you have more than ten, you can put three in some groups. If you have less than ten, then you can hand two cards to each group of two or three and allow them to choose which topic feels more urgent so that you can form discussion pairs or triads around whatever topics interest the group. You will need to monitor the progress of the group moving through the questions, and tell them when it is time to try to move on to question 5.

In these side conversations around the theme words on their cards, guide the group as follows. If you like you can print these instructions on the backside of the card:

1. How is this word relevant to your life personally these days?
2. In what ways are you skilled or adept to this word?
3. In what ways does this word challenge you or make you uncomfortable?
4. If you could be more at ease and effective with regard to this word, what might that look like? What could you do to help move in this direction?
5. Now repeat the first four questions, deliberately, one by one, thinking not of yourself personally, but of your church.

At the end of the 15 minutes, spend another 15 minutes, allowing someone from each group to report (in a couple minutes) on what they talked about in their group. Leave a minute for general discussion, but keep things moving.

Closing Prayer: *5 minutes.* Invite group members to write a one or two sentence prayer for themselves and/or your church referencing

the key word on their card. When they are done, invite any who wish to read their prayers aloud to close.

Be sure that everyone has a book before they leave and a clear schedule detailing (1) when the group will be meeting, (2) what reading is due by each meeting, and (3) what the topics will be.

Module B – Awakening to a New Day

Reading assigned in advance: Chapters 1-4 (pp. 1-26)

Themes: Changing Neighborhoods, Post-Christendom Era, Religious Diversity, Hyper-busyness

Icebreaker: *10-15 minutes.* Talking about our Community. Ask group members when they moved into this community (or for commuting church members) their first memories of being present in this community. What is a word they would choose to describe the community *in that time*?

Follow this by *one* of these options:

1. A report from a group member who has been in the church or community a good while, focused on the questions at the end of chapter 1 at the top of pg. 7. Whoever gives this brief report will need to find (or be given) a solid source of information on the community history.
2. If a group member or a friend is good with photography, then commission her or him to go out and shoot photos of people and other interesting scenes in the community a week or so ahead of this meeting, and then show the photos as a slide show to your group, asking for what they see.

Scriptural Foundations: *15 minutes.* Read 1 Corinthians 1:12 in the King James Version (below). Begin by sharing that this is a reflection by St. Paul looking back on his life's work as a missionary apostle in the Roman Empire. Plan to read the words slowly three times, allowing people to listen carefully for any curious word that jumps out at them. He writes:

For our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, *we have had our conversation in the world*, and more abundantly to you-ward.

After the first reading, ask them to listen again to isolate any characteristic they hear about Paul's conversation with the world. How does Paul describe this conversation? (They will hear (1) in simplicity and sincerity, (2) not with fleshly wisdom and (3) by the grace of God.) Ask them what they believe each of these qualities means with regard to Paul's witness in the world.

Then proceed to ask them to reflect in groups of 3 or 4 around the following questions. Feed the questions to the room one at a time.

- If you were to think of your life as a conversation in the world, how would you sum up *what you are trying to say*?
- Do you think our church is seeking to have a conversation in the world, or just within the walls of our church membership?
- What, if anything, do you think our church is trying to say to the world? What about to our immediate neighborhood?
- What, if anything, do you think the neighbors believe we are saying?
- What are you hearing back from the world? What are the people around you saying about their deepest hurts and hopes?

Ministry Clues: *15-20 minutes.* Continue with conversations in small groups (although you may choose to mix them up and ask them to re-group, so that they can each interact with more persons).

Assign the Ministry Clue boxes found on pages 10,12, 16, 23, and 25. Ask each group to discuss the ideas in one Ministry Clue box for about five to ten minutes and then report it to the larger group.

As a large group, vote on each of the five ministry ideas as follows. Each group member can assign points to an idea ranging from zero (for an idea that will not be very helpful in our church's setting) to five (for an idea that could be revolutionary for us). Add up the points and keep

score on this throughout the study. At the end, plan to revisit the top scoring ministry ideas and take those ideas into live consideration among your church's leadership team.

Processing Ideas and Experience: *15 minutes.*

Chapters two and three both talk about what it means to find ourselves in a time and place where our culture is no longer strongly identified with Christianity. *Note: This has nothing to do with the Separation of Church and State. Europe and Canada typically have no such separation yet they are more secular-minded than Americans. So try to steer the conversation away from this direction.* Say to the group, "Paul Nixon talks about a new generation of adults who are far less likely to identify with organized Christianity than fifty years ago." Ask them if they see evidence of this trend within their community? What about within their family? Explain to them that these trends are nationwide, but that they are progressing differently in Alabama than in Maine. Ask them what we could assume in our church's ministry a generation ago that we can no longer assume today?

Move on to consider a statement from p. 13:

But help me with my life and with my relationships, learn my name before I get out the door, and the chances are good that you will see me again. Go one step further: help me aim my life toward blessing others, and if I am among the youngest of American adults, the chances are even better that you will see me again and again.

How do you feel about this paragraph? Do you think it might be true? What does it mean to help people with their lives and their relationships? Might this be different for people who are spiritual seekers than for people who are professing Christians? What does it mean to aim people's lives toward blessing others? How could your church become more intentional about these things? How could you help your community discover that you are serious about these things?

Back as one group, ask people to finish the sentence, "In our community, relevant ministry means _____." Then, invite them to take a

one question survey of five people they know in the upcoming week, simply asking folks about town to finish the above sentence.

Closing Prayer: *5 minutes.* There are four movements in this prayer. One group member can lead the prayer, or you can invite four different folks to lead one part of the prayer. Of you can use sentence prayers around each of the four movements. (1) Thank God for your church's ministry in the past. (2) Reaffirm your church's mission from God for the present. (3) Lift up your neighbors who live outside any organized faith community. (4) Pray for yourself that you will be open to whatever God wishes to do in your church and community in days ahead.

Module C – Awakening to a New Day

Reading assigned in advance: Chapters 5-8 (pp. 27-51)

Themes: The Craving for Community, Changing Family Structures, The Millennial Generation, and The Art of Compartmentalizing

Icebreaker: *10-15 minutes.* Let's start with a game where we each get a blank piece of paper. Have folks make two columns. In the first column, instruct group members to list every name they can think of *from our church*, beyond the people in this study group. Some people may get six names. Others may produce forty. Call time at about two minutes. Then in the second column, instruct them to list every name they can think of for people who are outside our church (or any church) but who live in the area, people they know from work, shopping, friendship, etc. Again call time at two minutes. Now have them count how many of the folks in each list have been in their home or vice versa. They can circle those names. How many have they served on church or community projects where they got to know them beyond the 'passing the peace/hi-how-are-ya' level? They can circle those names also. How many do we know really deeply, intimately, so that we have prayed for them in their personal struggles and they for us? They can circle these names as well.

Ask each person to look at her/his two lists. Which is longer? Which has more circles? Which list do they need to develop more?

Scriptural Foundations: *15 minutes.* Read Acts 2:42-47. If you used the study guide for *I Refuse to Lead a Dying Church*, you may recall one of the group sessions focusing on this passage. Invite the group members to name the components of gospel community apparent in the early church, as they became one people united in faith and purpose. (Components that appear here: study, fellowship and camaraderie, sharing meals, pooling of resources, accountability groups). Now ask the group to reflect around the following questions:

- Which of these components are present in your church's small group life?
- Which kinds of family structures do participants come from?
- Which generational group?
- What kinds of new groups do you need in order to be a more faithful church? (Ask them to be specific. For example, "young couples" is not at all specific. What kinds of young couples? What about young singles?)

Make a list of at least five specific new groups your church needs in order to serve your community more faithfully. Describe the type of persons and the specific components from Acts 2 that these groups need to embody. Rank the varied hypothetical groups in order of urgency.

Ministry Clues: *15-20 minutes.* Break the group into smaller conversation groups, as we did last session. Assign the Ministry Clue boxes found on pages 30 and 33 (one conversation for 30 and 33 together), 37, 38, 40, 43. Ask each group to discuss the ideas in one Ministry Clue box for about five to ten minutes and then report it to the larger group.

Then, as a group, vote on each of the five ministry ideas as follows. Each group member can assign points to an idea ranging from zero (for an idea that will not be very helpful in our church's setting) to five (for an idea that could be revolutionary for us). *Add up the points and keep score on this throughout the study.* At the end of the last session, plan to revisit the top scoring ministry ideas and take those ideas into live consideration among your church's leadership team.

Processing Ideas and Experience: *15 minutes.* Present the group with the following case study for discussion:

Barbara is a 38 year-old single mother at Trinity Church. When members were invited to sign up to host a series of small groups in their homes, Barbara volunteered her home. She was still relatively new in the community and saw this as an opportunity to get to know more people. The small group series lasted 7 weeks and a total of 14 different adults came through Barbara's home, half of which are not members of Trinity. After the seven weeks, most of the group participants wanted to continue to meet. The associate pastor at Trinity pointed the group toward several books they might enjoy reading and discussing together as an on-going group. The participants continued to enjoy the group, and, over the next month, it grew to over 20 persons. Due to space constraints in Barbara's house and challenges in personal scheduling, two couples in the group ventured out to start a second group. After nine months, 33 persons were involved in the two groups. One day, Barbara received a call from the associate pastor, informing her that she wished to come visit her group and the other group that had spun off. When the pastor arrived, she told Barbara that she would like to say a word to the group. The associate pastor told the group that Trinity Church was glad that they were meeting, but that only six of the group's 18 current participants were regularly attending worship services at Trinity. The pastor continued: "As this is only a small group, and not the full church experience, Trinity would like for the group members to make an effort at attending Sunday morning worship in addition to their gathering in Barbara's home." One man in the group asked, "What does the worship service in the church building offer us that we can't do here?" The pastor responded a bit defensively: "The worship service is the heart of our church's life – it is only there that you can share in the Sacraments and hear our pastor's sermons. In order to truly be a part of the church, you need to attend worship." The man in the group pushed back, "Why can't we have the sacraments here? This group feels more like my church than the worship service. It is too formal for my taste – I seldom get much out of it." At this point, the man and the pastor began to raise their voices in disagreement, making several other group members uncomfortable, with several commenting afterwards that they would never set foot in the church sanctuary again, if the pastors there had such an attitude as this.

Ask the group to discuss in pairs or trios how the pastor might have approached this situation differently and more constructively? After people have shared their feedback, read the following alternative ending to the case study:

One day, Barbara received a call from the associate pastor, informing her that she wished to come visit her group and the other group that had spun off. During this call, the associate pastor ran an idea by Barbara that the pastors of the church wished to suggest, so that the group members could feel more connected to the church. Barbara thought it seemed like a good idea and encouraged the pastor to share it with the group. The associate pastor told the group that Trinity Church was glad that they were meeting, but that only six of the group's 18 current participants were regularly attending worship services at Trinity. The pastor continued: "As this is only a small group, and not the full church experience, Trinity would like to begin offering Holy Communion once a month at Barbara's house, so that group members could share more fully in the life of the church. Further, the church is making podcasts of the pastor's sermons, especially for those who are not able to attend the services." A man in the group asked, "Could we sometimes show the podcast of the sermon here and talk about it as part of our group time?" The pastor responded, "Absolutely - we would welcome that." The man in the group added, "This group feels more like my church than the worship service. Until today, I had felt uncomfortable around you pastors, since I somehow felt like I was betraying you to choose this group over the worship service. Now, I feel like I can really be a full part of Trinity right here at Barbara's house."

Invite the group to discuss this alternative ending and to identify if and how it makes them uncomfortable. As you close, share that many persons feel spiritually satisfied with a quality small group experience where there is prayer and spiritual conversation. They often do not feel a pressing need to attend a large worship gathering. Churches of all shapes and sizes will have to take seriously the possibility that *house church-style* small groups could play an increasingly mainstream role in their church's life in the years ahead. We can choose to view this trend as a threat to our church or as an opportunity to reach certain types of people we cannot reach on Sunday morning.

Closing Prayer: *5 minutes.* Read a list of your church's small groups and group leaders, allowing space between each group for silent prayer about that group's life and continued ministry in your community.

Module D – The Only Thing Certain is the Journey

Reading assigned in advance: Chapters 9 – 13 (pp. 55-89)

Themes: The Challenge of New Territory, Getting Unsettled, Difficulties and Challenges, The Values of Social Movements, The Interior Dimension of the Ministry Journey

Icebreaker: *10-15 minutes.* Let's tell stories of getting unsettled. Ask if anyone in the group ever had an experience that knocked them off their feet so to speak – a sudden relocation to a new home, a sudden change in their family, a sudden diagnosis from the doctor? What happened? Even though it was unpleasant, did any good ever come from getting unsettled and knocked out of their comfortable rut? Did anyone in the group see a change in their spiritual life as a result of an unsettling moment? Ask the group members to rate themselves in terms of where their life is currently on a scale of one to ten (one being totally settled and ten being totally pilgrim). What does this reveal about the group as a whole. Now think about your church, asking each person to rate it on the same scale of one to ten. Settled or pilgrim? If your church is really settled, what do you think it will take for your leaders to decide to embark on a pilgrim journey? Is it possible for some of the church to start moving on such a journey without waiting for everyone to come along?

Scriptural Foundations: *15 minutes.* Let's explore one of the Apostle Paul's most eloquent writings, as he reflects on the difficulties and conflicts that have come with his ministry journey. Read 2 Corinthians chapter 4: -----.

One way to really experience the beauty and wisdom of this passage is to try the classic *lectio divina* approach, where the passage is read aloud three consecutive times. Have group members relax, take deep breaths

and be still for a moment. As you read the passage the first time aloud, invite folks to listen rather than trying to read along. They may wish to close their eyes. Ask them to pay attention to any words or word phrases that linger in their minds. At the end of the first reading, invite any in the group to share what words hung with them. They do not need to say why, although some may choose to elaborate.

For the second reading, pass the Bible or the printed text to another person, so that we can hear it in another voice. Instruct people to listen again, this time thinking of a worry, struggle or painful experience in their life, possibly one that is still very near. As they listen, what words resonate with their soul and their deepest faith convictions in response to this difficulty? At the end any who wish can share, but people should be invited to do so only if there is something they wish to share with the group. With fresh wounds, sometimes we are not ready to speak publicly.

For the final reading, pass the Bible to yet another person. Instruct people to think about the journey of ministry of your church, about the challenges that are before you, about what God is calling your church to be and do (insofar as they have a sense of this), and to listen for wisdom related to your church's ministry and its perseverance. Again at the end, invite any to share who wish to do so.

Ministry Clues: *15-20 minutes.* Break the group into smaller conversation groups, as we have done in previous sessions. Assign the Ministry Clue boxes found on pages 56, 58, 65, 67, 72, 79, 81 and 88 to groups of two or three. If you have more ministry clues than groups, you can decide which ones to assign, or allow groups to choose. Ask each group to discuss the ideas in one Ministry Clue box for about five to ten minutes and then report it to the larger group.

Then, as a group, vote again on each of the five ministry ideas as follows. Each group member can assign points to an idea ranging from zero (for an idea that will not be very helpful in our church's setting) to five (for an idea that could be revolutionary for us). Continue adding *up the points and keeping score on the ministry clues that energize the group this throughout the study.* At the end of the next session, you can revisit the

top scoring ministry ideas and take those ideas into live consideration among your church's leadership team.

Processing Ideas and Experience: *15 minutes.* Read aloud a passage from the book, beginning with the last paragraph on page 84. Read through to the middle of page 85, ending with the words "where only you and God can go." Invite people to hear again the quote from Thomas Merton on page 85, with this question in mind, "What do you think is really going on in terms of your church's spiritual journey, all aside from the outward statistics, buildings, new members, etc?" This will not be an easy assignment for some in the group – we may not be used to thinking about our lives in terms of the spiritual narrative. They may wish to turn in their books to the questions at the bottom of page 87 and top of page 88 to stimulate their thinking.

After reading the Merton passage again, give group members a few minutes to reflect quietly, perhaps to take a few notes. Then invite any to share who wish to do so.

Closing Prayer: *5 minutes.* Invite group members to think about *words that describe their apprehensions or anxieties when thinking about your church's journey forward.* Then invite them to voice these as prayer. They do not need to make complete sentences unless they want to. After people have shared, say, "God we give you our apprehensions and anxieties." Then invite group members to *think about words that describe their eagerness or energy* about the possibilities God may have for your church. Again, they can speak aloud these words, as they feel comfortable. After people have shared, say, "God, we give you our hopes and dreams." Finally invite any to share a sentence prayer of what they most deeply wish for your church. Close the prayer time with these words: "God, we thank you for inviting us into journey with you and for receiving these our prayers. Amen."

Module E – The Only Thing Certain is the Journey

Reading assigned in advance: Chapters 14-18 and Epilogue, (pp. 90-130)

Themes: Hospitality, Tribe, The Cultivation of Extraordinary People, God's Call, Trust in God, Showing Up for Ministry

Icebreaker: *10-15 minutes.* With books in hand, ask group members to leaf through the pages for about five minutes, looking at the various chapters, perhaps at pages they dog-eared or passages they highlighted. Ask them to determine what one passage they felt most significant for our church at this point in our life. Go around and let each person share. If someone does not have a passage to share, allow someone to share two – since a few in the group will have difficulty picking just one. Take good notes. This is good information to be presented to church leadership along with the group's top picks among the Ministry Clues.

Scriptural Foundations: *15 minutes.* Read Hebrews 11:----. If you like, divide the reading into sections, so that the Bible or printed text can be passed around the room for different folks to read, changing voices with each new Bible character that is mentioned as an example of faithfulness. Write on a marker board or newsprint the word FAITH in large letters. In response to what we have just read, invite group members to call out other words or phrases that unpack what FAITH means in the lives of human beings (and your church).

Break into table groups and ask them to choose one hero of faith from the list in Hebrews 11 who illustrates something important that your church needs to be doing in the days ahead. This can be a sort of patron saint. Have each group verbalize for the larger group who they chose and why.

Ministry Clues: *20-25 minutes.* Break the group into smaller conversation groups, as we have done in previous sessions. Assign the Ministry Clue boxes found on pages 92, 95, 101, 103, 107, 110, 115, and 118 to groups of two or three. If you have more ministry clues than groups, you can decide which ones to assign, or allow groups to choose. Ask each group to discuss the ideas in one Ministry Clue box for about five to ten minutes and then report it to the larger group.

Then, as a group, vote again on each of the five ministry ideas as follows. Each group member can assign points to an idea ranging from zero (for an idea that will not be very helpful in our church's setting) to five (for an idea that could be revolutionary for us). *Add up the points and rank the ministry clues from the beginning of the series until now.* Have one person do this on the side as the group enters into the next part of the session. Before the closing prayer, present to the group the list of the top vote-getting ministry clues. You can give them the top six or the top ten. Allow the group to respond to the list. Assign two people to sit down with the pastor and the church council chair to discuss how the church might implement these ideas. Most of these ideas do not require a vote from church leadership. Best to implement them, and simply report to council on the plans and the results.

Processing Ideas and Experience: *15 minutes.* In table groups, think about the people in your church and community. See how many cultural tribes you can identify. "Empty nester white folks who have not yet retired" could be one example of a tribe. "African American college students" could be another. You can break these groups down even more narrowly if you like. After a few minutes, compile all the tribes that people can think of on a market board or newsprint. Then ask, "How many of these tribes are present in our church?" What tribes are marginally present, but not very involved? What tribes do we think we could serve and reach with a little work? What might that look like? What tribes, not presently in the church, do group members deeply long to be more connected with? How might you act to strengthen relationships between various tribes?

Closing Prayer: *5-10 minutes.* Pass out index cards, and ask each group member to write a prayer that sums up their feelings and longings about your church and its future, as we conclude this study. They can sign the cards or leave them unsigned. Collect the cards and read each as a closing act of prayer.

Be sure to keep these prayer cards, along with the list of favorite book passages and the 6-10 favorite Ministry Clues as a part of the report to the church leadership.

If someone in the group has really felt the study was extremely helpful, invite them to consider leading yet another study group with the same material for others in your church. The more people who participate in this conversation, the greater the chances that your church will take some essential ministry risks in the days ahead in order to stay in the game, to remain engaged as a force for spiritual leadership and community in your city or region.