

PONDERING & PLANNING

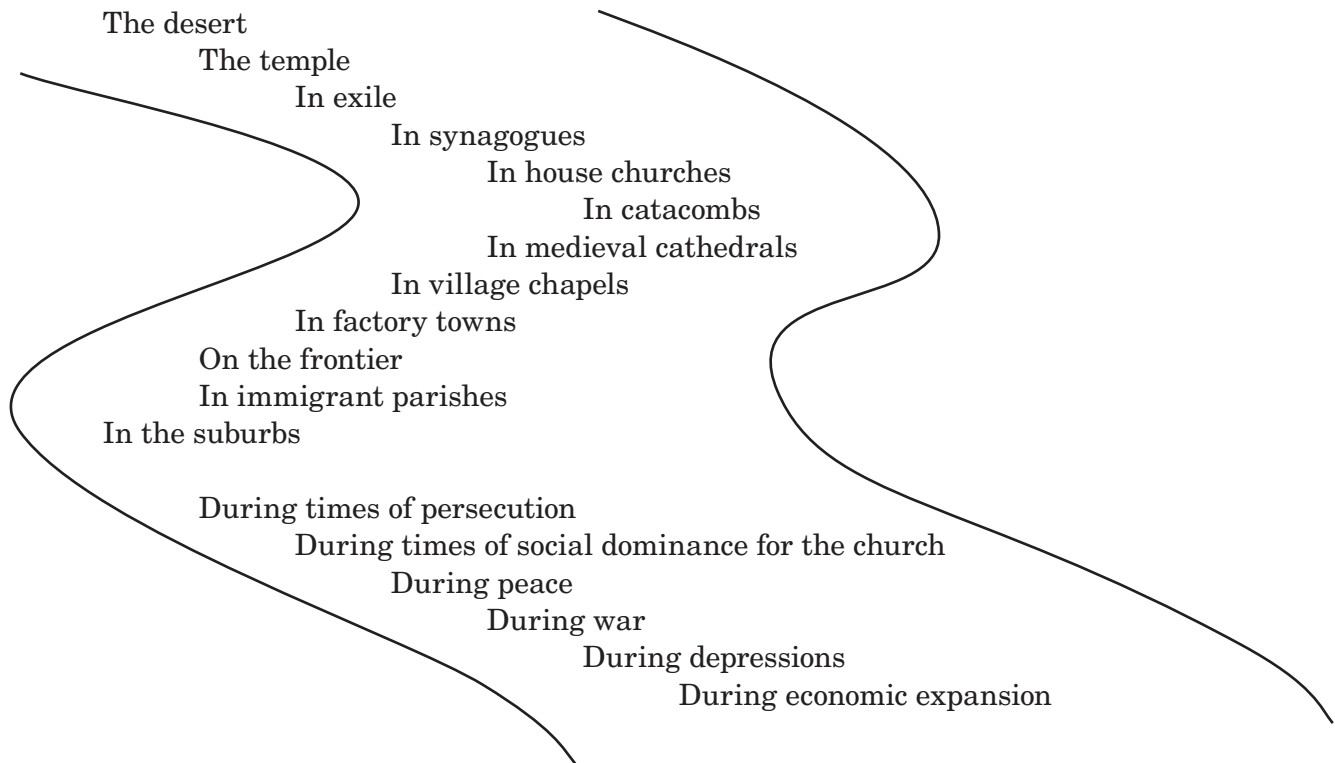
A Resource for Faith Re-Formation



Presbyterian Mission
**Office of Christian
Formation**

Hear, O Israel: The Lord is our God, the Lord alone. You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might. Keep these words that I am commanding you today in your heart. Recite them to your children and talk about them when you are at home and when you are away, when you lie down and when you rise. Bind them as a sign on your hand, fix them as an emblem on your forehead, and write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates. (Deuteronomy 6:4–9)

God's people have been called to do faith formation in many contexts through the ages:



In every context, God's people have created new and adapted old approaches to faith formation.

We have been learning how to participate in faith formation in a rapidly changing world. We have abandoned some things, adapted others, created new things.

We have grieved losses.

We have celebrated new successes.

And we may have even redefined success,

As we have followed that great tradition of creating and adapting the ways we go about faith formation.

We are called to explore and think about faith formation for the coming months and years.

Our aim may be the same as it was previously.

But we and our faith communities are not the same.

We most likely cannot go back to doing things just like we did.

So, at the invitation of Association of Presbyterian Church Educators (APCE) and the Office of Christian Formation in the Presbyterian Mission Agency (PMA), we have been called to create *Pondering and Planning – A Resource for Faith Re-Formation*. (Formerly named *Post Pandemic Pondering and Planning*).

We have created it to help as you ponder and evaluate how your faith communities will go about faith formation in the future.

We hope that you will find this resource useful in a variety of ministry and leadership settings, such as:

- A committee or session could work through the resource in parts of several meetings. Perhaps one page per meeting. Committee or session members might work on parts the resource at home and then share their thoughts when they come together for a meeting.
- A committee or session might work through the resource in one longer event, like a planning retreat.
- The leadership in one particular area of faith formation might work through the resource. For example, the youth council or the “mission trip folks” might find this to be helpful as they focus on their ministry area.
- A long-standing Sunday school class or Bible study group might use it to help in charting their future. It could be done by the whole class or by a leadership team of a larger class.
- An individual who cares about faith formation might work through it by themselves. Then they can look for places within their ministry setting to constructively share their thoughts or to encourage others to think about various pieces.
- Camps and conferences along with campus ministries are important contexts for faith formation. We have tried to design this resource so that leaders in those contexts may find it helpful as well.
- The leadership of a school connected with a congregation could use this, too.
- Outside groups using a congregation’s facilities might find it useful as the plan for their future.

We are sure that we have not come close to exhausting the possible ways that you might find to use this resource. We hope that you will find creative ways to use it in your particular context.

We hope that this resource will help you to think about this past year even as you move forward.

We hope that it will provide a time and space for you to share both joys and sorrows even as you dream about the future.

We hope that you will return to this resource and find it helpful as you continue to see how God’s work is unfolding in the future.



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This resource was created by the Association of Presbyterian Church Educators (APCE) in partnership with the Office of Christian Formation in the Presbyterian Mission Agency PC(USA).

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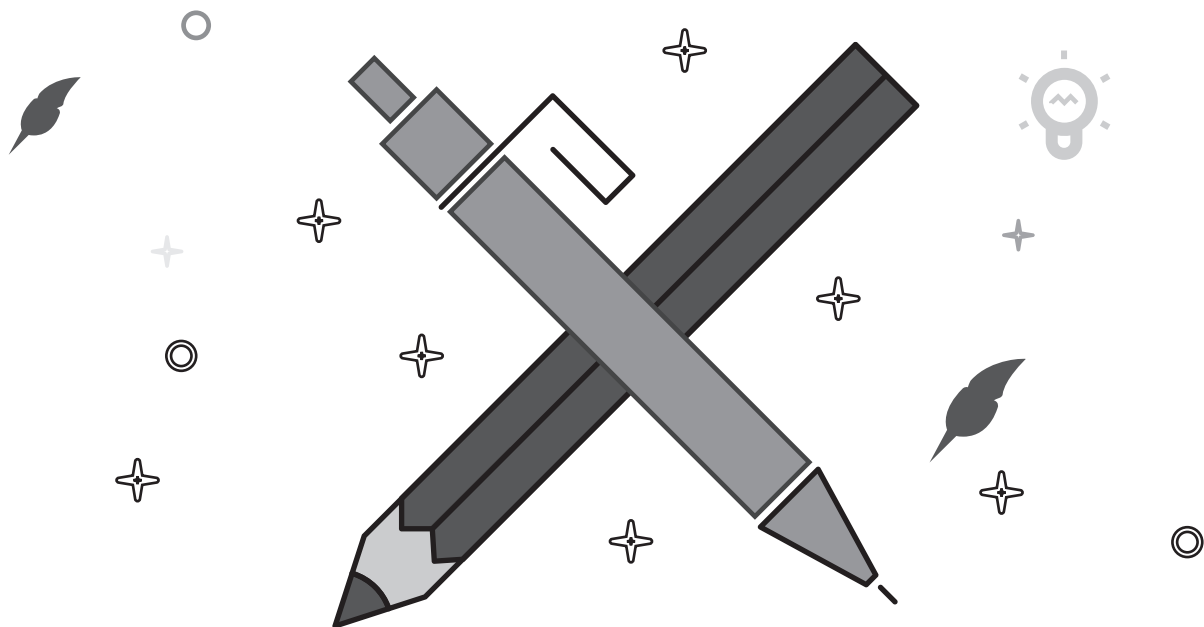
INSTRUCTIONS

Gather your favorite pens or pencils and set aside some time!

This resource is designed as a conversation partner. Working through the resource either in a small group or as an individual, each page invites you to consider a particular aspect of your ministry, context and your experience. The final page helps you to create a plan of action for the next three to six months. This is not comprehensive strategic plan, but a starting point as we consider where God is calling.

Here are a few suggestions as you get started:

- *Begin and end in prayer.* Invite God into the conversation and listen for the Spirit's guidance. Each page includes a short closing prayer for your use.
- *Give yourself time.* Each page invites you to brainstorm, reflect and discern. Even if you're working in a group, allow yourself at least 10 minutes in silence to consider the questions before beginning any discussion.
- *Take a break.* Rather than rushing through each exercise, pause in between. Give yourself space to consider your responses before going to the next one. This does not need to be completed in one sitting but could benefit from taking breaks between each section.
- *You are more than your ministry and your ministry is more than you.* Personal reflection is woven throughout the resource. How has the past year shaped your own faith and practice?
- *Leave judgement behind.* These exercises ask you to consider where you are today and where God is leading you in the future. Consider the questions with gentleness and grace.
- *Share with others.* Share your observations with conversation partners, colleagues and mentors. See what they notice.
- *Return!* Come back and see what you notice. Return to the questions in three, six and nine months to see what has changed.



IDENTITY



Write, Draw, List: Moments when your ministry was flourishing and faithful

PREVIOUSLY

PAST YEAR

IN THE NEXT YEAR

What stands out in each box?

What does this tell you about your ministry?

Reflect



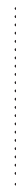
What hopes do you have in the next ...

three weeks

three months

six months

one year



As you think about your ministry, what guiding values, stories or statements help direct you?

Personal Note



Choose five words that describe your experience of the pandemic.

Act



Look over your responses:

Do any next steps or action items stand out?

_____ _____

_____ _____

Prayer: God of wisdom, help us to reflect on what has passed and focus on your vision of what is to come. Grant that we may discern your path in the midst of a new season of ministry.

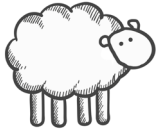
PEOPLE



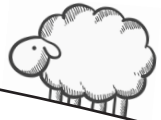
Consider your flock: How has it changed in the past year?



Who stayed?



Who was found?



Who is missing?

Reflect



Look through the names listed

Star * those who have THRIVED

Circle those who have struggled

Have you seen new gifts, interests or commitments emerge? How has your flock changed?

Personal Note



Pray through your list. Consider each name and their story — is there someone you feel particularly called to reach out to?

Act



Do any next steps or follow-up stand out?

_____ _____

_____ _____

Prayer: Faithful shepherd, you call us to tend to your beloved sheep. Help us to provide a space where all feel welcomed, all are included and all their gifts are embraced.

PROGRAM



In the first column, list your programs that you would consider educational or formational ministries.

The cycle of our Christian year is based around the living, dying and rising of Jesus Christ. Go through each listed program and identify the parts that are living, dying or rising in your ministries.

Program	Living	Dying	Rising	Next Steps

Reflect



Look at your column of Living: What is allowing these programs to flourish? How do these programs link back to Identity Page?

Look at your column of Dying: Are there signs of life? Natural places to prune? What needs to happen to let this die well?

Look at your column of Rising: Which squares are most exciting to you? Do you see one or two that seem like they are places to invest or nurture? How do these aspects link to Identity Page?

Personal Note



Shade or color the boxes where you have the most energy to make change happen.

Act



Consider your list of next steps and prioritize which you might address first as a congregation.

- _____
- _____
- _____

Prayer: God of transformation, you offer us new and everlasting life in Jesus Christ. Grant that we may see your hand at work in new, creative ways each day.

CAPACITY



Shifting between virtual, hybrid and in-person ways of doing ministry has increased and taxed our capacities for building new resources and abilities. It has also raised new questions.

Virtual



Hybrid

In-person



HOPES

CONCERNS

RESOURCES ALREADY PRESENT
(HUMAN, MATERIALS, SPACE)

RESOURCES NEEDED
(HUMAN, MATERIALS, SPACE)

Personal Note



Where do you feel most called to put your energy as part of the human resources needed?

Act



What next steps or action items can you identify for your ministry?

- _____
- _____
- _____

Prayer: God of provision, you offer the space and the energy to facilitate an expansive sense of ministry. Allow us to faithfully use our resources to help further the work of your beloved community.

SELF REFLECTION

Brainstorm



Reflect



Personal Note



It has been a year!

What has given you strength/life?

Where have you seen God at work?

What was lost?

What do you need to leave behind in order to move forward?

What are you mourning from this past year?

What would rest or renewal look like for you?

Prayer: Breathe in (something to embrace/ something that has energized you).
Breathe out (something to let go of/something that has drained you/your ministry).

Act



What are two or three next steps you can take for yourself?

WHAT'S NEXT?



Go through each page. Consider the next steps you identified. Combine them here.

Quick Wins! Things that you could accomplish now.

Long Term: Projects that will take at least three months to plan and implement.

Things that we need to do NOW:

Reflect



Act



Getting it Done! Go through your lists:

1. Add dates for each goal.
2. Add a review date to your calendar in three months.
3. Identify three to five conversation partners who could help with these goals.

Personal Note



How do I care for myself to accomplish these goals?

Prayer: God of all time, as we plan and establish priorities, grant us patience that we may be faithfully led in your direction, in your good time.