

GROWING IN THE LIFE OF
CHRISTIAN FAITH

with

STUDY GUIDE

COMMENDED TO THE CHURCH FOR INFORMATION
AND STUDY BY THE 201ST GENERAL ASSEMBLY (1989)
PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH (U.S.A.)

THEOLOGY AND WORSHIP MINISTRY UNIT
PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH (U.S.A.)
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Foreword

The 201st General Assembly (1989) received the report “Growing in the Life of Christian Faith” and commended it to the church for information and study. The Theology and Worship Ministry Unit is pleased to share it with you and especially pleased, in this second printing, to offer a study guide as well.

There may be no more important characteristic of the contemporary community of faith than the need and hunger that many church members are feeling. In spite of the affluence and technological sophistication of our culture, many persons are aware of a certain emptiness that they long to fill.

Given this phenomenon, “Growing in the Life of Christian Faith” makes a timely contribution. It helps us understand what we are experiencing. It helps us interpret our emptiness and yearnings as persons who are at home in the Reformed tradition. And, what is perhaps most valuable of all, it suggests how we might proceed should we wish to undertake new initiatives in our lives of faith.

We hope that you will find “Growing in the Life of Christian Faith” useful. It would please us to hear your reactions to it and your experience in studying it with other interested persons.

Advent 1991

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Preface

In 1985, the Council on Theology and Culture of the Presbyterian Church in the United States (PCUS) together with the Advisory Council on Discipleship and Worship of the UPCUSA commissioned a study on the topic of “Faith Development and the Reformed Tradition” and appointed a task force to carry it out (*Minutes*, 1987, Part I, pp. 635-36). The task force convened for the first time in the fall of 1986 at Louisville Presbyterian Theological Seminary in conjunction with a symposium entitled “Faith Development and the Reformed Tradition: A Symposium on Faith Nurtured and Expressed,” which was jointly sponsored by the seminary, Louisville Presbytery, and the two councils that commissioned this task force.

Two matters became clear at the very beginning of the task force’s work and at the symposium. First, Christians are hungry for renewal in their lives of faith. They want to know what it means to be alive and mature in Christian faith and they are calling for guidance and support in developing the disciplines and practices by which their faith may be nurtured and sustained, experienced and expressed. This may be true of all Christians, but it seems especially so of many in mainline denominations in the United States, including the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), who all too often feel that their own churches are unclear and inadequately helpful in these concerns.

The second matter that became clear to the task force is that we needed to deal with issues with which Christians seem most concerned: the nature of the life of faith, growing toward maturity in that life, and how the life of faith can be nurtured and sustained, especially in and through the church. The task force’s aim has been to see what might be said about these issues from the perspective of the Reformed theological tradition in the late 20th century.

The task force appointed by the predecessor bodies of the Theology and Worship Unit to prepare this paper included: the Rev. Dr. Michael Angevine, San Francisco Theological Seminary; the Rev. Dr. Craig Dykstra (writer), Princeton Theological Seminary; Ms. Mary Ann Harwell (co-chairperson), Alexandria, Virginia; the Rev. Wayne Purinton (co-chairperson), Presbytery of Cincinnati; the Rev. Dr. Nancy Ramsay,

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Introduction

Ours is a time of yearning—not only in the Presbyterian Church but in the church catholic and in society as a whole—for a newer, fresher, more vibrant life of faith.

At large in our culture is a widespread hunger for meaning, a deep desire for abiding communal and personal values, and a longing for direction in our lives. It appears that meaning, value, and direction are not easy to come by. Cultural and social institutions that may have provided for them in the past seem to have become fragmented, conflicted, or otherwise inadequate to the task. This may be no less true of churches than it is of families, schools, governments, and the arts. Many church people are, therefore, no less in need than others.

The search for meaning, value, and direction takes many forms. It is evident in political speeches and television dramas. One can see it in the controversies over what should be taught in elementary schools and what should be included in the required curricula of colleges and universities. The enormous proliferation of psychologically oriented self-help books on a huge range of topics may be the most obvious evidence of all.

In the churches, including the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), the considerable attention currently being given to “spirituality” and to “faith development” points in the same direction. These have been offered by the churches as responses to the malaise and as ways in which the search for meaning, value, and direction may be carried out. Thus, curriculum materials and popular religious books are regularly constructed around such themes as the “life journey” and “dealing with life crises”; and workshops, conferences, celebrations, and worship services have “spiritual gifts” and “faith sharing” as their themes.

Both within and beyond the church, the yearning is based upon a sense of lack, of unmet need, and inadequately fed hunger. Yet, the yearning is full of hope and expectation. People persevere in their search because they believe that, ultimately, their needs will be filled. There is willingness to believe that there is some “spiritual food” which can, in fact, nourish. Still, an undercurrent of wariness persists. Too often, promises of a banquet have led to a menu of junk food; anticipations of new life run into dead ends. This has been the case for many not only with promises made by secular sources, but with those made by churches as well. The result is that we are in a rather extended period of exploration and experimentation. Among the many available options some generate excitement, a few engender commitment, but the way to genuine meaning, value, and direction in life still seems obscured to many people.

This study is based upon a specific set of premises. We affirm that Christian faith begins with God, with God’s presence with and love for the world, rather than with what we want for ourselves. Thus, the meaning and point of Christian faith is not simply (or, even primarily) to meet human yearnings for meaning, value, and direction. Nonetheless, we confess and give thanks that in the life of Christian faith meaning, value, and direction are provided in such richness and depth that our hungers for them, while often transformed, are indeed met.

We believe that people throughout the history of the Reformed tradition have known and lived the life of Christian faith. Therefore, we can expect to find in this tradition’s theological documents and fundamental practices resources of the kind we need to guide us as individuals and churches. We recognize that the historic practices and central theological understandings of the Reformed tradition are not the only faithful ones. There is a long history of spiritual development which we, with the Reformers, have inherited from the faith, life, and practice of the whole church through the ages. Important and needed resources are available to us and to all from other Christian traditions, as well as from other religious faiths and various arts and sciences. Though our assignment here is to explore the Reformed tradition for what it may have to contribute to all, this is done in the context of our participation in a wider church and culture.

In order for these resources to be helpful, they must be remembered, articulated, and put to use in ways that allow their perennial significance to be made clear in our present situation. It is not sufficient simply to repeat what has already been said in other times and contexts. Instead, we must think freshly in the current context in ways that draw upon and are faithful to the tradition of which we are a part.

We recognize that the use of these resources is likely to bring to bear a different perspective on many present understandings of Christian faith and spiritual life, faith development and spiritual growth. It is also likely to bring criticisms to bear on many current corporate and individual religious practices. Such criticism is useful when it suggests means by which the church may reform and deepen its own understandings and practices. We are most interested here in those critiques which may help the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) toward renewal in its own life and deeper fellowship with the wider Christian community. The present study is organized as follows.

In order to explore the nature and dynamics of growth in the life of Christian faith,² the report begins with an exploration of “faith” and “the life of faith.” These are rich and complex realities that have a variety of aspects, as is evident not only from the way they are discussed and presented in the theological tradition, but also from the way they are portrayed in the Bible. Furthermore, they can mean quite different things to different people—not only in popular understanding, but also in the variety of theological traditions. Our task is to explore the central affirmations about these matters in the Reformed tradition and to relate them, constructively and reflectively, to such other positions as may be useful to our project.

The report then turns to the topic of growth in faith and in the life of faith, attempting to uncover what, from the perspective of the Reformed tradition, we may say about such growth. Thereafter, the report investigates what the Reformed tradition has to say about how people come to Christian faith and participate ever more fully in the life of faith. Here we attempt to articulate those dimensions of our life together in Christian community and the sorts of disciplines and practices that seem essential in nurturing faith and the life of faith.

The relation of the results of this investigation to studies in contemporary psychology are discussed in an appendix. Such studies have been influential in our church’s understanding of human growth and develop-

ment in relation to faith and the life of faith. During the 20th century, especially in North American/Western European culture, the discipline of psychology has articulated and influenced understandings of the nature and development of the human self as well as images and metaphors of human fulfillment and excellence that seem to have become predominant. Furthermore, these psychological theories presently inform much of the personal self-understanding of the members and pastors—as well as much of the pastoral and educational work—in our church. Thus, the task force concluded that it would be helpful to examine briefly the ways in which contemporary cultural assumptions about human growth and fulfillment (especially as they are reflected in psychological theories of human development) may both constructively inform our understanding and practice and be in some tension with them.

Part I: Faith and the Life of Faith

A. Approaches to the Meaning of “Faith”

The word “faith” refuses to be defined simply. There is no one meaning of “faith,” for it is a complex reality, and understandings of it do differ. Differences in understanding of the meaning of “faith” are significant on the practical level, for positions on this matter often have striking (and quite diverse) implications for our conceptions of spiritual growth and formation as well as for patterns of church life and pastoral practice.

In articulating what faith means, some start with such general human phenomena as believing, trusting, committing, and orienting life. Faith, according to those who start this way, is constituted by these basic human activities. Accordingly, faith is a dimension of every human life, because belief, trust, and confidence in something seem inherent to being human at all. Some people place their faith in material goods or personal prestige, some in certain people, communities, or traditions, others in ideals or goals, while still others in a transcendent Reality or Being. Nonetheless, from this perspective, all of these are taken to be forms of faith.

Others argue that faith can only be understood rightly by starting with God, rather than with human activities. Faith, in this way of thinking, involves being related to God in a particular way. Hence, the very meaning of faith is understood in terms of right relationship to the true God.

Ultimate relationship to anyone or anything else than God is considered to be idolatry, not faith. Faith certainly involves belief and trust in, commitment to and fundamental life orientation toward God. In this approach, the notion of faith as a human activity is not denied. But this activity is set in the context of a relationship, and that relationship depends upon the prior activity of God, who takes initiative in making the divine nature and presence known and accessible to human beings. Thus, faith is primarily a response—a response to a gift, an activity of recognizing and accepting God’s grace, which gives rise to a way of believing, trusting, committing, and orienting one’s life.

The Reformed tradition has always been aware that people must put their trust and belief in something in order to exist at all. And it recognizes and celebrates the religious need and sensibility that seems inherent to human being. Nonetheless, it has tended to reserve the term “faith” for trust and belief in the God known in Jesus Christ. Because of this, its way of understanding faith is couched in the recital of a story about this God.

The story is the one told in the Bible. The Reformed tradition’s confessions summarize this story in various ways, but these summaries always include the following basic parts:³

- The world and all its creatures (including human beings) have been created by God and this creation is good.
- Within this good creation, human beings, out of their own freedom, have broken community with God and with one another, fracturing and distorting creation. We can do nothing to remedy this by our own power or through any other power in the world.
- We are not left on our own, however. God chose Israel for the sake of all, and now all are, in Christ, loved and, through Christ, saved, freed, forgiven, rescued, and redeemed by God for no other reason than God’s sheer gracious goodness⁴
- That love and freeing rescue, active in the world today and in the future through God’s Spirit, makes available to all humanity and to the whole creation a new kind of life in which we may now participate in part, and, ultimately, in full.⁵

From the point of view of the Reformed tradition, “faith” gets its central meaning from its place in this story.

The place of “faith” in this story is at the point of our recognition and willing reception of the gracious love and saving liberation given by God

in Christ.⁶ Or, as John Calvin put it: “We shall possess a right definition of faith if we call it a firm and certain knowledge of God’s benevolence toward us, founded upon the truth of the freely given promise in Christ, both revealed to our minds and sealed upon our hearts through the Holy Spirit.”⁷ This is the basic, central meaning of “faith” from the point of view of the Reformed tradition: acknowledging our need of God’s love and freeing power; recognizing that this has been given to us and to all the world; and, in response, loving and proclaiming to the world the One who provides this tender mercy.

Faith gives rise to a new kind of life. The “life of faith” is the way of living that is organized by and flows out of faith. In the life of faith, we come more and more to participate in the new reality God is opening to us. We live in it ever more fully and let it do its work in every aspect of our lives, as all our beliefs and understandings, feelings and emotions, values and meanings, commitments and actions become increasingly shaped by and conformed to it. Above all, the life of faith involves rejoicing in the love and grace of God, giving thanks to God secure in the knowledge that all God’s promises are sure, and sharing that love and grace in the life of the world.

Faith and the life of faith are intimately related. Each includes and is dependent upon the other. Thus, it is just as true to say that faith “flows out of” the life of faith as the other way around. Faith is possible only because the life of faith surrounds it and provides its context. This context is communal and historical. The life of faith is deeply personal, but it is not individual or isolated. Only because both faith and the life of faith are communal and historic realities can they be ours as individuals. They come to us and are formed in us through our participation in the faith and life of faith of a community of faithful people.

What has been said in this section of the report are the most fundamental points to be made about the meaning of faith and the life of faith from the point of view of the Reformed tradition. But because some exploration of both of these can help to deepen our understanding of growth and transformation in them, the report now turns to a more detailed discussion of faith and then of the life of faith.

B. Faith

1. *Faith and belief.* To many people, faith means belief. Faith is, indeed, closely related to belief, but the relations between the two are complex, and some ways of making the connections are unhelpful and even false.

Belief sometimes means either mere opinion or unthinking assent. When faith is identified with belief in this sense, faith becomes believing without knowing, a kind of shot in the dark. This is a mistaken way of connecting faith and belief, however, even though it has, at times, been fostered by various churches. Faith involves belief, but in a different sense. Faith includes particular beliefs about God, the world, and ourselves. It is, in part, belief that certain matters are, in fact, the case. Faith is conviction of truth, conviction so deep it is always willing to face the evidence, entertain doubt, and inquire so far as truth may lead it.

Faith and belief are also connected in another way. Faith involves more than believing that something is true; it also involves believing in, having confidence in, trusting. Trust and confidence in God and in God's promises have been classical Protestant emphases in describing faith, and, indeed, this kind of belief may be regarded as fundamental since, for example, belief that God exists means little unless one believes in God.

Another connection has to do with how central our believing is to who we are. Some of our beliefs are fairly peripheral to us; they can be given up without significantly affecting one's basic identity and life orientation. But some of our beliefs are central to our very selves. To change these beliefs would mean to change as persons. Such "core" believing is close to the heart of a person and thus tends to be nearly identified with faith.

It makes sense, then, to talk about faith in terms of belief, especially where the word "belief" connotes the profound "believing in" and "believing that" which lies at the core of a person's or community's identity and character—at the heart of their being. "Belief" may not, however, be strong enough a word to convey the experience of faith to which the Reformed tradition points.

2. *Faith and personal knowing.* In Christian faith, God and the love, grace, mercy, and promises of God, are not just believed; they are not even just believed in. Rather, they are *known*. As Calvin puts it, we should call it "a firm and certain knowledge . . . both revealed to our minds and sealed upon our hearts."

The knowing involved here is not well conveyed by comparing it to

knowing a certain statement to be factually correct. The pattern is more one of “address and response” rather than of “statement and agreement.” “The knowing involved in faith is like the knowing involved in *being addressed* by a trusted messenger with a life-important personal message (such as, “Your execution has been pardoned,” or “The one you love does, in fact, love you deeply as well”); *recognizing* that the message is meant especially for you; and realizing that you are now free and may live, that your deepest hopes have come true. Thus, as *The Heidelberg Catechism* puts it:

It is not only a certain knowledge by which I accept as true all that God has revealed to us in his Word, but also a wholehearted trust which the Holy Spirit creates in me through the gospel, that, not only to others, but to me also God has given the forgiveness of sins, everlasting righteousness and salvation, out of sheer grace solely for the sake of Christ’s saving work.⁸

Because we have been addressed, received this kind of word, and accepted it, we know our very lives to be transformed. Now our lives are grounded anew, in the one who loves us and makes us free and able to love in response.

In such knowledge, there is assurance and comfort. The Heidelberg Catechism points to this dimension:

Q. What is your only comfort, in life and in death?

A. That I belong—body and soul, in life and in death—not to myself but to my faithful Savior, Jesus Christ, who . . . has completely freed me from the dominion of the devil . . . and makes me wholeheartedly willing and ready from now on to live for him.⁹

Faith involves accepting and receiving a liberating grace that truly frees us from every enemy to abundant life. Faith means freedom, the freedom at last to give up the anxious and impossible task of keeping oneself from falling. It means freedom to turn from oneself as the source of one’s own life and hope, freedom to give up the struggle to control everything by one’s own power. It means freedom to be at home in the presence of a loving God.

The *content* and the *source* of such good news are primary in the situation of faith and make possible the quality of its reception. The knowing that lies at the heart of faith gains its character from the urgency of the situation, the overpowering goodness of the good news, and the astonishing difference its reception makes in one’s life. Faith is the deep, life-changing knowledge of something in particular: God’s gracious freeing of us and God’s abiding love of us and the whole creation. To have faith is to know *this*.

If this way of speaking about faith leads to the conclusion that faith is still primarily a matter of knowing some *thing*, however, we have missed what is most fundamental about it. For faith is not only knowing the message; it is knowing the Messenger. Our response is not only to what is said, but, above all, to the One who speaks. In the situation of faith, we encounter the *presence* of God in Jesus Christ in our own lives. Ultimately, the “news” is the person; the Good News *is* Jesus Christ. Thus, faith is a qualitatively different, extraordinary, and ultimately unique kind of knowing. It is knowing God, knowing God’s own self, experiencing inwardly “God with us” as a present and personal reality.

The Reformed tradition has spoken of this in various ways, but Calvin’s formulation, “revealed to our minds and sealed upon our hearts through the Holy Spirit,” is to the point. Fundamental to our knowing is the fact that we are known by the One we come to know. Christ’s “true and efficacious presence” in the Holy Spirit is active in the inner heart and pervades the mind, and this is the ultimate condition of our knowing.

This kind of knowing is personal knowing—involving and affecting every dimension of our selves. Trust, loyalty, gratitude, love, adoration—even wonder, awe, and fear—all mark this relationship. Furthermore, the knowledge and the attitudes are not separate from one another. It is not because we know that we trust (or because we trust that we know). Rather, we know *in* trust, *in* love, *in* gratitude, *in* adoration. The attitudes and the knowing come together; they are parts of one another.

3. *Faith and truth.* The deeply personal nature of faith does not mean, however, that its knowing is merely subjective, much less irrational. The God who creates, sustains, forgives, and saves is a God who comes to us from beyond ourselves—indeed, from beyond human history and human experience. Therefore, though God is known in and through history and is experienced inwardly and personally, the knowledge of God and God’s promises can never be reduced simply to internal individual experience or to a by-product of historical social processes.

Furthermore, this God is both the Truth who sets us free and the Source of all truth there is. Faith is oriented toward truth, and the knowledge of faith is the knowledge of Truth (John 8:31–38). In the Reformed tradition, such truth, though not *grounded* in reason, is nonetheless understood to be credible to the discerning mind. Thus, intellectual inquiry into the meaning and intelligibility of God, of God’s acts and promises, of everything in God’s creation is an essential and constituent element of faith and the life of faith.

Faith, in its simplest, deepest form, then, is the knowledge of God in Jesus Christ through the Holy Spirit. It is profound acceptance of and utter reliance upon the gospel, the good news, of Jesus Christ. Faith involves both the address of God and the response of humanity. The address is the originating impetus for faith. Without the gospel, there can be no faith. Likewise, there can be no faith without human response. In faith, we answer—by recognizing and receiving God’s gracious gift.

C. *The Life of Faith*

Faith issues in—even propels us into—life of faith in which we come more and more to participate in the new life God has given us. In speaking of both “faith” and “the life of faith” we make a distinction and follow a pattern that is rather consistent in the Reformed tradition.¹⁰ For example, Calvin says that:

. . . the gospel is not a doctrine of the tongue but of life. It cannot be grasped by reason and memory only but is fully understood when it possesses the whole soul and penetrates to the inner recesses of the heart . . . [O]ur religion will be unprofitable, if it does not change our heart, pervade our manners, and transform us into new creatures.¹¹

The Westminster Confession points out that faith, which is “receiving and resting on Christ and his righteousness,” is “not alone in the person justified, but is ever accompanied with all other saving graces, and is no dead faith, but worketh by love.”¹² *The Confession of 1967*, continuing the same theme, says that as the gospel is proclaimed and believed, “the Spirit brings God’s forgiveness to [human beings], moves them to respond in faith, repentance, and obedience, and initiates the new life in Christ.”¹³

The Bible has many ways of speaking about this new life. It speaks of “newness of life” (Ps. 51:10; Ezek. 11:19; 18:31; 36:26; Rom. 6:4), of being “born from above” or “born anew” (John 3:3, 7; 1 Peter 1:3, 23), of “regeneration” (John 3:5; Titus 3:5), of “putting on the new nature” (Eph. 4:24; Col. 3:10), and of being “a new creation” (2 Cor. 5:17). Perhaps the fullest discussion of the life of faith, however, is that of the Apostle Paul, who speaks of it in terms of “life in Christ” and “life in the Spirit.” (See esp., Rom. 8:1–39.) “Life in Christ” and “life in the Spirit” are, for Paul, two different ways of pointing to the same reality, namely, the life of Christian faith.

1. Life “*in Christ*” and “*according to the Spirit.*” The life of Christian

faith is life in such intimate relationship with Jesus Christ that Paul says we may live “in Christ” and that Christ is “in you” (Rom. 8:10). Similarly, we are now free to live “according to the Spirit,” so that “the Spirit of God really dwells in you” (Rom. 8:9). This is contrasted by Paul with life “according to the flesh” (Rom. 8:5). The contrast is not one between life after death and our life on earth. Both life “according to the Spirit” and life “according to the flesh” are forms of present, daily, bodily, human living. But life “according to the flesh” is life aimed at and directed by things that have no ultimate, lasting value and power. “Life in Christ,” “life according to the Spirit,” is life-oriented, empowered, undergirded, and sustained by the Source of life itself.

Paul’s phrases are not everyday terms, to be sure. But they describe realities of everyday life that are central to the meaning of the life of Christian faith. They point to that in the life of Christian faith from which everything else is derived.

To take one example, suppose a person lives in such a way that his or her life depends upon and is fundamentally oriented around succeeding in a career. When this is the case, failure in one’s job would be a disaster. It would call into question one’s very existence, all that one is and lives for. Fear that this disaster might take place compels one to protect against it, to do almost anything to make sure the failure never takes place. All one’s energies, interests, understandings, feelings, and relationships become oriented around career and around keeping failure from happening. One’s “world” is shaped by the career and its protection. Work becomes one’s world. One becomes one’s work: It is in you and you are in it. In Paul’s terms, if this is going on in one’s life, one is living in one’s career “according to the flesh.”¹⁴

Similarly, we can be related to our families, our leisure, even our religion “according to the flesh.” In every case, these are good things to which we should be devoted—but only “according to the Spirit.” “In Christ,” we may love and care for them as Christ does. But we cannot make any of them the very center of our lives, because none of them is God. Each of them ultimately passes away. Each is only a part of life, not the Source of life itself. When we center our lives on anything but God, we live “according to the flesh.” And this, whether we know it or not, is living toward death.

In life “according to the Spirit”—life “in Christ”—our lives and everything that gives them value and meaning are not absolutely located in or dependent upon what we human beings can do or create or protect. Rather, our lives are located “in Christ.” God present to us in Jesus Christ becomes the source of our energy, the One on whom every aspect of our lives depends and to which it is oriented. Life’s meaning, value, and direction are all funded by and gathered together in Jesus Christ.

As this takes place, we actually experience our lives differently. Things change, individually and corporately—not all at once, but over time. We experience increasing freedom. Fresh ways of seeing and deeper insight into reality become available to us. New and different struggles emerge for us. We are given responsibilities that may not have been apparent to us, while we also receive new power to carry them out. And we are given new hope and perseverance.

We experience new life together, not in isolation. Life “according to the Spirit” is shared, corporate life. We are “in Christ” as members of “the body of Christ.” Our intimacy with Christ takes place in community. So too, of course, with life “according to the flesh.” Whole nations and peoples live according to the flesh, not just individuals. Indeed, the ultimate overcoming of life “according to the flesh” is the fulfillment of the reign of God, the coming of the Kingdom.

2. *New freedom.* Life in the Spirit begins with the profound assurance that we are loved—fully and unreservedly—by God. This love is the source and foundation of the new life we receive in faith. For many Christians, this proves to be a stumbling block difficult to overcome. Early childhood experiences or later trauma may leave some of us feeling that such love could not possibly include *me*. Others of us may never fully acknowledge our need for such love, secretly sure, perhaps, that it could never come anyway. In either case, the inability to receive the gift of love undermines the experience of faith and the life of faith, transforming God’s gift into a burden or reducing it to irrelevance. But as we do receive this love, we receive new freedom as well.

The fundamental freedom of the life of Christian faith is freedom from all the powers that enslave, dominate, corrupt, and corrode. We become more *free from* being dominated by and inappropriately dependent upon them; and we become more *free for* them, free to love, respect, enjoy, and care for them, precisely because we are not controlled by them.

Dorothee Soelle has described the life of Christian faith as one of constantly “chiming in with the great ‘Yes’ to life.” Faith is “choosing life” (cf. Deut. 30:19). This may not seem like much of a choice, given the alternative. But in the life of Christian faith, the choice for life is an emphatic and unconditional choice. As Soelle puts it:

We are inclined to affirm life under particular circumstances, under certain given conditions—when life is young, and beautiful and full of achievement. The “Yes” which is meant in the emphatic, biblical sense is a “Yes” without any conditions. It applies in sickness and dying as well. It applies above all to the people who have felt themselves to be denied and without dignity for so long that they have come to terms with the situation. But choosing life is the very capacity for not putting up with the matter-of-course destruction of life surrounding us, and the matter-of-course cynicism that is our constant companion.¹⁵

The new freedom of the life of faith is the freedom to choose life.

3. *Fresh seeing.* In life “according to the flesh,” our very world is shaped by what we are striving to defend and protect. We come to see everything through lenses distorted by such limited allegiances. In Christ, a whole new world in which to live is opened up us. It is not just that we live new kinds of lives in the same old world. Rather, the very environment in which we live is both enlarged and transformed; the whole atmosphere is altered.

According to the Bible, the world made accessible to us by “life in the Spirit” is the real world. It is the world created and sustained by God, not a distorted, delusionary one born of fear and anxiety. This is why fresh seeing, discernment, and wisdom are regularly conceived in the Bible to be intrinsic to the life of faith. The life of Christian faith, life in Christ, involves being able to see what there is to be seen, to see beneath the surface of things, and even to see beyond what can be seen.¹⁶

In this sense, the life of faith is often contrasted with life lived in darkness or blindness. Our perception is veiled or distorted—by our own ego-centric needs and desires as well as by familial and cultural structures and pressures. We see only what we want to see, often out of fear and anxiety refusing even to *look* at things to which we would rather not attend. In Christ, there arises the capacity to penetrate the haze, to face honestly what is there, both in the world and in ourselves. In the Gospel of John, for example, Jesus is regarded as the light of the world who makes sight possible. In him, John says, “you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free” (8:32).

4. *Struggle with evil.* The new seeing includes the ability to see evil more clearly, to recognize what the Bible calls “principalities and pow-

ers” for what they are. Recognizing the forces of evil and destruction that dominate life “according to the flesh,” we are faced “in Christ” with a continual struggle against them. Sometimes the struggle is with powers that work within us individually. Sometimes the struggle is with powers that work among us corporately and at large in the world. Usually we face both struggles at once.

In the life of faith, we may come to see our own selves more clearly, including our sin. Struggle with sin has been a central theme in Reformed theology from its earliest days. In *Calvin’s Institutes* we read, for example, that the first of “the effects we feel” in the life of faith is repentance. As Calvin puts it: “No one can embrace the grace of the gospel without betaking himself from the errors of his past life into the right way, and applying his whole effort to the practice of repentance.”¹⁷ But repentance meant more to Calvin than mere sorrow for our sin and the effort to avoid it in the future. It meant a life-long struggle with sin that involved, at root, a fundamental turning from self to God. Repentance, he said, “is the true turning of our life to God.”¹⁸

The struggle is not only with individual sin, however. Sin has a corporate dimension inseparable from its personal dimension. So the life of faith involves us individually and corporately in life-long struggle against communal and political powers of sin and death, deceit and alienation, injustice and oppression—in the church and in the larger world.

It is not always clear in the midst of struggle that the powers of sin and death are not victorious. We must continually face up to the harsh realities of human existence and cannot avoid them. But, as the Apostle Paul has written:

We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not driven to despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed; always carrying in the body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be manifested in our bodies (2 Cor. 4:8–10).

So, the struggles, though often very difficult, are not humorless or devoid of joy. Just the opposite. For, to say it once again, the struggle is for life and is born of the life that is given us in and through the risen Jesus Christ. In the Spirit, we participate in Christ’s living work in the world, which is at once a present foretaste and sure promise of the ultimate defeat of every power of death and destruction.

5. *Consecrated service.* Participation in Christ’s living work is the heart of what is conveyed by the biblical word “sanctification.” Edward A.

Dowey, Jr. put the matter this way in his *Commentary on the Confession of 1967*:

“Sanctified,” in the Bible, means “set apart for a divine purpose,” or commissioned to serve. What made the people of Israel holy (Latin, *sanctus*, the root of “sanctify”) was not their moral condition but the fact that they were chosen and set apart for a special mission in the world. The same is true of the church and each of its members.¹⁹

Karl Barth made a similar point when he said that what supremely characterizes the life of Christian faith is the fact that in it we have been given a task, a vocation. For him, the life of Christian faith is “existence in the execution of this task.”²⁰

Obedience to Christ is a crucial dimension of the Christian life, but what that means can easily be distorted. Sometimes obedience is understood only in terms of adherence to moral rules regarded as expressions of God’s will. There have been times in Reformed history when such understandings have inappropriately dominated the tradition. In such cases “the law” has been virtually identified with God (and sometimes a tyrannical God at that), and “moral righteousness” with “faith.”

But obedience is best understood as a response of gratitude and love to a gracious and loving God whose requirements are for the sake of creation. Furthermore, the God who calls us to obedience is the same One who has first freed us for obedience and who is able and ready to forgive our disobedience. God empowers obedience, encouraging and enabling us to live gratefully and responsively in relation to God’s purposes and promises. In this way obedience is true freedom.

We are often prone to identify “God’s law” with our own law and God’s purposes with our own desires, habits, and customs. Life in the Spirit, however, is life imbued with freedom from conventionality. To live in Christ is both to be and to do in new ways. There is a certain kind of predictability to those who live in the Spirit, if that predictability is seen from the point of view of consonance with the will and ways of God in the world. But because that will is not conformed to the will of the world, there is also an unpredictability to those who, following God’s law and purpose, no longer necessarily think and behave in ways common to their culture and society or adhere to conventional and fixed patterns of response to people and situations. In the Spirit, God’s will and God’s instruction to us in the law are received as gracious gifts of guidance and direction, which point us toward the kind of new life that God intends for all people and the whole earth.

The life of Christian faith is obedient, above all, in love. The love of God for us and for all creation, made manifest in Jesus Christ by the Spirit, is the source and foundation of the new life we receive in faith, a life itself characterized by love. Love is the ultimate sign and manifestation of life in the Spirit, of new life in Christ. And the love that characterizes this life is one that moves out in all directions. It is not restricted. Obedience means freedom to share in God's love for all things, including one's own self, one's kin and neighbors, strangers and enemies, and the earth itself. Life in Christ is lived in love for God's whole creation. Obedience, therefore, takes the form of care for all the world. Its names include "healing" and "compassion" and "justice" and "mercy."

But our love is not only for creation. We love God. We love God as creatures who have been created and redeemed. We love God as God's own beloved. That means we worship God. So, our obedience is not only in our political and personal care for the world, but also in our worship of God.

6. *Hope and perseverance.* A life such as this demands perseverance. The life of faith involves faithfulness: holding firm, keeping faith, pressing on in confidence, courage, and hope. The life of faith must, therefore, be patterned, structured, kept in place and on course over the long haul through the development of disciplines and habits, both personal and corporate. The power of persevering faithfulness becomes especially evident when obstacles are faced and the struggles the life of faith involves bring suffering or persecution. The life of faith is no more immune to the devastations that evil can bring or to the powers of destruction and death than other kinds of life. Indeed, life in Christ often places us in harm's way more often and in more ways than we otherwise might be. But, in the Spirit, we learn more and more to trust in God's power to do wonderful things, even in the midst of the bleakest of circumstances. The Bible recognizes this particular trust as an important element in the life of faith, and those who live in the Spirit are, therefore, not surprised when dead ends unexpectedly turn into fresh possibilities or when healing takes place—all by the power of God.²¹ Moreover, as *A Declaration of Faith* has put it:

In the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus
God kept his promises.
All that we can ever hope for
was present in Christ.
But the work of God in Christ is not over.

God calls us to hope for more than we have yet seen.
The hope God gives us is ultimate confidence
that supports us when lesser hopes fail us.
In Christ God gives hope for a new heaven and earth,
certainty of victory over death,
assurance of mercy and judgment beyond death.
This hope gives us courage for the present struggle.²²

D. Faith and the Hungers of the Age

At the outset of our report, we pointed out the widespread hunger for meaning, direction, and values pervading our culture. We also affirmed our belief that in the life of Christian faith meaning, direction, and value are given to us in such richness and depth that our hungers for them, while often transformed, are indeed met.

We are now able to develop these ideas a bit further. A hunger for meaning, direction, and value can lead people to Christian faith, if they know that in faith such hungers are met. But it is a mistake to *identify* Christian faith with a way of making sense out of life, with a way of finding meaning, direction, and value in it. Faith and the life of faith are indeed seen and experienced by Christians as filled with meaning, value, and life direction that is ultimately trustworthy and true. The God known in faith is the overflowing reservoir of all that is valuable and good, and to live “according to the Spirit,” to live “in Christ,” is to be placed in intimate contact with that God in every dimension of our lives. But meaning and faith are not the same. Meaning, value, and direction are neither the substance, the aim, nor the means of faith and the life of faith. Rather, they are by-products.

In the experience of faith and the life of faith, a transformation takes place. Meaning, value, and life direction all become relativized. They are no longer the prize we seek. In Christ, our very hungers become transformed, so that to live in Christ is the only food we crave. In Christ, we are free to give up all else—even meaning, value, direction, and our search for them. For they are not God. The surprise, however, is that in being free to give them up we find them returned to us a hundredfold. Just as those who lose their lives for Christ’s sake gain them back (Matt. 16:25), so also do those who, in Christ, let loose of their strivings for meaning, value, and direction gain them all back again, but indirectly, as a gift, and different in kind from that which they had expected, from that for which they had hoped. As H. Richard Niebuhr has written, God

“requires of us the sacrifice of all we would conserve”—including meaning, value, and direction in life—“and grants us gifts we had not dreamed of.”²³

Part II: Growing in Faith and in the Life of Faith

It is clear, both from experience and from the testimony of Scripture, that the kind of faith and life of faith we have described thus far do not arise in a moment. The alterations and transformations that take place in faith and in the life of faith take place in time and over time. Though some dimensions of faith and the life of faith are born in the littlest child, others presuppose experience in the world and a meeting with the gospel. Besides, every dimension of faith may expand and deepen. The Bible speaks of both immaturity and maturity in faith, and we are called to grow up into the latter.²⁴ Furthermore, faith and the life of faith are dynamic, vital processes, not static conditions. For all these reasons, it is important to recognize and articulate what it means to grow in faith and in the life of faith, and to ask how it happens.

All this is fully recognized in the Reformed tradition. Calvin called the process “regeneration” and understood it to be long-term and dynamic. He said that:

This restoration does not take place in one moment or one day or one year; but through continual and sometimes even slow advances God wipes out in his elect the corruptions of the flesh, cleanses them of guilt, consecrates them to himself as temples renewing all their minds to true purity that they may practice repentance throughout their lives and know that this warfare will end only in death.²⁵

The Confession of 1967, especially in its section on “The New Life,” points up the dynamic and growing character of faith and the life of faith with its references to the way in which the new life “takes shape,” “matures,” and “finds its direction.”²⁶

A. *Faith and Metaphors for Growth*

The consistency of these insights with what we know about human growth and development in general is obvious. It is clear to almost everyone, and it is articulated in great detail in contemporary studies in developmental psychology, that not only our bodies but also our capacities to reason and use language, our emotions, our attitudes, our sense of self,

and many other aspects of our lives as well, undergo continual change in the dynamic processes of human life. The course of our lives involves continual transformations and developments, and many of these, we now realize, occur according to some pattern and in an orderly and expectable sequence.

These facts all make it reasonable to wonder whether or not the same is true for faith and the life of faith. We know the life of faith involves change, transformation, growth, and maturation. Would it not be possible to chart out a consistent, general pattern by which this occurs?

Many attempts along these lines have been made over the centuries, though they have varied greatly in kind. Sometimes the pattern is that of an ordered series of works of the Spirit in a person (such as illumination, conversion, regeneration, justification, mystical union); sometimes people have talked about rungs on a spiritual ladder; the portrayal of growth and transformation as a journey on which crucial events take place is widespread (Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*, for instance); and, in recent times, faith has been seen as something that moves through stages of human development or across eras in the normal human life cycle.²⁷

One of two fundamental sets of metaphors is usually implicit in these various conceptions of growth in faith. Perhaps the most prevalent in contemporary thinking are organic metaphors. To this way of thinking growth is the expansion of an organic structure in size and complexity through a continuous series of transformations. Trees grow up from seedlings to maturity following a consistent pattern, the stages of which can be anticipated and systematically described. In much the same way human bodies go through regular changes from infancy through childhood and adolescence to adulthood and old age. These changes and their sequence are more or less programmed within the organism from the beginning.

A second set of metaphors often implicit (and sometimes explicit) in our understanding of growth uses the imagery of a journey. Growth is seen as movement from some originating point to some destination. Here growth and transformation are not so much the development of an internal structure through an expected sequence as they are the results of events and interactions that take place between persons and their environments. The sources of transformation are thus both internal and external, and growth itself implies a certain degree of purpose on the part of the person who makes the journey.

Both of these sets of metaphors have been employed in the Reformed

tradition through its history and by contemporary thinkers who reflect on the nature of growth and transformation in faith, and both are helpful in capturing the dynamic, historical character of faith and the life of faith. But the tradition also contains warnings about too much dependence upon them.²⁸ Several fundamental themes in the traditions understanding of faith and the life of faith keep it from adopting these metaphors without qualification and from using the language of growth and development without reservations to speak about faith. The following examples illustrate:

- The Reformed tradition's emphasis on the priority of the activity of God as the source of faith and on the nature of faith as response to God in history makes it wary of organic metaphors that suggest that faith is a structure built into human beings that undergoes evolutionary or developmental transformation.
- In recognizing that our lives are ever endangered by powers and principalities and the threats of sin and death, the tradition has usually been hesitant to place too much emphasis on progress in the life of faith or to stake out any stages by which such progress might be marked.
- The traditions emphasis on the freedom and particularity of new life in Christ has made it hesitant to define or describe maturity in faith and in the life of faith too exactly. There has been an effort to avoid a conformism and to recognize that the life of faith gains its concrete shape from the particular historical situation in which it is carried out.

Given these reservations the question becomes how to speak appropriately of growth and transformation without obscuring, distorting, or oversimplifying faith and the life of faith themselves.

B. Faith and Human Development

Faith and the life of faith certainly involve changes in the conditions and qualities of our lives, and these changes are heavily influenced by events and interactions that happen in our lives in various physical and cultural locations. The metaphor of life as a journey—and even as a “faith journey”—helpfully captures these characteristics of human existence in time. There are, indeed, aspects of human life (biological, psychological, and social) that do involve us in patterned developmental processes of growth and transformation, but faith and the life of faith should not be

identified with the development of a structure or the itinerary of a journey. When they are, important dimensions of faith and the life of faith are obscured or distorted, for neither faith nor the life of faith are organic structures intrinsic to human beings. Therefore, they are not the sorts of realities that can grow in size or complexity through some patterned sequence over time. Nor are faith and the life of faith our movement from some point of departure to some place of arrival at the end of a journey.

Faith and the life of faith have power to transform and shape human development and life journeys. But this can only be the case if faith and the life of faith are recognized to be something more than and other than the outcome or sum total of development in the various natural human capacities (such as bodily motor operations, cognition, imagination, role-taking, moral judgment, and various affective dimensions) or the result of a series of human events and interactions. Only then can it be clear that faith and the life of faith are never strictly determined by our developmental achievements or the accidents of history and, thus, never limited by any failure to reach some particular stage of development or have some particular kind of event take place in one's life. The shape of one's faith and life of faith will certainly be influenced by one's developmental capacities and by the events that take place in a person's life, but more significantly, every aspect of a person's human development and historical existence may be transformed by and employed in faith and in the life of faith.

This becomes especially important when we recall that no aspect of human development and historical interaction is unambiguously good and life-giving. Rather, all of it is played out in the context of a contention between life "according to the flesh" and life "in the Spirit."²⁹ Human growth and development and human journeying lead us ultimately only to death and destruction if they take place "according to the flesh." We live only to die, as the saying goes. But "in Christ" all things are transformed. From the point of view of Christian faith, this is the crucial point. The issue is not how much or how fast we grow, but in what context. The ultimate context is known in faith to be the environment or communion of the Spirit, the creative and redemptive Spirit of God who makes all life-giving and life-sustaining growth possible.³⁰

Coming to faith means coming to recognize that the context of all our growing and living is the world in which, over which, and through which the Spirit of God known in Jesus Christ reigns. We may fail to recognize

this; or, recognizing it, we may refuse to accept it. We manufacture worlds of our own of which we are the center and source, and we strive to control, guide, direct, and force our own growing and journeying within them. In these and many other ways, we often struggle against the fact that we live at all only because we live in an environment constituted by the graciousness of a loving God. But such recognition and acceptance is what defines faith and originates, undergirds, and mobilizes growth in faith and in the life of faith.

C. Growth in Faith and in the Life of Faith

The life of faith is a living, moving, dynamic existence that takes place in the environment of the Spirit. This existence includes the experience of growth in the manifold aspects of our nature: our bodies, minds, feelings, judgments, social relationships, imaginations. In the Spirit we come to recognize this growth as God's gift. We come to see that "God has made us and not we ourselves," and this frees us to allow the Spirit to work in our growing, rather than to struggle against the Spirit by trying to control it ourselves through our own powers. This is part of what is involved in growth in the life of faith.

Growth in the life of faith also involves a lifelong continuing process of encountering and entering into the inexhaustible richness of the mystery of God and of God's love, ever more deeply and profoundly. Just as the process of knowing a person is never finished or exhausted, so too the dynamic of uncovering the riches of God's grace and promises is unlimited. Thus, we grow in the life of faith as we hear more and more of the good news of the living gospel, understand and appropriate more profoundly its unceasingly expanding meaning and significance, and dwell ever more fully upon the presence of God with us.

We may also speak of growth in the life of faith in terms of extending our recognition of the consequences of God's grace into more and more aspects of our lives in the world. We grow in the life of faith as our seeing, our struggling, our obedience, our loving, our suffering, and persevering—all the aspects of the life of faith discussed above—are more and more "quicken and strengthened."³¹ Growth in the life of faith involves the penetration or infiltration of faith into ever-increasing dimensions of our existence.

There are a number of dimensions, then, to growth in the life of faith.

But what about growth in faith? Does faith grow? Do we grow in faith?

It is clear that we do not come to faith simply by growing. We do not grow into faith just by becoming more mature. But does faith grow? There is a sense in which faith grows. Faith—understood as the recognition and acceptance of God’s enduring, saving presence—may grow in power, significance, richness, and depth as more and more dimensions of our individual and corporate lives are touched by and conformed to it. But in another sense, it is misleading to say that faith grows. If by growth we mean a patterned process of change in form, structure, or complexity, then faith does not grow.³² Faith simply is what it is, and by being so provides the still point on the basis of which all other forms of life-giving growth and transformation may take place.

If faith simply is what it is, the obvious next question is how we come to faith. How do we come to recognize and accept God’s gracious presence in our lives? We may, in a sense, know it from the earliest days of our lives. One Reformed theologian has argued that when, at the age of three months, a child “seeks and learns to respond to the presence of a human face . . . and give a smile,” what is established “is the child’s sense of personhood and a universal prototype of the Divine Presence.”³³ In other words, there is a sense in which infants may recognize the presence of God, though they of course cannot name it.

This recognition is short-lived, however, for, by six months, children already sense absence and disorientation, and in the brokenness of a world that lives according to the flesh, this gives rise to anxiety and the struggle to compose substitute “worlds” of our own.³⁴ Thus we need to be helped to make this recognition again. This happens as we come in contact with a people and a “culture” that has this recognition intrinsic to its way of life. The process by which we come to faith and grow in faith and in the life of faith is a process that involves a community.

Part III: The Nurture of Faith and the Life of Faith

A. *Participation in the Means of Grace*

Faith and the life of faith—as well as growth and transformation in

relation to them—are communal before they are individual. One of the key New Testament texts on growing in the life of faith is Ephesians 4:1–16. The “growing up” (v. 15) that Paul has in mind is predominantly the growing up and maturing of the whole body of Christ (v. 12). Attaining “to the unity of the faith and the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature adulthood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ” (v. 13) is something the people as a whole are called to. It is “we” together as the body of Christ who are “to grow up in every way into him who is the head” (v. 15), and it is only as “the whole body, joined and knit together by every joint with which it is supplied, when each part is working properly” that “bodily growth and upbuilding in love” (v. 16) become possible.

The deep, profound, almost physical knowledge of the love of God in Jesus Christ that constitutes faith is first of all and above all the whole body’s knowledge. The presence of Jesus Christ is a presence in, to, and through the community of Jesus Christ. The new life in the Spirit, the new seeing, the vocation, the ministry, the suffering, and the perseverance are not simply the sum of individual new lives, visions, and vocations. Rather, all these are first and last the community’s. The new life and all that comes with it are features of the community of Jesus Christ in every epoch, all around the globe, in every kind of cultural situation, including our own.

The communal nature of faith and the life of faith does not by any means exclude the individual. Just the opposite. It makes possible the faith and life of faith of each of us. Faith is, indeed, profoundly personal, and the life of faith is given to each of us to live out in our own particular times and circumstances. God comes to each of us, God frees each of us, and God calls each of us in a personal way. The point is that faith and the life of faith come for each of us individually *in* the body, as *parts of* the body. And faith and the life of faith come in the body as a whole as each of us individually lives in faith and in the life of faith.

The process of coming to faith and growing in the life of faith is fundamentally a process of participation. We come to recognize and live in the Spirit as we participate more and more broadly and deeply in communities that know the nature of their situation, acknowledge it, express it, and live their lives in the light of it. *The Confession of 1967* says that “the new life takes shape in a community in which [human beings] know

that God loves and accepts them in spite of what they are.”³⁵ In words that capture an older language, God uses the community of faith as “means of grace.”

“New life in Christ” is made available to us in community. Such community carries on its life through certain “practices” that are constitutive of the shape of its life together in the world. These practices were called by Calvin “external means or aims by which God invites us into the society of Christ and holds us therein.”³⁶ *The Larger Catechism* calls them “outward and ordinary means, or “ordinances.”³⁷

At times these “means of grace” have been mistakenly regarded primarily as means by which certain “benefits” were made available to individuals. And these benefits were understood to be available in and through the church, which alone “administered” the grace of God in Christ through certain ordinances which it controlled. This conception often led to distortions of the church’s proper self-understanding and to destructive patterns of ministry and life in the world, and it still does so in some contexts today. But God’s grace is not just for separate individuals or for Christians alone; it is also for the world. Nor is the church God’s broker. Thus, contemporary developments in Reformed theology have led us to speak about these matters in other ways. In order to understand the place of the church and its practices in the economy of God’s grace, it is helpful to consider, as Jürgen Moltmann does, “the participation of the church in the history of God.”³⁸

Just as faith and the life of faith are life in the communion of the Spirit, so a community “the whole being of [which] is marked by participation in the history of God’s dealings with the world” becomes the concrete arena of our coming into faith and growing in the life of faith.³⁹ We participate in the life of the Spirit by participating in the life of such community, and this only because the community’s own being and activity are constituted through participation in the life of the Spirit. Thus, insofar as the church is a community in the power of the Spirit, its whole life in the world becomes a means of grace for those who are its people and for all the world.

B. *Practices and Disciplines*

The church, as community in the power of the Spirit, has over the course of its history learned to depend upon the efficacy of certain central

practices or disciplines in nurturing faith and growth in the life of faith.⁴⁰ The tradition itself bears witness to the fact that by participating in certain active forms of life together, an environment is created in which people may come to faith and grow in life in Christ.

At the same time, the tradition has avoided any sort of causal understanding of the relation between these practices and faith. Its practices and disciplines do not *bring about* or *cause* faith or growth in the life of faith. Rather, engagement in them puts us in a position where we may recognize and participate in the work of God's grace in the world.⁴¹ This is precisely what we do when we "make diligent use of the means of grace." By active participation in practices that are central to the historical life of the community of faith, we place ourselves in the kind of situation in which we know God accomplishes the work of grace.

What are the practices and disciplines that Christians have found to be efficacious for the nurture of faith and of growth in the life of faith? *The Larger Catechism* puts the question and gives an answer as follows:

Q. 154. What are the outward means whereby Christ communicates to us the benefits of his mediation?

A. The outward and ordinary means, whereby Christ communicates to his Church the benefits of his mediation, are all his ordinances, especially the Word, sacraments, and prayer.⁴²

The catechism then goes on to discuss the ways in which these ordinances are to be carried out and instructs persons how to do so and with what intention.⁴³

Other official documents of the church likewise discuss such practices. *A Brief Statement of Belief* contains sections on "The Church and the Means of Grace" and "Christian Life and Work" that discuss various important practices.⁴⁴ *The Theological Declaration of Barmen* points out the significance in the Christian life of practices of criticism and resistance to powers that oppose Christ's work and call us to the practice of "providing for justice and peace."⁴⁵ The various practices involved in the "ministry of reconciliation" are articulated in the Confession of 1967.⁴⁶ In addition, the *Book of Order* lists nine specific ways in which members are called to be involved in the ministry of Christ's church.⁴⁷

Practices and disciplines that appear consistently throughout the Reformed tradition and that are particularly significant for Christians today would include:

(1) worshiping God together—praising God, giving thanks for God's creative and redemptive work in the world, hearing God's word preached

and receiving the sacraments given to us in Christ;⁴⁸

(2) telling the Christian story to one another—reading and hearing the Scriptures and also the stories of the church’s experience throughout its history;

(3) interpreting together the Scriptures and the history of the church’s experience, particularly in relation to their meaning for our own lives in the world;

(4) praying—together and by ourselves, not only in formal services of worship, but in all times and places;

(5) confessing our sin to one another, and forgiving and becoming reconciled with one another;

(6) tolerating one another’s failures and encouraging one another in the work each must do and the vocation each must live;

(7) carrying out specific faithful acts of service and witness together;

(8) suffering with and for each other and all whom Jesus showed us to be our neighbors;

(9) providing hospitality and care, not only to one another but to strangers;

(10) listening and talking attentively to one another about our particular experiences in life;

(11) struggling together to become conscious of and understand the nature of the context in which we live;

(12) criticizing and resisting all those powers and patterns (both within the church and in the world as a whole) that destroy human beings, corrode human community, and injure God’s creation;

(13) working together to maintain and create social structures and institutions which will sustain life in the world in ways that accord with God’s will.⁴⁹

These are the kinds of practices that the church’s people engage in over and over again, because they are practices that constitute being the church, practices to which God calls us as Christians. They are, likewise, practices that place people in touch with God’s redemptive activity, that put us where life in Christ may be made known, recognized, experienced, and participated in. The church knows from its own history and experience that such practices enable the community and each of its people to continue their experience with God made present in Word, in sacrament, in prayer, and in the community’s life in obedience to its vocation in the world.

C. *Living into the Practices*

People come to faith and grow in faith and in the life of faith by participating in the practices and disciplines of the Christian community. These are practices of the whole church. Because and to the extent that the church is faithful in its practice, it makes available to itself and to the world “external means” by which the gift of God’s Word and presence may come to persons and take root in them. Those who participate in these practices and disciplines are involving themselves ever more deeply in processes by which faith may come, grow, and mature.

People come to faith and grow in the life of faith in the context of these practices as they themselves, participating in them actively, each actually do what these practices involve. We engage in them personally in particular physical and material settings and in face-to-face interaction with other people. It is not enough simply to know about them or think about them or observe other people engaging in them. Each of us must actually pray, read the Scriptures and interpret them, and provide hospitality to strangers.

We cannot start by doing all of them at once, of course, and in the beginning we will not be prepared for all that they involve. These practices all involve multiple levels of complexity and broad ranges of participation. It takes time and experience, for example, to extend one’s reach beyond simple attempts to say what a particular verse means toward more complex practices of interpretation in which many parts and themes of the Bible are seen mutually to influence and resonate with one another and to speak deeply to the most fundamental issues of our time. And over time, we may come to participate in biblical interpretation in a wide variety of settings and contexts, including not only worship and study but also devotional reading, moral decision making, and political action. We mature in faith as our participation in these practices involves increasingly broad, more varied, and more complex dimensions, and when the activities we engage in become increasingly wide-ranging in their context and impact. It is not only a matter of going into the practices in greater depth, but we are also enabled to take increasing initiative in beginning and carrying them through.

We are not born with the abilities to carry out these practices and they do not come simply with age. We need to *learn* them. In order to learn them, we need not only experience but guidance. We need at many points

to be taught. So we grow best in these practices when we participate in the activities involved in them *jointly* with others, especially with others who are skilled in them and are able to teach them to us. Then, as we are well taught, as our experience with them broadens and deepens, as our own engagement in them becomes more extensive, we grow more and more into the practices. Increasingly, we come to live into them until they live in us.

There are great advantages to learning and participating in these practices and disciplines from early childhood. They are not limited to adults only. The faith of children is essential in the faith of the whole church. Adults can grow in the life of faith by participating with children in these practices, for the faith of children is a witness to us. Likewise, children grow in faith and in the life of faith as these practices become the fundamental habits of life around which their identity and character are formed. Furthermore, we are able to grow most fully in participation in the practices of faith when the people involved in them with us are, or are becoming, personally significant to us, and we to them. Bonds of affection and mutual support contribute greatly to growing into participation in every one of these practices. So the readiness of children to be open to such affection and trust makes possible deep participation with loving parents, teachers, and other caring adults.

One of the fundamental characteristics of the Reformed tradition is its refusal to choose any one practice or discipline as the key to faith and the life of faith. The life of faith involves participation in all of them. When any particular practice or discipline is taken individually or isolated from the others, its power is limited. The power of each of them is enormously enhanced, however, when they are intimately related to one another and each of them is experienced as a dimension of a whole. Telling the Christian story to one another and interpreting the Scriptures, for example, have a power that they otherwise lack when done by people who are suffering for and with one another and who are talking about and listening attentively to each other's experiences in the world.⁵⁰ Criticizing and resisting powers that destroy may themselves lead to the corrosion of human community outside a context where we also confess our own sinfulness and work to maintain and create sustaining, life-giving social institutions. We grow in any of these practices only as we come more and more to understand the significance and meaning of all of them and see how they are intimately connected with one another.

The practices and disciplines are means of grace, not tasks to accomplish or instructions to follow in order to grow in the life of faith. To do the latter would be to engage in the practices “according to the flesh” rather than “in the Spirit.” Instead, they are gifts to the community by means of which God may use the community to establish and sustain all people in the new life given in the Spirit. We come to value and appreciate these practices and integrate them more fully into the structure of our own lives as we come more and more to see this. Then we have reasons and motives of our own for engaging in them and take increasing personal responsibility for initiating, sustaining, and making them available to others. Then they become part of who we are.

D. Practices and Ministries

One of the fundamental responsibilities of church leadership is to provide the conditions under which all the people of the church are enabled and encouraged to participate fully in all of the practices and disciplines of faith.

The various practices are fostered and sustained in the community through a variety of ministries. In various cultural and historical contexts, these ministries may be organized variously or called by different names. In the Presbyterian Church we speak of such ministries as preaching, pastoral counseling, Christian education, evangelism, social mission, administration, and sometimes spiritual direction. There is no one-to-one correspondence between these ministries and the various practices. Rather, every form of ministry is responsible for doing its part to establish and sustain the whole complex of practices. Likewise, every form of ministry is itself some constellation of all of the practices. Thus, every one of these practices should contribute to every form of ministry, and every form of ministry must work to sustain and relate to each other the whole variety of practices.

Practically speaking, the adequacy of a form of ministry can be evaluated in part by the degree to which all of these practices are involved in and sustained by that form of ministry. When some are missing, an evaluation of the way in which that ministry is being carried out may well be called for. For as each of the practices is increasingly built into every form of ministry and as the quality of the community’s active participation in the practices is enhanced and enriched in and by that form of ministry, the

one ministry of the whole church is itself made stronger.

Some of the practices and disciplines may—for particular persons and even for a community or tradition as a whole—be underdeveloped. Different traditions may emphasize certain of these practices to the detriment of others. Likewise, in some historical periods a tradition may have lost practices and disciplines that were once central to it. Both may well be the case in our church today. We may be in a period in which certain practices, historically underemphasized in our tradition or once prominent but now in abeyance, are desperately needed. If such is the case, they must be identified, redeveloped, and supported by the church as a whole.

Also, the various practices and disciplines may be carried out in any of a number of ways. The ways these practices are carried out are highly influenced by the contexts and cultures in which they arise and are sustained. Furthermore, as cultural change takes place, the ways in which these disciplines and practices are carried out often may and should undergo modification.

These last two points call the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) and every congregation and judicatory in it to look to our own long history of practices and disciplines to see whether we have let certain important practices atrophy. They also suggest we pay careful attention to the practices of the church catholic around the world, present and past. Today such attention must be given especially to those communities of faith in which the life of Christian faith seems most compelling. These certainly include many located outside white European and North American culture, as well as those which express faith in feminist terms.

Conclusion

Faith in God known in Jesus Christ and life in the environment of the Spirit of God are our true calling. The hungers of the age for meaning, value, and direction in life may be met in God. The church through the ages has been given the gifts of faith and the life of faith for the sake of the world. God calls us continually to deepening recognition and confession of God's own gracious love, so that the world—and our own selves as members of it—may have life and have it abundantly. In making diligent use of the means of grace, as specific communities and individuals, we grow in grace and truth.

As a historic and important part of the church catholic, the Presbyterian

Church (U.S.A.) is called to affirm the gifts we have received and to be refreshed and renewed by the recovery and development of those practices and disciplines through which the church's experience has shown us God works in and through us.

In this report, we have not presented a plan by which this may be done. Rather, we have explored the nature of faith and the life of faith, discussed what growth and transformation involve in relation to them, listed some central practices and disciplines in which we do well to continue, and articulated some criteria by which they may be well carried out.

It is the task of the readers of this report, as individuals and as representatives and/or leaders of institutions and groups within the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), to interpret its meaning and implications for their particular, concrete situations in life and ministry and to work to sustain or bring into being the kind of environment and patterns of activity in which life in the Spirit of Christ may flourish.

As this happens, over time and in many places, we may expect increasingly to experience faith and participate in the life of faith as these take shape in our contemporary situation. We may do this with the assurance that when we ask our gracious God for bread, we shall receive not stones but the nourishment we need.

Appendix

The portrait of Christian faith and the life of faith, of coming to faith and growing in the life of faith, and of nurturing such faith and life that has been put forward here has made little use of concepts and theories used in and generated by various disciplines of contemporary psychology. This may seem unusual, since to a considerable degree such concepts and theories have permeated much of the way many of us think and talk about so much in our lives today—including faith.

Because psychological language and imagery permeate contemporary understandings and expressions concerning human beings and their relationships, it is no surprise that they should have become prevalent in many arenas of understanding and work in the church itself: (1) among lay people and clergy who look to it to provide metaphors of human fulfillment, understandings about how to achieve it, and guidance in doing so; (2) in the theory and practice of some of the basic ministries of the church, especially Christian education, church leadership and administration, and pastoral care and counseling; and (3) in many people's understandings of what faith is and what growth in the life of faith means and involves. There is, however, controversy in the church and among scholars (in both theological and secular disciplines) about the relation between psychology and faith.

The modern discipline of psychology has been an enormously productive and influential field of investigation. It continues to generate ways of seeing and understanding phenomena of human life, both personal and interpersonal, that have illuminated hidden recesses of our existence and provided healing to many whose suffering could not have been alleviated without it. Nonetheless, some critics believe that both church and culture have become so dominated by images and metaphors of human nature either derived from or reinforced by the modern discipline of psychology that we are in danger of translating our entire moral and cultural ethos into its terms. They argue, furthermore, that in doing so these images and metaphors carry cultural assumptions that may be dangerous for our society and its people.⁵¹

At the very least, psychological theories and assumptions are not “value-free.” Indeed, Don S. Browning has argued that:

. . . significant portions of the modern psychologies . . . are actually instances of religio-ethical thinking. They are, in fact, mixed disciplines which contain examples of religious, ethical, and scientific language . . . [W]hen many of these psychologies are submitted to careful analysis one discovers that they have religious and moral horizons about which both they and the general public are unclear.⁵²

These moral and religious horizons may or may not be consistent or compatible with the moral and religious horizons of Christian faith, but, as Browning argues and demonstrates, they should be subjected to careful comparative scrutiny. Finally, E. Brooks Holifield has written a history of pastoral care in America in which he traces the way in which “piety in the American Protestant heritage . . . was easily translated into a secular psychological piety. And the new vocabulary of the psychologists and psychotherapists then reshaped the older Protestant vision.”⁵³

It seems clear, then, that the various modern psychologies are, in part, religious visions, that a kind of translation has taken place in our culture between psychological and religious understandings, and that there is potential of some loss and distortion of meaning and orientation involved in such translation from the point of view of Christian faith. Because of this, Christians should take care to draw upon their own tradition’s ways of seeing and being throughout its history, as well as the concepts and ways of speaking that best express them, as they strive to articulate what faith and the life of faith mean and involve. We have attempted to follow this course in this study, while realizing that in no period can (or should) such reflection ever be isolated from wider social and cultural expectations, ideals, and forms of thought.

None of these cautions lead to the conclusion that psychological realities are not involved in faith and in the life of faith. Indeed, they are. But psychological insights and ways of rendering them are not confined to the contemporary disciplines of modern psychology and the ways of speaking that emerge from them. Such realities are known, understood, and rendered in other disciplines and modes as well—including philosophy, history, literature, and art; the sociological, sociocultural, and sociopolitical disciplines that help us to understand human beings in their social and cultural settings; and, certainly, theology and the Bible itself.

Contemporary psychology, nonetheless, can be of considerable usefulness to us as we attempt to understand the life of Christian faith, for this

is a human way of life involving human ways of knowing and being and living. Contemporary psychological inquiry can make highly significant contributions to our understandings and conceptions of what is involved in coming to faith and growing and maturing in the life of faith, especially when the following conditions prevail:

First, faith and the life of faith must be investigated for what they are, rather than described or explained in terms that reduce the nature of their reality to something else.⁵⁴ Psychological studies can serve theological understandings of faith very well when faith is studied as faith understands itself and the assumptions about human being in a particular psychological theory are not in fundamental conflict with faith's own assumptions.

Second, given the complexity and multidimensionality of faith and the life of faith, it is likely that psychological study will be most useful to our understanding when it functions to illuminate the many complex dimensions of faith and growth in the life of faith. Attention needs to be paid to the multiple and often distinct aspects and dynamics of the human self and its learning and development as they may relate to faith and the life of faith in their multiple and various aspects and dynamics. In order for this to be possible, those concerned with the psychological understandings of faith and the life of faith will likely need to work with and make use of multiple approaches, theories, and insights into the human self for what they can clarify concerning life in faith.

Many scholars are currently involved with the exploration of the connections between insights and theories in contemporary psychology and the various dimensions of faith and the life of faith. An exploration of these studies moves far beyond the proper scope of this report, though we hope others will be able to use this report constructively as an aid to the fruitful extension of this exploration.

Endnotes

1. The phrase “the Reformed tradition” is widely used to refer to a particular church historical movement that began in the 16th century in Western Europe and is still alive today in churches and to patterns of life and thought that have emerged in historical continuity with those beginnings. The tradition is marked by certain central theological themes and convictions as well as by key theologians and writings (including creeds and confessions) through which these themes and convictions have been articulated in various circumstances over the centuries. The tradition is also marked by certain practices: patterns of liturgy, governance, personal and corporate discipline, and service.

Throughout this paper, we frequently speak of what the Reformed tradition holds, believes, thinks, or says. There is some danger in doing this, so several cautions are in order. First, the tradition is not static. Its central themes and convictions and practices have undergone modification (sometimes significant) over time. Therefore, we cannot simply pluck statements out of any particular document and be sure that a whole movement is thereby represented. Second, the tradition has always been to some degree pluralistic. At no point in time has there been agreement on everything by everyone. Thus, the tradition itself is as much an ongoing argument as it is a relative consensus. Third, a tradition is not the sort of thing to have clear boundaries, and discerning what may be said to be “Reformed” is often a matter of context and perspective. No single reading of the tradition, therefore, has a purchase on defining it. Fourth, the Reformed tradition both influences and is influenced by the many cultures and contexts in which it has lived over time. The result is that its practices and beliefs have naturally become more inclusive and pluralistic than those of its formative years. Finally, most of what the Reformed tradition holds, it holds in common with all other Christian churches and people. Thus, when we speak of what the Reformed tradition holds, believes, or does, we are not necessarily—or even usually—talking about what the Reformed tradition holds exclusively, distinctively, or apart from others. Indeed, one of the fundamental characteristics of the Reformed tradition is its ecumenical commitment, its openness to other Christians and to all persons.

The phrase “the Reformed tradition” is, therefore, a kind of shorthand. And while it admittedly may oversimplify (and thereby somewhat distort) the complexity of the actual historical situation, it is nonetheless a useful term for calling to mind a stream of life and thought that has identifiable contours in reality. Sometimes such a stream may seem so forceful and overwhelming that one fears drowning in it. But it may also be a current that lifts one up, carries one along, and provides direction as well as refreshment.

2. The present topic is broader than the one originally suggested, which was “faith development and the Reformed tradition.” The term “faith development” is only recently coined, but already it is used in several different ways. Originated by a contemporary theorist in the cross-disciplinary field of developmental psychology and theology, the term refers most specifically to a particular developmental psychological account of the nature of faith and the life of faith and their growth and transformation. The topic “faith development and the Reformed tradition” would, under this meaning, be a discussion of a particular theory of the Reformed tradition.

When a particular theory becomes well-known and highly influential in the church, it may be important to carry on a conversation about it from the point of view of the church’s own theological self-understanding. But the task force rejected this option as its task for several reasons. First, it seems more appropriate for individual scholars to pronounce upon any particular theory than for church bodies to do so. Second, such an analysis would of necessity be highly theoretical and academic in style and orientation, and probably of little interest to the church as a whole. Finally, the results of such an inquiry would be unlikely to address adequately the wider concerns in the church that generated this project in the first place.

A second meaning of “faith development” is closely related to the first. The phrase may refer to a group of theories that attempt to give a developmental psychological account and explanation of faith, the life of faith, and growth and transformation in them. It is legitimate for a church body to respond to this more general phenomenon and to ask to what extent and in what ways a psychological developmental account may be helpful to the church in its ministries and in enhancing its own understanding of faith and the life of faith. Those who know both “faith development theory” and Reformed theology recognize that there are significant points of tension and also of agreement between these approaches. The task force decided to give some attention to these matters, but it did not attempt to resolve them.

A third meaning of “faith development” is much broader. Even though only recently coined, the term has already entered the vocabulary of many as a synonym for “growing and maturing in the life of Christian faith.” The task force found that when people came to a symposium on “faith development,” it was this latter issue with which most expected and hoped to deal, and it is with “faith development” in this broad sense that this paper is in fact concerned. But when the issue is investigated from the point of view of the Reformed tradition, it turns out that the term “faith development” may not be the best way to denote the area of interest. The word “development” may not express well what the Reformed tradition has to say about these matters. And even the word “faith,” standing by itself, may be too limiting, for it is the whole life of faith which interests the Reformed tradition.

It is such considerations as these that led the task force, with the approval of its originating councils, to take as its topic “growing in the life of Christian faith.”

3. This outline is patterned after Presbyterian Church (U.S.), *Declaration of Faith* (Atlanta: Presbyterian Publishing House, 1977). The opening chapter of this statement speaks of our relation to “the living God” and introduces us to the story or narrative which follows. We are then told of God’s creation and ruling of the world (chap. 2, 1–5), of how “the human race has rejected its Maker” (chap. 2, 6), of God’s dealings with the people of Israel (chap. 3), of the coming of God in Christ and the deliverance brought in him (chap. 4), of the continuing activity of God in the world in the Spirit (chap. 5), of God’s call to us to participate in what God is doing (chs. 6–9), and of all toward which God’s promises lead (chap. 10).

4. “Justified” is the technical word the Reformed tradition has most often used, and it has made clear that we are justified not by anything we have done but rather “by grace alone.”

5. “Sanctification” is one traditional name given to this participation and to what happens in and to us through our participation.

6. See Office of the General Assembly, “The Westminster Confession of Faith,” in *The Constitution of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) Part I, Book of Confessions* (New York: The Office of the General Assembly, 1983), 6.079: “the principal acts of saving faith are, accepting, receiving, and resting upon Christ alone.”

7. Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, Book 3, ii.7.

8. Office of the General Assembly, “The Heidelberg Catechism” in *Book of Confessions*, (New York: Office of the General Assembly, 1983), 4.021.

9. *Ibid.*, 4.001.

10. The distinction being made here is parallel to and related to the distinction often made between justification and sanctification. That the two are so deeply intertwined as to be two parts of the same whole is conveyed by Calvin, who says that “this [justification, or the righteousness of Christ] you cannot attain without at the same time attaining to sanctification. . . . We may distinguish between them, but Christ contains both inseparably in himself. . . . Thus we see how true it is that we are justified, not without works, yet not by works; since union with Christ, by which we are justified, contains sanctification as well as righteousness” (Calvin, *Institutes*, Book 3, xvi.1).

Likewise, “faith” and “the life of faith” are so deeply interconnected that they can never be separated from one another. Indeed, some feel that even to make a distinction between them is problematic. Nonetheless, for many purposes making such a distinction is useful, so long as making it does not lead to any kind of separation between them. We make the distinction here primarily in order to highlight the centrality of the deep and intimate knowledge of the gospel of Jesus Christ for the life of Christian faith while not losing sight of the manifold and often intricately related dimensions of life lived in response to this gracious gift. We believe that by making this distinction we are helped to understand more clearly the nature and dynamics of growth and maturation in the whole Christian life.

It is important to point out, however, that the various dimensions of the life of Christian faith are not only related to and dependent upon the dimension we have already discussed; they are also constitutive of it. That is, “a firm and certain knowledge of God’s benevolence toward us . . . both revealed to our minds and sealed upon our hearts” involves the dimensions of discernment, freedom, struggle, obedience, perseverance, love, and hope that we are about to discuss. These cannot be central in our lives apart from the knowledge we call faith; but neither is the knowledge we call faith accessible to us apart from these other intrinsically related dimensions. And when we turn to the issue of growth in the life of faith, we will see that each dimension deepens precisely in the interplay among them all.

This way of making the distinction together with the discussion of life in the Spirit draws significantly upon a book manuscript in preparation by Craig Dykstra, where these ideas are used as a basis for understanding the nature of Christian education as “education in the Spirit.”

11. John Calvin, *Golden Booklet of the True Christian Life* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1952), p. 17.

12. Office of the General Assembly, *Book of Confessions*, 6.061.

13. *Ibid.*, 9.21.

14. See Edward Farley, “The Work of the Spirit in Christian Education,” *Religious Education* 60 (Nov.–Dec. 1965): 427–36, 479. Much of this interpretation of life “according to the Spirit” is indebted to Farley’s presentation in this article.

15. Dorothee Soelle, *Choosing Life* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1981), 7.

16. Cf. Heb. 11:3: “By faith we understand that the world was created by the word of God, so that what is seen was made out of things which do not appear.” See also, Frederick Buechner’s essay on this text entitled “Faith,” in *A Room Called Remember* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1984), esp. 20–23.

17. Calvin, *Institutes*, Book 3, iii.1.

18. *Ibid.*, iii.5.

19. Edward A. Dowey, Jr., *A Commentary on the Confession of 1967 and an Introduction to “the Book of Confessions”* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1968), 90.

20. Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, Vol. IV, Part 3, Second Half, trans. G. W. Bromiley (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1962), 573–74.

21. See, for a few examples, Mark 5:22–43; 9:14–28; 11:22–25; Luke 18:35–42; and Heb. 2:1–5.

22. Presbyterian Church in the U.S., *Declaration of Faith*, chap. 10, 1–13.

23. H. Richard Niebuhr, *The Meaning of Revelation* (New York: Macmillan, 1960), 138.

24. See Ephesians 4:13–16.

25. Calvin, *Institutes*, Book 3, iii.6.

26. Office of the General Assembly, *Book of Confessions*, 9.22, 23, 24.

27. See Barth’s sketch of various instances of this attempt within Protestantism, in *Church Dogmatics*, Vol. IV, Part 3, Second Half, sec. 71.2 (see esp. 505-6); Fowler, *Stages of Faith*, Donald Capps, *Life-Cycle Theory and Pastoral Care* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1983), and *idem., Deadly Sins and Saving Virtues*, *ibid.*, for two contemporary examples.

28. Barth is probably the Reformed theologian most emphatic in his warnings about the dangers inherent in trying to chart out any kind of developmental sequence in faith and the life of faith. He says that “the essential interest in this matter has always been to outline the development of the natural man into a Christian, and the Christian into an increasingly perfect Christian, in a way which can be mastered and recounted.” For him, “this whole attempt implies an attack on the substance of a genuine understanding of the process . . .” See Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, *ibid.*, 506–7.

29. See, for example, James E. Loder, *The Transforming Moment: Understanding Convictional Experiences* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1981), chap. 6, where he discusses “the developmental history of negation” and argues for “the theological deficiency of normal development.”

30. See Dwayne Huebner, “Christian Growth in Faith,” *Religious Education* 81: (1986): 511–21. Huebner points out “the presence and necessity of God’s grace for growth. Growth is mostly beyond our control and ken. To grow is one thing, to be conscious of that growth is another. If the mystery and grace are acknowledged, then faith can be connected with growth. . . . The problem of faithlessness arises when we describe, depict, offer explanations, or think about growth. In such thinking activities, we usually fail to acknowledge the presence of God’s gifts or God’s grace.”

31. A phrase borrowed from “The Westminster Confession,” 6.067.

32. Thus, Huebner, “Christian Growth in Faith,” esp. 517: “Faith is an awareness of God’s presence . . . faith does not change form, structure, complexity . . . faith is openness to God, which is itself a gift of God. It does not grow.”

33. See Loder, *The Transforming Moment*, 166–67.

34. *Ibid.*, 167ff. This same point is made by Huebner, “Christian Growth in Faith,” 516:

In building our human world and our understanding, we, in effect, construct idols that detract us from memory, praise, and hope. This shows most clearly in the relationship between infant and parent/caregiver. The love and concern which made the infant a person is named human love and the Source of that love is forgotten. The intrusion of anger, disregard, selfishness in the relationship is brokenness or sin, unacknowledged as such. The clearings of faith, in which the presence of God is acknowledged and sought, are preempted by idols and the preoccupations which they produce. The infant, in growing with a cluttered adult and without the necessary clearings for remembering, thanking, and seeking God, constructs or takes on idols, not clearings of faith.

35. Office of the General Assembly, *Book of Confessions*, 9.22. See Dowey, *Commentary on the “Confession of 1967,”* 86.

36. Calvin, *Institutes*, Book 4 (from the title).

37. Office of the General Assembly, *Book of Confessions*, 7.264.

38. Jurgen Moltmann, *The Church in the Power of the Spirit*, trans. M. Kohl (New York: Harper & Row, 1977), 64–65.

39. *Ibid.*, 65.

40. A “practice” is an ongoing shared activity of a community of people that partly defines and partly makes them who they are. A more complex and precise definition is provided and discussed by Alasdair MacIntyre in *After Virtue* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1981), 175. See also Bellah et al., *Habits of the Heart* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985), 335. The term “discipline” is virtually synonymous with practice, but we use both because several connotations of discipline are helpful in our context, particularly as we think of “spiritual disciplines” and “church discipline.” Disciplines are practices and all practices are of necessity disciplined. In the Reformed tradition, “spiritual discipline” and “church disci-

pline” (or order) have never been separate matters. Rather, they are reciprocal dimensions of one piety, a piety that is at once individual and corporate.

41. See Shirley C. Guthrie, Jr., *Christian Doctrine* (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1968), 299–300:

In the first place, if new life is a gift of the Holy Spirit, we cannot give it to ourselves. We cannot simply decide to have faith, to live with hope and to love. Not only the New Testament but our own experience tells us this . . .

Secondly, there is nothing we can do to force the Spirit of God to come to us and give us faith, hope and love. We cannot manipulate him to work according to our schedule and desires. . . . He is free to work when, where and how he chooses. He takes the initiative and not we.

But that does not mean that we can do anything we please or do nothing at all, excusing our lack of faith, our hopelessness or our unloving attitudes by complaining that the Spirit has not chosen to come to us. We have been told who he is, and where and how he is promised. Although we cannot control his coming and going, we can at least place ourselves in the kind of situation in which we know he accomplishes his work. (See also *ibid.*, 307ff. and 323ff.)

42. Office of the General Assembly, *Book of Confessions*, 7.264.

43. *Ibid.*, 7.265–7.306.

44. *Ibid.*, xiv–xv.

45. *Ibid.*, 8.22. See also *ibid.* 8.01–8.28.

46. *Ibid.*, esp. 9.35–9.37, 9.48–9.52, 9.53, 9.55

47. Office of the General Assembly, *The Constitution of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)*, Part II, *Book of Order* (Louisville: The Office of the General Assembly, 1988), G-5.0102.

48. Worship comes first on this list because it is the central and orienting practice of the Christian life. The Reformed tradition has always highlighted this point, because the worship of God is, in fact, the context and point of everything else Christians are and do.

49. This list is adapted from Craig Dykstra, “No Longer Strangers,” *Princeton Seminary Bulletin* 6 no. 3 (November 1985): 197.

50. E. Dixon Junkin made this point powerfully in his address to the “Symposium on Faith Development and the Reformed Tradition.” (The page numbers which follow refer to a typescript taken from his address and made available to the task force.) His address was an exploration of why we are seeing in Latin America today “a Christian faith of a significantly different quality than we’re used to seeing” (p. 1). Among the reasons he suggested is that, while “the Bible is being read in one way or another all over the world. . . . Central American Christians very deliberately bring to consciousness and reflect on and try to understand the world in which they are living” and “very deliberately ask what Scripture has to say to their world and to them as Christians” called to “specific acts of obedience within a real life setting” (p. 7). And they do this in small groups or communities in which “participation is the order of the day. Everyone is understood to have a voice” (pp. 7–8).

51. See Bellah, et al., *Habits of the Heart*, esp. ch. 2. Bellah and his coauthors argue that one of the main dangers here is the tendency to foster a “culture of utilitarian and expressive individualism” in which persons are preoccupied with their own selves and achievements to the detriment of commitment to a wider community and more comprehensive values.

Such individualism affects how people understand and are related to religion. Religion becomes, according to C. Ellis Nelson, “more important to the individual than to the society. Religion is considered an element in life in which a person may be interested. It is like music, art, or sports. It is self-fulfilling to certain people . . .” But if this is all it means, “then religion has lost its power to be an ethical element in society; for its value is limited to the psychological health of individuals.” When this happens, “authority is not in God who comes into a per-

son's life with a mission; it is rooted in a person's psychological needs. . . . The search is not for truth about God but for religious beliefs and practices which help people cope with inner difficulties or provide a way to make sense out of the variety of events taking place around them." Religion, through this process, has become largely a psychological aid to us, almost a form of therapy. Criteria for truth then become those reinforced if not formed by contemporary psychology. "The specific types of psychological criteria vary greatly; but what they have in common is an assumption that whatever helps the individual become a 'self-actualizing' person, provides support, or cures one of undesirable traits is good and true. Given this screen through which all of life is judged, the Bible is accepted when it illustrates some psychological truth." *How Faith Matures*, ch. 5, passim (C. Ellis Nelson, *How Faith Matures* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1989)).

Another aspect of a culture of this kind involves a preoccupation with and overreliance upon technique. In relation to this, psychological theory is often used as a guide to the development of techniques by which to make personal change take place. In other words, if we can understand the internal personal dynamics of some phenomenon (like guilt, fear, anxiety, or happiness, joy, sense of well-being, or faith), we can control it through some technique. We can alleviate the phenomena we do not like and enhance those we favor through more refined techniques. Applied to faith and the life of faith, we may come to think that if we understand the psychological dynamics of it we can manipulate the forces operating on and in the self—and thereby "nurture" faith in a more controlled, effective, and efficient way. But the whole idea that faith or growth in faith can be "controlled" through the use of certain techniques seems, to Reformed sensibilities, dangerously close to denying the freedom of the human being in faith and the conviction that faith and growth in the life of faith are gifts of God alone, the work of the Holy Spirit rather than the work of human technical construction and influence.

A related tendency is the proclivity toward measurement. If technique, guided by theory, can effect change, then that change can and should be measured. And so it can and should, in many cases. But when this is carried over as a general tendency in a culture, when it is applied to human growth and development, and especially if it is applied to faith and the life of faith, an appropriate endeavor has overreached itself. From the point of view of the Reformed tradition, there are no scales by which to "measure" faith or the life of faith. The life of faith has no pre-determined pattern which can provide markers of growth. As Harold Nebelsick has pointed out: "it would be a complete misunderstanding to decide that there is a pre-determined pattern of life which could be called 'spiritual,' a 'piety' which can be prescribed in advance of its coming into being. Since [the life of faith] is a life lived in response to 'the Word,' which in the Reformed tradition is 'new every morning,' the life lived in response to that Word is creatively new. To pre-determine the proper pattern of Christian life is, therefore, to preempt the Word. Any attempt to pre-pattern the conduct of the Christian is to substitute some kind of idealistic *concept* of life for the actual dynamic of life which is formed in response to *the living Word in a changing world*" ("The Seminary's Responsibility for Spirituality or the Search for a Proper Piety," *Life at Louisville Seminary* 5 no. 4 (April, 1975): 2). It is because of this sort of understanding of the life of faith that the Reformed tradition tends to resist the whole idea of "stages of faith" and any standardized behavioral means of identifying degrees of faithfulness.

52. Don S. Browning, *Religious Thought and the Modern Psychologies* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1987), 8.

53. Holifield, *Pastoral Care in America*, 356. See also, Robert Coles' essay on "Psychology as Faith" in *Harvard Diary, Reflections of the Sacred and the Secular* (New York: Crossroad, 1988): 94, where he laments "watching ministers or priests mouth psychiatric pieties, when 'hard praying' (as I used to hear it put in the rural South) is what a particular human being may want, and yes, urgently require. I am tired of all the 'value-free' declarations in the name of what is called 'social science'; tired, too, of the complexities, ambiguities, and paradoxes of our

moral life being swept into yet another 'developmental scheme,' with 'stages' geared to ages."

54. Loder, *The Transforming Moment*, 7–14, speaks pertinently to this point. Loder argues that the various human sciences can err in interpreting and understanding human experience when "the presumed reality of the human sciences becomes normative for those experiences that to the experiencer are disclosing a reality of a related but distinctly different order. Thus, analysis and interpretation by the human sciences is implicitly circular—that is, cut off from the new knowledge just at the crucial point where the experiencer him- or herself is breaking into a new order of reality" (p. 9). If, for example, "life in Christ" is presumed (either implicitly or explicitly) by a psychological theory to be simply a way of describing life from a certain point of view—rather than life in the context of a new reality (the world made new in Jesus Christ)—then that psychology will not be able to provide even an adequate description, much less an explanatory account, of faith and the life of faith as actually experienced by Christians.

Loder also makes clear that there are ways to err on the theological side as well.

Annotated Bibliography

Bouwsma, William J. "The Spirituality of John Calvin." In *Christian Spirituality: High Middle Ages and Reformation*, edited by Jill Raitt with Bernard McGinn and John Meyendorff. New York: Crossroad Publishing, 1987.

John Calvin's faith has often been described as systematic or dogmatic. This revealing chapter sheds new light on Calvin's spirituality as much more than a systematic, compartmentalized set of beliefs. Calvin's experience of God is discussed, as are his views on God's initiation and the Christian's response in faith. Although Calvin was comfortable with a stage progressive view of one's journey of faith, he nonetheless believed that all Christians necessarily remain as adolescents in this life, with none reaching full maturity of faith. Next to a consideration of Calvin's own work, this should serve as a most helpful inquiry into his personal faith.

Bronfenbrenner, Urie. *The Ecology of Human Development*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1979.

An extensive examination of an important theorist's perspective on human development. Development is defined as a lasting change in the way in which one perceives and deals with one's environment. The theory emphasizes the interaction between developing person and environment, and offers insight into both developmental research and application to the practice of the life of faith.

Brusselmanns, Christiane, ed. *Toward Moral and Religious Maturity*. Morristown, N.J.: Silver Burdett, 1980.

A compilation of 20 European and North American scholars' contributions to the First International Conference on Moral and Religious Development. A diversity of views is presented here; among them we find those of Fowler, Gilligan, Kohlberg, and Hauerwas. Divergent traditions are brought together, resulting in greater clarity in the areas of conceptual frameworks, religious and moral education and development, and theology and psychology. Educational implications which serve to link theory and practice of moral and religious development are noted.

Calvin, John. *Golden Booklet of the True Christian Life*. Translated by Henry J. Van Andel. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1952.

This short book is Calvin's expression of the foundation and practice of the Christian life—it is, so to speak, Calvin's "spirituality" from Calvin himself. In it we find a typically Calvinistic emphasis on both the inner, devotional life and the outer, active life: They cannot be separated, only differentiated for purposes of explanation and discussion.

Causey, Beth. "Fear, Faith, and Movement." *Journal of Religion and Health* 26:50–56.

Through an examination of Fowler's faith stages theory, the intra-psychic dynamics of faith development are explored. Specifically, the necessity of courage is cited in truly confronting the inevitable loss of self which occurs in the development of faith. Human interaction is suggested as an effective means by which successful upward movement in Fowler's stages can occur.

Conn, Walter. *Christian Conversion*. New York: Paulist Press, 1986.

A psychological, philosophical, and theological analysis of the beginnings of human religious experience. Relies heavily on developmental theory in examining the moral, cognitive, affective, and religious aspects of Christian conversion. Builds on the work of Erikson, Piaget, Kohlberg, Fowler, and Kegan, and offers a theoretical critique.

Dykstra, Craig. *Vision and Character: A Christian Educator's Alternative to Kohlberg*. New York: Paulist Press, 1981.

While written primarily for religious educators, this discussion of moral development should prove useful for all readers interested in the topic. The terms "juridical ethics" and "visional ethics" are coined in discussing two fundamentally different means of doing moral philosophy. The juridical ethic inherent in Kohlberg's theory of moral development is critiqued and contrasted with a theologically based visional ethic, with a discussion of the implications for moral growth and transformation.

_____. "The Formative Power of the Congregation." *Religious Education* 82 (1987): 530–46.

The ability of the faith community to nurture the faith and affect the spirits of believers is addressed. Emphasizes the manner in which the beliefs and practices of the congregation give a depth to spirituality that cannot be achieved through mere individual isolation. Specific questions of the adequacy and the nature of congregational formative power are discussed.

Dykstra, Craig and Sharon Parks, eds. *Faith Development and Fowler*. Birmingham: Religious Education Press, 1986.

A collection of works organized as overview, evaluation, enhancement, and application of faith development theory. Serves as an extended critique of Fowler's theory, and culminates with a response by Fowler himself. Applications to religious education are made, and proposals about the future of faith development are indicated.

Finson, Shelley. "Feminist Spirituality Within the Framework of Feminist Consciousness." *Studies in Religion* 16 (1987): 65–77.

An examination of the radically different forms that feminist spirituality can take in light of feminist consciousness. Feminist consciousness is seen as an increased awareness of life experience as a woman and, as such, is a developmental aspect of human life. As this consciousness develops, so does a different form of spirituality also often develop. Explores the intimate connection between one's being in the world and one's awareness of oneself in the world.

Ford-Grabowsky, Mary. "Flaws in Faith Development Theory." *Religious Education* 82 (1987): 80–93.

This article deals with a specific aspect of Fowler's faith development theory; namely, his concept of the self as primarily ego, with little emphasis given to any deeper aspects of the person. This limited concept of the self is here addressed through the use of a holistic approach, as found in the writings of Jung and St. Hildegard of Bingen. Specifically, Jung's concept of the self and Hildegard's concept of the inner person are analyzed to demonstrate that Fowler's concept of the person lacks adequate depth.

Foster, Richard J. *Celebration of Discipline*. San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1978.

A somewhat dated look at the practices of faith from a Quaker perspective. Briefly examines the history and practice of a variety of Christian thinkers. A highly readable and practical work.

Fowler, James W. *Stages of Faith*. San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1981.

This important work combines the results of extensive personal interviews with the theories of Piaget, Erikson, and Kohlberg. Faith is seen not as a purely religious concept, but instead as a universal element of human existence—those different meanings and values around which human lives are focused. Recognizing that different people have different forms of faith, Fowler nonetheless identifies sequential stages which universally characterize such faith. These developmental stages are identified and supported with numerous examples from Fowler's interviews as well as with examples from the lives of notable people of faith.

_____. *Faith Development and Pastoral Care*. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1987.

A highly practical work which applies Fowler's views on developmental faith to the area of pastoral care, this book should prove useful to both pastors and lay leaders. Pastoral care is viewed as a means by which questions of Christian vocation may be answered, with attention given to both individual and corporate faith development. Faith development is also related to the development of the self in pastoral care, especially with regard to Kegan's theory of the "evolving self."

Fowler, James W. and Sam Keen, edited by Jerome Berryman. *Life Maps: Conversations on the Journey of Faith*. Waco: Word Books, 1978.

A dialogue of sorts between a young Fowler and a then-editor of *Psychology Today*, this book offers a paradoxical view of faith as that which both puts things together and takes things apart. Fowler's chapter serves as one of the first discussions of his developmental faith theory offered in print. Keen, a former lecturer at both Princeton and Louisville seminaries, examines the developmental aspect of faith as trust. A final chapter attempts a synthesis of the two viewpoints. This work originated as a colloquium, and reads accordingly.

Fowler, James W. and Robin W. Lovin. *Trajectories in Faith*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1980.

A fascinating look at the lives of five people of faith: Malcolm X, Anne Hutchinson, Blaise Pascal, Ludwig Wittgenstein, and Dietrich Bonhoeffer. A method of psychohistory/psychobiography is employed whereby Fowler's faith development stages are applied to the lives of these notable people. Highlighting the structures of their personal faiths, common features are identified within each person in the development of their faith in a variety of time periods and circumstances. These in-depth examinations should prove useful in helping the reader to understand faith at both a personal level and on a broader, more general level.

Goodier, Alban. *An Introduction to the Study of Ascetical and Mystical Theology*. London: Burns & Oates, 1938.

A dated examination of the history, doctrine, and practice of ascetical and mystical theology. This Catholic priest's comments, although brief, nonetheless provide a thorough introduction to this broad topic. Originated as a series of lectures for religion students.

Hand, Quentin L. "A Growth or a Gift?" *Journal of Psychology and Christianity*, 7 no. 1 (1988): 39–44.

A concise consideration of two divergent perspectives. In looking at the question of faith development, Hand seeks to integrate the interpersonal concept of growth with a view of gift. Specific gifts are mental potentiality, meaning content and structure, and specific reli-

gion; these are conferred through creation, socialization, and the religious community, respectively. One's response to these gifts results in the formation of personal faith.

Holifield, E. Brooks. *A History of Pastoral Care in America: From Salvation to Self-Realization*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1983.

Traces the historical development of the discipline of Protestant pastoral counseling in America, with particular attention paid to the shift in an emphasis on saving souls to supporting parishioners in the process of self-realization. In examining this shift, Holifield compares it with a broader trend in American religion as a whole. The increasingly dominant role that contemporary psychology plays in the development of faith is used to demonstrate how Protestant religious experience has come to play a major role in the formation of a "therapeutic culture" in America.

Huebner, Dwayne. "Christian Growth in Faith." *Religious Education* 81 (1986): 511–21.

A personal discussion of faith from a non-stage sequential perspective. Growth in faith is seen as the continual in-breaking of God's grace into the lives of believers, in-breaking which has its origin in the relationship between infant and caregiver, and which develops as space is cleared of idols and for God. In this manner, faithful believers allow God's work increasingly to be done throughout their entire lives.

Kegan, Robert. *The Evolving Self: Problem and Process in Human Development*. Cambridge: Harvard University, 1982.

This work examines human effort to make meaning of life from the perspective of Piagetian theory. The individual's effort to make sense of experience is viewed as a developmental process from cradle to grave. This evolutionary process is outlined in detail with an eye towards the internal experience of growth and change and its accompanying victories and setbacks.

Loder, James E. *Religious Pathology and Christian Faith*. Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1966.

A fairly technical work looking at the means by which religious ideas become significant to individual believers. In examining this psychological process, Loder draws on Freudian psychoanalysis and Kierkegaardian existentialism. Also explores the interconnectedness of psychic functioning and religious content in the development of Christian self-understanding.

_____. *The Transforming Moment: Understanding Convictional Experiences*. San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1981.

A transformational theology is offered by which instances of convictional knowing may be examined. Such occurrences are defined as "sudden life-changing bursts of religious realization." Loder views these events as legitimate, unique ways of encountering God, and draws from personal experience as well as the experiences of Martin Luther, C. S. Lewis, and the Emmaus event to elucidate his theory. Assistance is given for examining and analyzing different forms of religious experience.

Lynch, William F. *Images of Faith*. Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1973.

An enlightening view of faith from the perspective of a Catholic priest. Described specifically as a relational study of theology and the literary imagination, this work presupposes that faith is not so much a set of beliefs as it is a life of the "ironic imagination." Lynch believes that viewing faith in this new light puts faith in its rightful place as a primary force in human life, and takes it out of a secondary position relative to knowledge. Faith is also seen as an experiential paradigm around which one's perception of the world may be organized.

Moltmann, Jurgen. *Experiences of God*. Translated by Margaret Kohl. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1980.

An autobiographical look at the spiritual and theological development of an important modern theologian. Moltmann considers the basic human experiences of hope and anxiety as pointers to God, and explores them as such in his own life. Also gives a historical perspective on the theology of mystical experience in the life of the Christian church.

Morgan, Oliver J. "Music for the Dance: Some Meanings of Solitude." *Journal of Religion and Health*. 25 (1986): 18–28.

The place of solitude in spiritual and psychological growth and health is examined. The experience of solitude is outlined, along with a description of its elements. The process by which one chooses to practice solitude is related to the development of the emerging self.

Nelson, C. Ellis. *Where Faith Begins*. Richmond: John Knox Press, 1967.

A somewhat dated work that deals in a fundamental manner with the question of the origins of personal faith. Religious development is viewed primarily as the result of parental nurture and socialization. Nelson calls for a renewed emphasis on the role of the local congregation in both communicating faith and developing faith among a community. The purpose of religious education is discussed, and suggestions are offered concerning the way this area may more effectively serve to develop faith in the community of believers.

Olthuis, James H. "Faith Development in the Adult Life Span." *Studies in Religion* 14 (1985): 497–509.

A holistic look at adult faith development which utilizes Erickson's stages of adulthood to propose stages of adult faith. Stage movement is seen not as linear and progressive but as spiral-like. The impact of early life experience on the formation of adult faith is emphasized, and faith is viewed as a multi-modal human act resulting from meeting the needs of the whole person in a community of believers.

Parks, Sharon. *The Critical Years: The Young Adult Search for a Faith to Live By*. San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1986.

Focusing on the age of young adulthood as that time when one begins truly to examine the meaning of life, Parks explores the role that higher education plays in the formation of mature adult faith. Faith is viewed in broad terms as the search for meaning in the basic areas of one's life and, in this respect, resembles Fowler's view of faith as more than a purely religious exercise.

Individual faith development theory is placed into a larger social context, whence it is carefully and effectively critiqued.

Soelle, Dorothee. *Death by Bread Alone*. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1978.

A broad, varied look at the relationship between the inner self and outer reality. Soelle identifies the importance of religious experience in bridging this gap, and examines the role that Jesus' teachings, Eastern meditation, German mysticism, and modern psychology play in different religious experiences. She also utilizes the psalmists, mystics, Bonhoeffer, and Grimms' fairy tales in looking at common themes in the journey of faith and the formation of identity. An insightful collection of reflections on the need for and practice of spirituality.

Sparkman, G. Temp. "Proposals on Religious Development: A Brief Review." *Review and Expositor* 83 (1986): 93–109.

A collection of descriptive, noncritical reviews of recent proposals on religious development. Following the brief review of these nine proposals, a short synthesis is offered, highlighting the common themes and implications. A good summarizing discussion of the broad topic of religious development.

Tan, Siang-Yang. "Interpersonal Integration: The Servant's Spirituality." *Journal of Psychology and Christianity* 6 (1): 34–39.

A brief, introductory look at spirituality and integration. Interpersonal integration—the personal appropriation of faith and the integration of psychological and spiritual experience—is posited as the foundational aspect of the integration of professional psychology and Christianity. Aspects of the "servant's spirituality" are outlined, and interpersonal integration is seen as dependent upon such spirituality. Emphasis is placed on practicing the spiritual discipline and achieving sound biblical knowledge in the development of personal faith.

Recommendations

Recommend that the 201st General Assembly (1989) receive the report “Growing in the Life of Christian Faith,” as amended, commend the report to the church for information and study, and instruct the General Assembly Council through its Theology and Worship Unit to:

1. Print the report and make it available for sale in the church, with the cost of printing amounting to \$3,000 to be borne by funds of the Theology and Worship Unit set aside for this purpose.

2. Mail the report to each presbytery executive and synod executive.

3. Refer the report to the General Assembly Council in the fulfillment of its responsibility to “cultivate and promote the spiritual welfare of the whole church.”

4. Design a process for dealing with the report and its implications for the life of the church, which process will include at least the following elements:

a. Consulting with the Education and Congregational Nurture Unit to explore the feasibility of including the report with appropriate study guides in the curriculum materials of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.).

b. Consulting with the Church Vocations Unit to explore ways this material can be used by Committees on Preparation for Ministry in fulfilling their responsibilities of nurturing and examining faith among inquirers and candidates; by Committees on Ministry in fulfilling their responsibilities for the nurture and examination of faith among ministers; as well as in fulfilling its own responsibilities to resource governing body consultations and provide material for various clergy conferences and seminars.

c. Consulting with study centers and conference centers of the church to encourage the use of this material in continuing education settings, seminars, and retreats.

d. Consulting with the Office of the General Assembly and its Program Committee to reflect on this paper as plans are made for the worship life of the General Assembly.

e. Consulting with the Education and Congregational Nurture Unit

and the Church Vocations Unit as they work with congregations in self study for mission and educational assessment to reflect on that aspect of the congregations' life.

f. Requesting the Education and Congregational Nurture Unit to make use of this report in its continuing evaluation and revision of the Presbyterian and Reformed Educational Ministries curriculum, and to report on the usefulness of this document for this purpose to the Theology and Worship Unit.

g. Consulting with the Evangelism and Church Development Unit concerning the implications of this document for the work of that unit.

h. Communicating, through its Sub-Unit on Discipleship and Spirituality, to individuals and groups working in these areas to stimulate discussion and writing in this area and to help define the distinctive contributions Reformed piety offers the church catholic (universal).

i. Consulting with the Presbyterian Publishing House, Westminster/John Knox Press, *Presbyterian Survey*, and the *Presbyterian Outlook* concerning the development of materials that have to do with the nature of faith and the life of faith as well as with the various practices and disciplines that sustain and nurture them in the life of the church.

j. Consulting with the Committee on Higher Education regarding the life of faith on college and university campuses.

k. Referring the report to the Committee on Theological Education with the recommendation that it be sent to all faculty of the theological institutions of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), as well as to all Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) faculty teaching in other theological institutions, as a resource for use in curriculum development, course offerings, and extracurricular discussion groups. The report should also be sent to the student body presidents in Presbyterian theological institutions.

l. Consulting with Church Vocations Ministry Unit to explore ways this material can be used by persons serving in specialized ministries.

m. Send this report to appropriate offices in ecumenical partner churches of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.).

Study Guide:
Growing in the Life of Christian Faith

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Part I: Introduction

“Growing in the Life of Christian Faith” was prepared by the Theology and Worship Ministry Unit and commended to the church for information and study by the 201st General Assembly (1989) of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). In a letter of introduction to the document, Edward Dixon Junkin makes this observation:

There may be no more important characteristic of the contemporary community of faith than the need and hunger that many church members are feeling. In spite of the affluence and technological sophistication of our culture, many persons are aware of a certain emptiness that they long to fill.

Junkin goes on to note the timeliness of this study paper. We in the Reformed tradition have always believed in the importance of growing in faith. Sadly, the culture has often embraced a materialism sharply at odds with the simpler life traditionally counseled by Christian faith. However, in a recent issue of *Time* magazine (8 April 1988, p. 58), a cover story on “The Simple Life” says:

In place of materialism, many Americans are embracing simpler pleasures and homier values. They’ve been thinking hard about what really matters in their lives, and they’ve decided to make some changes. What matters is having time for family and friends, rest and recreation, good deeds and spirituality. For some people that means a radical step: changing one’s career, living on less, or packing up and moving to a quieter place . . . The pursuit of a simpler life with deeper meaning is a major shift in America’s private agenda.

If, as the *Time* magazine article suggests, Americans are searching for values and spirituality to support a simpler life, then “Growing in the Life of Christian Faith” is indeed timely in its focus on a Reformed perspective on the life of faith. The introduction to the study, in describing the search for “spiritual food” that can nourish and sustain life, suggests that “too often, promises of a banquet have led to a menu of junk food.”

“Growing in the Life of Christian Faith” offers a banquet of ideas, reflections, and study opportunities. This study guide provides suggestions for using the document with small groups in congregations as well as a design for a presbytery (or synod) leader-training event.

DESIGN FOR A PRESBYTERY OR SYNOD LEADER-TRAINING EVENT

During the course of a year, many documents and papers are sent to the churches for study. Some are received, studied, and reviewed. Others are received and carefully filed, never to be seriously examined. If this document is to find its way into the hands of small groups in the congregation, it is essential to introduce it to groups of ministers, church educators, and lay leaders.

This might be done at a presbytery or synod leader-training event. The following design might be used.

A. Introducing the Document [15–30 minutes]

1. Distribute copies of both the document and study guide to everyone. (*Note:* Later editions of the document include the study guide.)
2. Briefly describe the contents of this study.
3. Explore people’s understanding of the Reformed perspective on faith (pp. 5–7).
4. Walk the participants through the three major sections of the document.
5. Give suggestions for ways this document could be used in a local congregation. Examples are adult study groups, officers’ retreat, adult weekend retreat focusing on spirituality, new members class, church officer training.

B. An Experience with the Document [30 minutes]

Take the group through steps 2 and 3 in Session I of the study guide.

C. Helpful Hints for Studying [15 minutes]

1. Read through the entire document and keep a Bible nearby.
2. Identify the assumptions (Preface and Introduction) that undergird this document.
3. As you read the three sections, refer to the endnotes as you go along. This is very important. The endnotes provide additional content and bibliographic sources essential to this study.
4. As you read, note questions and points for clarification. Where does the document touch your own understanding and experience of growing in Christian faith? Where do you struggle with your own practices and disciplines?
5. Note books and/or other resources that you want to have available for the group studying this document.
6. Consider expectations for this study. What do you hope will happen through this experience? On page 33 the document calls for readers of the report to interpret its meaning for their own particular lives and to work together for a church where life in the Spirit of Christ flourishes. How can your study together help people do this?

D. The Study Guide [15 minutes]

Introduce the study guide discussing the five sessions and how they relate to the document.

E. Other Considerations

1. What is an appropriate time and place for adults to engage in a study of this material? Options include:
 - a. a church school class interested in short term study units
 - b. special groups in the church such as new members, mariners, or young adults
 - c. continuing education for teachers/leaders in the church school
 - d. officer training for session, Christian education committee, etc.
2. This study is especially useful for teachers. Many times teachers do not take the time to care for their own growth in faith. Think about offering this study at a time when they could take advantage of it.
3. The study could be done over a period of five weeks or in a concentrated period of time such as a weekend retreat.
4. Who will teach the material? Perhaps two persons might agree to work as a team. There are certain advantages to having the pastor lead this study, but that is by no means the only option.

Part II: Leading the Sessions

SESSION ONE

INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

Session Goals

By the end of this session, learners will have had the opportunity to

1. examine the realities of their own practices or disciplines of the Christian life;
2. discuss the basic assumptions of the study and the focus of each session;
3. identify personal questions and/or hopes concerning this study.

Preparation for the Session

In addition to planning to teach the content of the session, think also about the setting and room arrangement. Arrange chairs in a circle to enable discussion. Make sure an easel with newsprint or a chalkboard is available. Have copies of the study on hand and copies of Handout #1, which describes the focus for the sessions.

Developing the Session

1. Begin with Prayer/Meditation [3-5 minutes]

Begin each session with a selection from a psalm (perhaps the one indicated for the lectionary reading for the day) or a passage of Scripture indicated in the study. This practice of focusing with quiet, with Scripture, and with prayer models what the study is describing. Ask members of the group to volunteer to lead prayer and meditation for each of the remaining sessions.

2. Reflecting on Personal Practices [15-20 minutes]

If this is a new group meeting for the first time, spend a few minutes with introductions. This first part of the session focuses on the practice of the Christian faith in the lives of the learners in this group.

You may want to do this exercise as a total group or divide into smaller groups of two or three. Use the following questions to open a discussion on the practice of the Christian faith.

- a. What models for living the Christian faith were available to you in your home when you were growing up?
- b. In what ways did your parents communicate to you the importance of prayer, study, participating in church school and worship, and the living of the Christian faith at home, school, and work?
- c. How were these messages communicated, explicitly or implicitly? To what degree was faith talked about in your home? How important was faith in your home and what effect did that have on you?
- d. How did you become a Christian? Why do you remain one?
- e. What and from whom did you learn about the ways of faith? What evidence of this learning is there in your life today?
- f. What is the shape of the private life (prayer, Scripture reading, meditation/reflection) that sustains and supports your public life as a Christian?

3. Introduction to the Document and This Study [20 minutes]

Use this part of the session to introduce the group to the document itself and to the focus for each of the other sessions. One way to proceed is to hand out the document and ask the group members to read pages 1–5, stopping after the end of the first paragraph on page 5. Use any of the following questions for discussion.

- a. On page 1, the document says,

Christians are hungry for renewal in their lives of faith. They want to know what it means to be alive and mature in Christian faith and they are calling for guidance and support in developing the disciplines and practices by which their faith may be nurtured and sustained, experienced and expressed.

Page 2 continues this theme, noting the “widespread hunger for meaning” in the culture. Do you agree or disagree with this assessment of the culture? How is it true for you?

- b. What affirmations serve as the basis for this study?
- c. What in this introduction speaks most clearly to your own questions?

After allowing 10-15 minutes for this reading and discussion, share with the group the focus for the remaining sessions. It would be helpful to have this printed with the related assignments for reading/reflection so that each person can be responsible for his or her own preparation and study. An example of such an outline follows at the end of this study guide.

4. Identification of Questions, Hopes for the Study [10-15 minutes]

Our hope as Christians is that we are growing in our lives of faith through our participation in communities of faith, through our own times of prayer and study, and through the ways we intentionally live our lives in the world as faithful Christians. The reality is we fall short of our intentions. Sometimes overloaded schedules, hurried lifestyles, and family, work, and social demands leave scant time for a personal spiritual life despite our good intentions. If this is the case for some or all of the group members, then this first session is the time to covenant together to shape life in this community by living in accord with the vision of the document.

This part of the session gives the participants a chance to identify their own hopes for the study. Have a chalkboard or newsprint available on which to record their comments. Ask the following questions:

- What are your personal hopes and goals for learning during this study?
- What are your questions and doubts?

- What kind of commitment are you willing to make regarding your continuing growth in faith?
- Can you make a commitment to spend 15–30 minutes each day in prayer, Scripture reading, and reflection? (As a way to encourage this activity, you could prepare handouts with the daily lectionary readings and make them available one week at a time. Such readings are included in the *Mission Yearbook for Prayer & Study* sent to every congregation each year by the Stewardship and Communication Development Ministry Unit. Another helpful source for praying through the year is *With All God's People, The New Ecumenical Prayer Cycle* [Geneva: WCC Publications, 1989].)

Share with the group your own expectations for this study. Discuss the discussion/participation method of learning. This method carries with it the responsibility of each person to come prepared which means, at least, having read the assignment. The study also assumes practice and reflection and not just an academic study of the document. The ultimate goal is to enhance spiritual growth and foster commitment to a life-style that affirms God and supports the struggle for justice in the world.

5. Assignment for Session Two [5 minutes]

Before reading anything, write a few sentences, no more than a paragraph, on your own definition of faith. Begin: “Faith is . . .”

Use an index card for your response and bring it with you to class next week. Do not put your name on it.

In preparation for the next session, let each person read the first section in the study, “Faith and the Life of Faith,” pages 5–19. This material will be studied for two sessions. In addition, each person should answer the following questions:

- Where do you struggle with your faith and its meaning in your life? Give an example (also printed on Handout #1 at the end of this study).

- What does it mean to you to live a faithful life? What is involved?

If the group is meeting for a two-hour session next time, have everyone bring a Bible to the class.

6. Additional Resources

Two books that will enrich your own thinking and possibly provide additional material for discussion are:

Harris, Maria. *Fashion Me a People: Curriculum in the Church*. Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1989.

Palmer, Parker. *The Company of Strangers: Christians and the Renewal of America's Public Life*. New York: Crossroad, 1983.

SESSIONS TWO AND THREE

FAITH AND THE LIFE OF FAITH

Session Goals

By the end of these sessions, learners will have had the opportunity to

1. discuss, raise questions, and reflect on the first section of the study;
2. share personal definitions of faith;
3. engage in biblical study on selected New Testament passages.

Preparation for the Session

The first section of the document, “Faith and the Life of Faith,” is the longest one. Thus it seems best to focus on this material and its implications over two sessions rather than one. The suggestions for study are based on two hours. If you are meeting at a time other than the hour for church school, you might agree to meet for a two-hour session rather than one. If the group is studying this during the time for church school, then divide the session in two. Suggestions for how to do this are given below.

Developing the Session

1. Begin with Prayer/Meditation [3-5 minutes]
2. Hungers of the Age [15 -20 minutes]

If the group is larger than 8-10 persons, consider doing this discussion in twos or threes. It is important that each person have a chance to participate in the discussion. Introduce the discussion in the following vein:

“You probably remember asking lots of questions as a child. You probably also remember looking up to adults and wondering what it would feel like to know all the answers to life’s questions. Then you became an adult and realized that the questions are still there. On pages 18–19, the study talks about the human search for meaning, direction, and values in life and the relationship of this search to our lives as Christians. What is the relationship between our faith and meaning in life? Let’s take a few minutes and either

together as a group or with a partner share your response to one of the questions you considered for today: Where do you struggle with your faith and its meaning in your life? Give an example.”

Allow 10-12 minutes for this part of the discussion. Then focus the group’s attention to Section D, page 18, the paragraph beginning with “We are now able to develop . . .” The document asserts that the Christian faith is not a way to make sense out of life. Rather, because we are Christians, we are transformed, and meaning, direction, and values grow out of lives lived in faithful response to God. Let the group discuss these assertions, giving reasons for agreement or disagreement.

3. The Meanings of Faith [30 minutes]

Part of the assignment for this session is for each person to write their definition of faith on an index card. Collect the cards, shuffle them, and distribute them making sure no one has his or her own card. Ask each person to read the definition he or she has. Use newsprint or a chalkboard to record basic concepts from the definitions.

Refer to the document and compare the definitions from the group with those on pages 6–7 and the one at the top of page 11. What differences and similarities do you find? Look particularly at the last paragraph on page 6.

Use any or all of the following questions to facilitate discussion.

- Based on these definitions, what is the relationship between faith and life?
- In Section B of Part I, faith is defined in terms of belief, personal knowing, and truth. Which of these elements of faith is consistent with your experience?
- Think about the story of God as it is told on page 6. Think about the way you would tell this story. How would you recite this faith story using your own words?
- Now look back at your own definition of faith. After the reading and discussion, would you change your definition in any way? If so, how?

4. Looking Ahead [5 minutes]

If the group is meeting for a one-hour session, then this is the appropriate place to divide the session. The focus of the next session is on Bible study so everyone should be sure to bring a Bible with them. You might talk about the kinds of Bibles people use at home. Having available a variety of translations would be good. Some suggested versions include: New Revised Standard Version, Revised Standard Version, New English, Jerusalem.

5. The Life of Faith [60 minutes]

The largest section of the first part of the document is C, “The Life of Faith.” It lends itself very nicely to a session that involves the group in biblical study and discussion of the characteristics of the life of faith. Listed below are some suggestions for discussion. Plan the session using those that fit best for your group.

- Read the Scripture passages listed on pages 11 and 12 of the document. (Divide the passages among groups of two or three persons.) How is the new life of faith described in these passages? From the perspective of Paul, what does it mean to live “in Christ” or live “according to the Spirit”?
- Where do you struggle in your own life with living “according to the Spirit”?
- Two characteristics of the life of faith are new freedom and fresh seeing. How would you interpret these characteristics in terms of your own experience of living the life of a Christian? What are some of the risks involved?
- Look at the paragraph in the middle of page 14, beginning, “According to the Bible . . .” Do you agree with what is being said? What does it mean to see in the ways described? Do you find it easy or difficult to see in this way?

- In worship we have a time of public and private confession of sins and a time for the assurance of pardon. What does this time in worship mean to you? If the statements of confession are printed in your worship bulletin, examine them for 4–6 weeks. What is being said about the struggle with evil, both individually and corporately? What is our assurance?
- The life of the Christian is also concerned with living in both hope and obedience in faithful response to God’s gracious activity in our lives. How does the document define obedience on pages 16–17? Is this understanding similar to or different from your own assumptions? How is hope real (or absent) in your life?
- Consider your own life and the ways you are growing in faith. What examples of sanctification are evident? How have you participated in Christ’s living work in the past and how do you now in the present? Using fresh ways of seeing, to what kinds of service, in the world and in the church, do you think God might be calling you?

6. Closing the Session

Close this session with a prayer or meditation prepared by one of the group members. Perhaps something grew out of the discussion that can be used at this time. The assignment for the next session is to read Part II: “Growing in Faith and in the Life of Faith,” pages 19–24.

SESSION FOUR

GROWING IN FAITH AND IN THE LIFE OF FAITH

Session Goal

To identify one's personal understanding of the life of faith.

Preparation for the Session

The preparation for this session depends on which teaching/learning activity you choose. Read through all three and make your decision. Alternatively, let the group decide which method to use.

Developing the Session

1. Begin with Prayer [3–5 minutes]
2. Growing in Faith [55 minutes]

Three suggestions follow for this session. Each represents a different method for understanding the material and relating it to personal experiences of growing in faith. You or the group must choose one of them.

There are two conceptual issues essential to this section of the document: (1) Although growing in faith is related to human development, to talk of growing in faith with only organic metaphors or the image of a journey, limits its scope and ties it unnecessarily to evolutionary or hierarchical (proceeding from lower to higher stages) concepts; (2) Growing in faith involves one's context and relationships. Each of the three suggestions for developing this session addresses these issues.

Suggestion One: Developing a Time Line

Invite members of the group to use the time line, Handout #2, as a way of reflecting on their growth in faith. You could emphasize the two points made above as a way of introducing this activity. Ask each person to work individually on the time line (15 minutes) then come together and share what they have done, with particular attention to

learnings and insights. If the group is larger than 10, ask people to work with a partner before engaging in a total group discussion.

Each should divide his or her life into thirds. So if a person is 45, he or she will be thinking about growth in faith in the years 1–15, 16–30, and 31–45. Then consider three things for each time period: (1) In what way did the context of home and church encourage, enable, discourage, or block growth in faith? (2) What faith issues were important to you at this age? What were you struggling with? What questions were you asking? What affirmations about God were you making? (3) What support did you get from people at this time in your life? Who were the guarantors in your life? (William Myers in his book, *Theological Themes of Youth Ministry* [New York: Pilgrim Press, 1987], defines a guarantor as an adult who models for young people a faithful Christian life. Such people guarantee or affirm their faith in God's story.)

Conclude this activity with some reference to Section C of Part II, pages 23–24 and the affirmation about the lifelong process of encountering the mystery of God, a process that involves a community.

Suggestion Two: An Affective Learning Experience

Adults involved in teaching and learning settings in the church often use only cognitive (thinking) processes in their teaching. Opportunities in educational settings for affective expression—art, poetry, music—are rare. This learning activity provides such an opportunity. Many people may find it hard to express their faith in words. In this exercise people will use art materials to express their faith.

Have the art materials available as well as tables on which people can work. Have music available that provides a calm and soothing background. Suggested art materials: paper (white and colored construction paper), crayons, chalk, clay, water colors, fabric scraps, ribbon, yarn, glue, needle and thread, scissors, sequins, tissue paper, and anything else you can think of.

The assignment is simple; the hard part is trusting the process. People can and will express themselves, if given the opportunity. Explain that they have 30–40 minutes to use any of the art materials on the tables to illustrate growing in faith.

Spend some time at the end of the session (15–20 minutes) sharing in the total group what individuals have done.

Suggestion Three: Group Discussion

Listed below are discussion questions and suggestions designed to enable the participants to explore the material in Part II.

- Why does the document affirm very strongly that growing in faith should not be limited to organic imagery or hierarchical (lower to higher, better stages) development? What are alternative views?
- If faith and the life of faith should not be identified with self-development structures or the itinerary of a journey, what then should be the focus?
- Describe a time when you experienced the richness of the mystery of God and God’s love.
- How do we come to recognize and accept God’s gracious presence in our lives?
- The document suggests that an important issue is not how much or how fast we grow, but in what context. What contexts and what people have enabled your growth in faith?

3. Assignment for Session Five

Read Part III: “The Nurture of Faith and the Life of Faith,” pages 24–32.

SESSION FIVE

THE NURTURE OF FAITH AND THE LIFE OF FAITH

Session Goals

1. To reflect on the variety of practices and disciplines of the Christian faith.
2. To identify communal and personal commitments to growing in faith.

Developing the Session

1. Begin with Prayer/Meditation [3–5 minutes]
2. Reflecting on Practices and Disciplines [30 minutes]

Use, as a basis for discussion, the list of practices and disciplines, pages 27–28 and the list of nine qualities of church membership from the *Book of Order*, Handout #3. Either as a total group or in triads, discuss these questions:

- Which of these practices are a normal part of your life of faith, both as an individual and as a member of a faith community?
- Which of these practices relate to areas in which you need to grow or have experience trying? Which of these are more difficult than others? Which relate to areas where your church needs to grow?
- In what ways have these practices been a means of grace for you? For your church? Your community?

3. Living into the Practices [20–25 minutes]

Conclude the session and this study with an opportunity for the learners to make commitments to living into the practice of the Christian life. Consider what commitments your faith community can and should make. These questions and suggestions will facilitate this discussion.

- What point is the document making about living into practices of the Christian faith?
- In what ways does your congregation support these assumptions and the practices suggested on pages 27–28?
- How does the congregation support the growth in faith of parents so that they in turn can enable the growth in faith of their children? Is it a congregational priority?
- Provide paper and envelopes and invite each person to write a letter to themselves about the recommitment to living the life of Christian faith. The letter could contain a commitment to prayer, reading the Bible, and providing hospitality to strangers. It might include ideas learned in this study that each wants to remember or certain practices of spiritual discipline each wants to practice. Include specific commitments each is willing to make to growing in the life of the Christian faith over the next six months. After each person has finished, ask them to seal the envelopes and give them to you. Mail them back to each one in six months.
- Develop an open letter to the congregation calling for a whole church commitment to living the life of Christian faith.

4. Concluding the Study

Either at the conclusion of this session or taking one more session, reflect on this study—what you have learned, what additional study might take place using resources suggested in the document. A sixth session might focus on communal commitment to living the life of Christian faith and what such a commitment would mean to the whole church.

HANDOUT #1

Use this as a model for a handout to have available at the first session. Space is allowed for indicating the dates for each session. Space is made available to write in names of persons who volunteer to open the sessions with prayer/Scripture reading/meditation.

“Growing in the Life of Christian Faith” Handout #1: Outline for Study

Session One: Introduction to the Study

Date: _____

Sessions Two and Three: Faith and the Life of Faith

Date: _____

Reading Assignment: Part I, pages 5–19

Assignment for Reflection: Before you read anything, write in one paragraph on an index card your own definition of faith. “Faith is . . .”

- Where do you struggle with your faith and its meaning in your life? Give an example.
- What does it mean to you to live a faithful life? What is involved?
- What does it mean for a congregation to have a faithful life? What is involved?
- Where does your congregation struggle with faith and its meaning for congregational life? Your denomination?

Prayer/Reading: _____

Session Four: Growing in Faith and in the Life of Faith

Date: _____

Reading Assignment: Part II, pages 19–24

Assignment for Reflection: _____

Prayer/Reading: _____

Session Five: The Nurture of Faith and the Life of Faith

Date: _____

Reading Assignment: Part III, pages 24–33

Assignment for Reflection: _____

Prayer/Reading: _____

“Growing in the Life of Christian Faith” • Handout #2: Growing in Faith

	AGE 1	AGE 2	AGE 3
Church:			
Home:			
Faith Issues:			
Enablers/ Mentors:			

“Growing in the Life of Christian Faith”

Handout #3: *Book of Order*

G-5.0100: The Meaning of Membership

A faithful member accepts Christ’s call to be involved responsibly in the ministry of his Church. Such involvement includes (G-5.0102a-i):

- a. proclaiming the good news,
- b. taking part in the common life and worship of a particular church,
- c. praying and studying Scripture and the faith of the Christian Church,
- d. supporting the work of the Church through the giving of money, time and talents,
- e. participating in the governing responsibilities of the Church,
- f. demonstrating a new quality of life within and through the Church,
- g. responding to God’s activity in the world through service to others,
- h. living responsibly in the personal, family, vocational, political, cultural and social relationships of life,
- i. working in the world for peace, justice, freedom, and human fulfillment.