

Lay Academy Faith Foundations - Year 2 Reading and Reflection Assignments for 2017-2018

Greetings Lay Academy Participants!

I am thrilled to be welcoming you to this year of Lay Academy, Faith Foundations – Year 2. I have no doubt that this will be a year of deep learning, big questions, profound changes and spiritual growth and development for all of us. I can't wait to get started!!

Outlined in the following pages are all of the reading and reflection assignments for the coming year. Please look over what you see here and plan accordingly so that you can complete the reading assignments prior to each session and turn in your reflections in a timely manner. **Remember**, you are responsible for acquiring the books assigned for this year so plan accordingly.

I hope the reading and reflecting you will do throughout the year will enhance your experience of Lay Academy overall and support you in meeting your personal learning goals for the year. The instructors and I have tried to offer a variety of suggestions for reflection after each session. If you come up with other ideas for how you would like to reflect on what you are learning and incorporate it into your life and faith, please feel free to talk with me about your ideas. It's entirely likely that I will affirm your idea and receive your work with open arms. My top priority is for you to find ways that work for you to reflect on what you are learning and to put it into practice in your life and possibly also in your local congregation.

I am available throughout the week to answer questions and discuss assignments. Feel free to contact me at tbrown@wcucc.org or 608-846-7880.

Have a great year!

Tisha

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Book List for Faith Foundations 2 - 2017-2018

For September (Jane Redmont)

1. Virgilio P. Elizondo and Timothy M. Matovina, *San Fernando Cathedral: Soul of the City* (Read the entire book) This book will provide a glimpse into Hispanic Spirituality and Expression
2. Jane Redmont, *When in Doubt, Sing: Prayer in Daily Life* (Read Ch. 1, 2, 5, 6, 15, 16, 23, 24, 27)
3. James Cone, *The Spirituals and the Blues* (Ch. 2, 3 and 4) These chapters will be scanned and sent to you. You do not NEED to purchase this book, but feel free if you are curious.
4. Selected Readings from *Life Together* by Dietrich Bonhoeffer – Sent in a word document

For November & January (Karl Kuhn)

Introducing the New Testament by Mark Allan Powell

Having Words with God: The Bible as Conversation by Karl Alan Kuhn

For March (Ben Menghini)

Church History: An Essential Guide by Justo Gonzalez

For April (Carolyn Roncolato):

1. Stephen Prothero, *God is Not One*
2. Eboo Patel, *Interfaith Leadership: A Primer*

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Christian Spiritual Practices/The Art and Craft of Discipleship September 8-9, 2017

Instructor: Jane Redmont: Jane Redmont is a retreat leader, pastoral minister, spiritual director, theologian, writer, and editor. She has been involved in work for social justice and in ecumenical and interreligious relations all her life. Jane serves as a Congregational Consultant in the Episcopal Diocese of Massachusetts, assisting communities of faith and practice in strengthening and sustaining their common life.

Jane Redmont is the author of [When in Doubt, Sing: Prayer in Daily Life](#) (1998, pbk 2008), [Generous Lives: American Catholic Women Today](#) (1992, pbk 1993), and more than 100 articles ranging from news and feature stories to personal essays and academic book reviews.

Session Preparation (to be completed prior to each session)

Read the Following

(1) James Cone, *The Spirituals and the Blues* (Orbis Books, 1972, 1991)

Read ch 2, 3, and 4 – scanned and sent to you

(2) Virgilio P. Elizondo and Timothy M. Matovina, *San Fernando Cathedral: Soul of the City*

(Orbis Books, 1998)

Read the whole thing.

(3) Jane Redmont, *When in Doubt, Sing: Prayer in Daily Life* (Ave Maria Press, paperback, 2008

Get the paperback edition with the bird on the cover.)

Read the Introduction and chapters 1, 2, 5, 6, 15, 16, 23, 24, 27.

(4) Selections from Dietrich Bonhoeffer's *Life Together* (Word Document)

Reflection Assignment (To be turned in to Tisha – tbrown@wcucc.org by October 31, 2016)

Choose one of these options for your Reflection. Choose the option that best supports your learning goals. If none of these options resonates with you, feel free to suggest an alternative that would support and enhance your learning goals. Reflection papers should be 2-3 pages in length.

Pick one of the following two options.

- 1. Pick one of the practices** in which we engaged over the weekend (Praying the Psalms; lectio divina with either the Bible or “the book of nature;” making a home altar or prayer space and going there regularly; singing Spirituals; writing Psalms or litanies of lament or celebration)

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- a) **commit to doing it** daily or every other day/three times a week regularly for two weeks, OR once a week without fail for one month; (*Note: You can pick a practice to do alone or you can do the practice with a buddy or with members of your household.*)
- b) once you are about halfway through (after one week or after two weeks, depending on the rhythm you have chosen), **begin to reflect on how you might share the practice with a group of others in your local ministry**; it may or may not be the obvious group! It may be a group of youth or elders, women or men, congregational leadership, social outreach group, healing prayer group, a seasonal occasion, or the whole congregation at Sunday worship or on another occasion.
- c) **Write a two-three page reflection** paper about the experience. You may want to ask and answer other questions besides these, but here is a start:
 - What practice did you pick? Why did you pick it?
 - What was it like to commit to it over time, for two weeks? What happened?
 - How was the practice different over time?
 - How was it different when you started and how was it different by the end of your period of commitment?
 - What did you learn --about God? about yourself? about the practice?
 - Were there any surprises? What were they?
 - Did this practice have any influence on the rest of your life?
 - If the practice was a solitary one, did it affect your communal life of faith and worship? How so?
 - If it was a communal one, did it affect your personal or solitary prayer life?
 - With whom in your congregation might you share this practice? Why? How?
 - What resources or support might you need in order to do this?

2. Go on a field trip.

- a) **Pick a congregation's Sunday worship or community event or ritual** (by community event or ritual I mean something like Stations of the Cross or a procession, a Dia de los Muertos celebration, a revival, a vigil) from a cultural, ethnic, and/or racial Christian community (any denomination or church) that is not your own. .
- b) **If you are from the majority population in your area and congregation** (for most but not all of you, this will mean White and Euro-American) **do a little research first** (online and/or at your local public library and/or by asking your local clergy or friends) about African American and/or Latino and/or Asian/Pacific or Native/First Peoples communities of faith, either in your own town or in your region. (Don't forget Eastern Christian traditions: have a look also at whether there are Orthodox Christian communities around – Greek Orthodox, Ethiopian Orthodox, Coptic Christian, for instance.)
- c) **Pick one congregation or community** from among your options. Learn a little about it before visiting. You can find an encyclopedia or news article at the library or online, or read the congregation's website, for example.

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Make note of any kind of **etiquette** that might be obvious before your visit. A helpful and amusing book is *How to Be a Perfect Stranger*, which is multi-religious and not just focused on Christian communities, but does include them. Focus on varieties of Christianity but also and especially on race, culture, and ethnicity.

Most Christian communities will be hospitable and kind toward visiting strangers, so don't "stress" too much about this preparation, but poke around a bit to find out whether there is anything you need to know. Be aware not just of dress but about practices of communion / the Lord's Supper.

- d) Go to at least one Sunday worship service** in that congregation. **OR** if there is a congregation or community that is having a **celebration that is NOT a Sunday service**, you can attend that instead. *(If you can, go to two worship services or cultural events at the same congregation. Think "If you've seen one, you haven't seen 'em all.")*

Do it with a buddy if you think you will feel intimidated by this unfamiliar environment. You can also call the pastor of the community beforehand, or a staff member or lay leader, to ask about visiting.

- After this experience, **write a two-three page reflection paper on the visit:** the "before," the "during," and the "after."

Before:

- How did you do your research before the visit?
- Why did you pick this particular congregation or community?
- What were you looking forward to?
- What were you anxious about?
- How familiar (or unfamiliar) were you with this particular community?
- How was it different from your own congregation racially? Culturally? Socio-economically? Denominationally?

During:

- This is a worship service. Above all, be attentive to the way God speaks to and in and through this community.
- Observe:
 - Quiet? Noisy? Small? Large? Formal? Informal?
 - Multigenerational? Internally diverse? One coherent cultural identity or more than one? Households, families, individuals, couples?
 - What is the place of music? What kind of music? Participatory or not so much?
 - What is the balance or emphasis with regard to word and sacrament? The visual and the auditory? What senses are engaged in worship? How involved are people's bodies in worship?
 - What is the worship space like? (building or out of doors – either way, it's a worship space)

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- What do you notice about people's attitudes in worship?
- How do you feel?

After:

- What did you notice most?
- What did you learn?
- How or what did you feel?
- How was the form of the worship related (or not) to the content or message(s) in the worship?
- What was most strange?
- What gave you the most hope?
- How did God speak to you?
- What was this like for you as a community experience?
- Did you realize anything about what you know or don't know? About what you love? About what you need? About what it means to be a Christian?
- How will you follow up?

These are just "starter questions." Ask or answer any other questions that are important to you and/or your congregation.

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The New Testament Part 1 November 3-4, 2017

Instructor: Karl Kuhn, Lakeland University

Session Preparation (to be completed prior to each session)

Read the Following:

Chapters 1-9 in *Introducing the New Testament* by Mark Allan Powell

Chapters 1-3 and 6-7 in *Having Words with God: The Bible as Conversation* by Karl Alan Kuhn

Reflection Assignment (To be turned in to Tisha – tbrown@wcucc.org by January 16, 2017)

Choose one of these options for your Reflection. Choose the option that best supports your learning goals. If none of these options resonates with you, feel free to suggest an alternative that would support and enhance your learning goals. Reflection papers should be 2-3 pages in length.

1. Reflect on a gospel passage and be very intentional about reading the text in light of its first century social-historical context. Discuss how you see those first century realities reflected in the gospel text, and how Jesus responds to those realities of Roman rule with his teaching about or enactment of the Kingdom of God. Then, consider what contemporary analogies might exist to the elements of the Roman world you have identified. What situation in our world is similar to this aspect of the first century world? How might we as Christians respond to this contemporary situation in ways that parallel Jesus' teaching and/or action in this passage? Turn in your reflection.
2. Draft a proposal for a new mission/outreach initiative for your congregation (or group of churches), drawing from a NT text as part of your rationale. Be sure to explain how the text, within its literary and historical context, offers a vision of God's Reign and the church's mission that guides and directs your proposal. Turn in your proposal.
3. Write a children's Christmas program that incorporates the role of Caesar in Luke's story of Jesus' birth, takes seriously the realities of Roman rule, and reflects the treasonous nature of Luke's claims about Jesus. Turn in your script.

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The New Testament Part 2, January 19-20, 2018

Instructor: Karl Kuhn, Lakeland University

Session Preparation (to be completed prior to each session)

Read the Following:

Chapters 10-29 in *Introducing the New Testament* by Mark Allan Powell

Chapters 4-5, Conclusion in *Having Words with God: The Bible as Conversation* by Karl Alan Kuhn

Reflection Assignment (To be turned in to Tisha – tbrown@wcucc.org by February 27, 2017)

Choose one of these options for your Reflection. Choose the option that best supports your learning goals. If none of these options resonates with you, feel free to suggest an alternative that would support and enhance your learning goals. Reflection papers should be 2-3 pages in length.

1. Organize a bible study on a NT epistle. Plot out the passages you will address each week, and compose an introduction to the study of the letter that reviews its historical context, major themes, and key points of argument. Turn in your introductory comments and study outline.
2. Compose a newsletter article for your church that addresses the reality of racism within our society, and how it is counter to the Reign of God, drawing from a particular passage within a NT epistle. Turn in the article.
3. Examine a NT lectionary text for which the RCL has omitted some of its verses. Explain how the omission alters the function and meaning of the text, and what is lost as a result. Turn in your reflection.

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Christian History: The Church, It's Mission, March 2-3, 2018

Instructor: Ben Menghini

Ben Menghini holds an M.A. in Theological Studies and Historical Theology from Eden Seminary, where he was recognized for his work on the theology of 4th century theologian St. Augustine of Hippo, and contemporary ethicist Stanley Hauerwas. His thesis was titled *Christian Nonviolence After 9/11: Faithful Discipleship in the Globalized World*, focusing on various Christian responses to violence after 9/11 emphasizing virtue ethics. He writes frequently on issues of church and society. He contributed to and helped edit *The Empire's New Clothes*, a collaborative volume produced by Eden scholars on the topic of contextual mission.

Session Preparation (to be completed prior to each session)

Read: "How to Think Theologically" by Stone and Duke

Reflection Assignment (To be turned in to Tisha – tbrown@wcucc.org by April 24, 2017)

Choose one of these options for your Reflection. Choose the option that best supports your learning goals. If none of these options resonates with you, feel free to suggest an alternative that would support and enhance your learning goals. Reflection papers should be 2-3 pages in length.

1. Begin by asking "how do we define the mission of the church?" Reflect on one of the figures or historical eras that you connect with either positively or negatively. How do the context, content, and outcomes of your chosen subject relate to your own congregation and their understanding of their mission? Compare your findings with your own congregation's mission statement.
2. From the epistles of Paul to the present day much of Christian theology has been shared through letters. Write your own letter to your congregation, a friend, or even to yourself. Engage with issues relevant to our unique time and place in history. Take care to involve the perspective of the voiceless and those outside of your own culture who are too often silenced on the historical stage.

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Interfaith Cooperation and Ministry, April 27-28, 2018

Instructors: Carolyn Roncalato, Campus Engagement Manager at the Interfaith Youth Core & Noah Silverman, Senior Director of Academic Initiatives at the Interfaith Youth Core

Session Preparation (to be completed prior to each session)

Read:

3. Stephen Prothero, *God is Not One* (Introduction Only)
4. Eboo Patel, *Interfaith Leadership: A Primer*

Reflection Assignment (To be turned in to Tisha – tbrown@wcucc.org by June 2, 2017)

Choose one of these options for your Reflection. Choose the option that best supports your learning goals. If none of these options resonates with you, feel free to suggest an alternative that would support and enhance your learning goals. Reflection papers should be 2-3 pages in length.

1. Write your own theology of interfaith cooperation (we will talk about what that means in the course)
2. Visit a worship service of another tradition and write a reflection. What were similarities between this service and your home church? What were the differences?
3. Design an interfaith activity to do with your congregation based on what you learned in this session. Use the **Lay Academy Project Peer Assessment** and the **Lay Academy Project Self-Assessment** Forms from the website to evaluate your activity. Ask at least 3 attendees of your activity to complete the peer assessment and complete the self-assessment yourself. Turn these in to Tisha by the deadline.

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The Extra Event Paper - Guidelines

During each year of Faith Foundations Lay Academy Participants are asked to participate in an extra event at some point during the year. In year 2 it should be some kind of community-based event where you are likely to interact with people who are NOT part of your congregation. The primary purpose of this requirement in year 2 is to help participants connect with the community beyond the doors of their local congregation. Each year, participants have many questions about this requirement. Hopefully, most of your questions are answered below.

What is the purpose of the Extra Event Requirement for Year 2?

- To provide Lay Academy participants with the incentive to engage with their local community – those who are not in their church and possibly not in any church at all. What do you observe? How could you or your church build relationships with them?
- To step outside of our comfort zones and interact with folks who do not attend church as a way listening to and learning from them – what are their needs, interests, fears, longings?
- To expand our understanding of “church” beyond a building or even beyond membership.

What types of events/experiences will help me meet this requirement?

- Any non-church sponsored community event where people are gathering to help others, enjoy fellowship, have fun, learn something new or support one another. This could be something you already do but that you encounter with fresh eyes (ie sporting event, school related event or community service or volunteer opportunity) Turn in a 1-2 page reflection on this event. Respond to some of these questions: What did you do? Who did you meet? What did you observe? What did you learn about your neighbors? What are some possible points of connection between your congregation and this community you observed? How could your congregation serve or engage with this community, group or event?
- A Neighborhood Prayer Walk/Drive with at least 1 other person from your church. Download the “Neighborhood Prayer Walk/Drive” Instructions from the website. Turn in a 1-2 page reflection on this experience.

When is the Extra Event Assignment Due?

As soon as possible but no later than May 31 of each year.

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Neighborhood Prayer Walk/Drive Instructions – For Extra Event Paper Requirement

Jesus and his disciples were constantly on the move. They walked everywhere they went – from town to town and city to city. Along the way they met people, they healed and taught and they shared together in conversation. Walking clears your mind and gives you time to think of bigger things. Walking gives you time to pray. Indeed walking can become prayer. One of the ways to get to know your neighbors and encounter the presence of the spirit in the world outside the walls of your church is to walk or drive in the neighborhood, region or town around or closest to your church building.

With this in mind, find a partner who is willing to join you on a prayer walk. If it is not feasible to walk around your church’s neighborhood or region, this could become a prayer drive. You might begin by asking Jesus to walk or drive through the neighborhood with you.

Walk or drive for at least 30 minutes. As you go, pray for everything and everyone you encounter – houses, farms, and schools, families and visitors, businesses and services, wildlife, streams and forests. One of you could pray for the right side of the street, the other for the left. Walk or drive quietly together, and think your prayers to God. Pray for a God’s presence, peace and protection to blanket the area. Pray that your neighborhood will be infused with Christ’s presence. Open your heart to the spirit’s guidance about ways you or your congregation might reach out to these neighbors. Wonder about the needs and longings of the people and places surrounding your church.

If people come out and talk with you, you could tell them that you are from _____ church on _____ street/road, and that you are doing a prayer walk or drive. Ask if there’s anything specific they like you to pray for. Some may say no. Many may ask for prayer.

When you’re done, go to a coffee shop and talk about this experience. Turn in a brief (1 to 2 page) reflection that describes your experience. Respond to some of these questions: What did you observe? What did you learn about your neighbors? What are some possible points of connection between your congregation and this community you observed? How could your congregation serve or engage with this community?

Adapted from “A Prayer Walk with Your Partner” in *Unbinding the Gospel: Real Life Evangelism* by Martha Grace Reese