

UP & OUT

*Paying Attention and Attending to What God is
Doing in the World that God Loves*



THE MINISTRY
COLLABORATIVE

A Project of the
Macedonian Ministry
Foundation

We're pleased to provide for you resources from TMC [blogs](#), [podcasts](#), and other sources that serve as compelling prompts for discussion in your ministry contexts. Pastors and Layleaders frequently utilize these resources for conversations with their boards, small group contexts, and other engagements, so we wanted to organize some of them under headings that we think capture some of the most pressing issues. Feel free to use these resources in whatever way is most helpful and appropriate for your ministry. If you'd like to think through how to do so with a firmer grasp of effective group facilitation, coaching, group dynamics, and shifting a congregational culture, please let us know. We'd be happy to be a conversation partner or, in some cases, assist you and your congregation in a more comprehensive manner. We remain grateful for you all and committed to serving you.

Trust-Building is Not Optional

The Church is called to be an instrument in God's mending of social fabric.

- **Confidence in U.S. Institutions Down; Average at New Low** - Americans are less confident in major U.S. institutions than they were a year ago, with significant declines for 11 of the 16 institutions tested and no improvements for any.
- **Suffocating Bubble Wrap: A Round Table Conversation on Public Theology and Mending the Social Fabric** - The Ministry Collaborative program staff (Ryan Bonfiglio, Jennifer Watley Maxell, Mark Ramsey, and Adam Borneman) talk about standing in the face of discord, the messiness of change, and how theology happens everywhere.
- **The Sound of the Genuine: A Conversation with Patrick Clayborn** - Program Curator Jennifer Watley Maxell talks with the Rev. Patrick Clayborn (Bethel AME Church, Baltimore) about Howard Thurman, interdependence, and the search for common ground.
- **Trust-Building Is Not Optional: A Conversation with Amy Valdez Barker** - Program Director Adam Borneman speaks with the Rev. Dr. Amy Valdez Barker (Candler School of Theology, Citizen Exchange Art Collective) about the declining confidence in institutions, speaking the truth in love, and the importance of doing what we say we're going to do.

BROKEN CONNECTIONS

OR, "DO WE REALLY HAVE TIME TO LIST ALL OF THEM?"

With our own faith formation and call
With history in all its diverse chapters
With and among our institutions
With resources for ministry
Caused by multiple cultural tsunamis
With our communities and our social fabric
With our pain and the pain of others
With pastors' and congregation's relationship with each other
With the very culture we have been called to serve and offer God's hope
With Jesus
What else...?

- **Can I Get a Witness** - "Who we are as a people, and a world power seems to be shifting at a rate that is outpacing our ability to process and determine who we are as a collective. The moral, ethical and institutional foundations that have historically held us together as a democracy are quickly being torn asunder leading to more divisiveness, chaos, and confusion than many of us can remember." - Jennifer Watley Maxell
- **Lessons From Bethlehem** - "How can pastors work to heal the tattered social fabric of their communities? I've been thinking a lot about this question since recently returning from a trip to Israel-Palestine with two Ministry Collaborative cohorts." - Ryan Bonfiglio

" I am absolutely convinced that men hate each other because they fear each other. They fear each other because they don't know each other. They don't know each other because they are separated from each other. No greater tragedy can befall a society than the attempt to live in monologue rather than dialogue."

- MLK Jr., Louisville 1961

- **If Being In A Community of the Spirit Means Anything to You** - "What are the sources of division and ideological purity that we need to critique or abandon for the sake of life-giving love? What are the inch-deep social, economic, political narratives that are shaping your faith more than the Spirit of Jesus is?" - Adam Borneman
- **Faith Formation Must Be Lived Outside the Church** - "It's no wonder that most pastors and church folk would like to never think or have to talk about the political/social divide in our society ever again. It is literally tearing churches – and pastors – apart. Accepting the warring categories in our culture as they infect the church, and fighting things out on those terms, is impossible. It will never lead to wholeness. I believe the church is urgently being called today to play a role in this divide, but on very different terms." - Mark Ramsey

- **All the Rage** - "Violent crime. Customer abuse of workers. Student misbehavior. Vehicle crashes. Those are four very different categories of human interaction. Let's add a fifth: rage from the pew." Elizabeth Lynn & Mark Ramsey
- **Staying in the Room by Leaving It** - "How do we stay in the room with people with whom we disagree and/or who hold such divergent world views to our own?" - Elizabeth Lynn & Mark Ramsey
- **You want to be "prophetic"? Let's try this.** - "The way is the way of humility, of bearing a cross, not the way of domination or winning. Truth is a person, not a weapon. And life is more abundant and beautifully complex than we dare admit. True koinonia is messy as hell; let's give it a shot anyway."



31% of U.S. Adults Report Feeling Lonely At Least Some of Each Day

The Spirit Heals & Empowers

What is the Spirit doing to simultaneously heal our communities and also empower them with God's love for the whole world?

"The antidote to exhaustion is not rest: it's wholeheartedness." - David Whyte

- **The Next Global Pandemic: Mental Health**
- **The Loneliness Epidemic**
- **Life after Forgiveness: A Conversation with Graham Reside** - Pilgrimage Formation Curator Ryan Bonfiglio talks with Dr. Graham Reside (Vanderbilt Divinity School) about his work with death row inmates, the paradox of forgiveness and justice, and the critical place of healing.
- **Physical Salvation: A Conversation with Lydell Lettsome** - Program Curator Jennifer Watley Maxell talks with the Rev. Dr. Lydell Lettsome (Vanbert Health Equity Project) about Jesus' role as a healer, the centrality of health care in Christian formation, and the importance of clergy embracing their role as moral leaders.
- **Preaching and Trauma: A Conversation with Kimberly Wagner** - Executive Director Mark Ramsey speaks with the Rev. Dr. Kimberly Wagner (Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago) about the subjective nature of trauma, its disorienting capacity, and what it means to preach faithfully into the moment.
- **Breathing Room: A Conversation with Erica St. Bernard** - Program Curator Jennifer Maxell speaks with minister and therapist the Rev. Erica St. Bernard (Your Life's Well) about the difference between coping and healing, the importance of providing community spaces around mental health resources, and The Ministry Collaborative's Breathing Room opportunities for ministry leaders.

- **The Mask of Ministry** - "We smile, but, O great Christ, our cries. To thee from tortured souls arise. We sing, but oh the clay is vile. Beneath our feet, and long the mile; But let the world dream otherwise, We wear the mask." Jennifer Watley Maxell
- **The Great Resignation** - "Imagine the power and influence our great resignation would have if we resigned ourselves to Jesus and Jesus alone." Jennifer Watley Maxell

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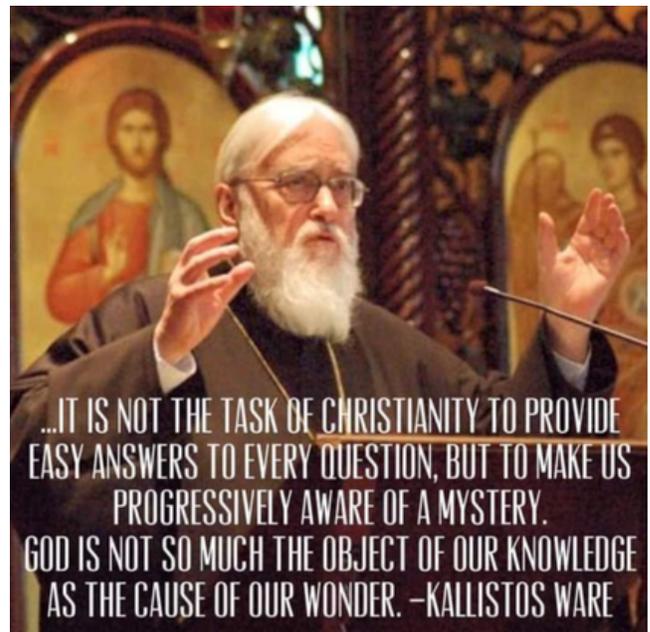
TRUE SELF-CARE IS NOT SALT BATHS
AND CHOCOLATE CAKE, IT IS
MAKING THE CHOICE TO BUILD A
LIFE YOU DON'T NEED TO
REGULARLY ESCAPE FROM.

Brianna Weist

Keep Doing Less & Going Deeper

Let's keep the main thing the main thing and provide for people's deepest longings: Jesus. Healing. Wisdom. Belonging.

- **Drilling Down to the Source: A Conversation with Carol Lynn Patterson** - Program Curator Jennifer Watley Maxell talks with the Rev. Dr. Carol Lynn Patterson (First Baptist Church of Lincoln Gardens, NJ) about committing ourselves to things that give us joy, and finding faith formation within community, and the importance of Sabbath rest.
- **The Tablespoon** - "I'm going to go out on a limb and say that no one - absolutely no one - is sitting around right now wondering about joining a new church so that they can become part of that church's struggle to survive in a post-modern, post-denominational, post-Christian culture. No one." Ben Johnston-Krase



- **The Work Is All Divine But Can We Sustain It?** - "Our pursuit of our best life will not save us. Nor will it satisfy the deep longings of our soul. That is the lie of culture, satisfaction by pursuit. Salvation based upon production. Only by returning to God and resting in the Almighty, quietly, confidently trusting bit by bit, we grow in grace and knowledge. We grow in wisdom and strength. We grow spiritually, faithfully, counterintuitively, counter culturally. We grow deeper and more authentic becoming abundant wells of life, love, capacity and Divine energy. We grow into who we were created to be." Jennifer Watley Maxell

- **Really. No One Cares.** - "Ironically, we'd often like for a few more people to join our churches so that they can become solutions to the problems they already don't care about." Ben Johnston-Krase
- **The Room Where It Happens: A Conversation with Rob Dyer** - Program Director Adam Borneman speaks with the Rev. Rob Dyer (First United Presbyterian, Belleville, Illinois; Ministry Architects) about the Christian equivalent of viral, the narratives we tell ourselves, and why people are not coming back.
- **Fences and Wells** - "What does the church have that culture shows absolutely no interest in having? Jesus Christ. The fullness of the gospel in its challenge and invitation. Unmerited, unearned, un-worked for grace. If that is true, then why do our church boards so little time talking about, discussing, sharing, about Jesus?" Mark Ramsey
- **"But How Will We Get the Work Done?"** - "To what extent does your church board experience and evidence trust, depth, and joy? How do we get there?" Mark Ramsey
- **The Raceless Gospel: A Conversation with Starlette Thomas** - Program Director Adam Borneman speaks with the Rev. Starlette Thomas (The Raceless Gospel, Good Faith Media) about Harriett Tubman, Clarence Jordan, and the hope that Baptism should be for the Church.



"Neither Self-absorption Nor Exhaustion"

The congregation as nimble and attentive community of witness.

- **Fresh Ministry** - "Churches need to reach for challenges beyond themselves. When I hear congregations lamenting changed worship times, staffing transitions, music choices, or (you can fill in the blank here for what you are hearing in your setting), I think "these folks need to look up and out." When a congregation stretches itself beyond its own comfort zone and tries to meet the challenges of the world with the hope of the gospel of Jesus Christ, everything about internal conversations changes." Mark Ramsey
- **From Sunday to Monday: A Conversation with Jack Fortin** - Executive Director Mark Ramsey speaks with the Rev. Dr. Jack Fortin (Charity to Change, Christensen Center for Vocation at Augsburg University) about the dangers of self-absorption, God's surprising love for institutions, and Peter the businessman.
- **What is the Spirit Doing with Ministry Systems and Structures?** - "Seth Godin wrote just a few months ago: 'In a crisis, there's maximum attention. And in a crisis, we often discard any pretense of caring about systems and resilience and focus only on how to get back to normal. This is precisely why normal is what normal, is because we fight to get back to it. Changing the system changes everything. And it might be even less work than pouring water on today's tactical emergency.'" Adam Borneman
- **Experiment Your Way into a Future: A Conversation with Dwight Zscheile** - Program Director Adam Borneman speaks with the Rev. Dr. Dwight J. Zscheile (Luther Seminary) about church agility, faithful innovation, and how the massive shifts around institutional identity are affecting congregations.
- **Church Comes Home: A Conversation with Dave Barnhart** - Content Curator Adam Mixon and Program Director Adam Borneman speak with the Rev. Dr. Dave Barnhart (St. Junia, Birmingham) about his new book Church Comes Home and what the house church movement can teach the broader Body of Christ about faithful ministry in the margins.

- **Confronting Social Justice Fatigue** - "Most churches think of justice as a 'movement' to join or an idea to advocate for. While well intentioned, such approaches aren't effective at developing muscle memory because they see social justice either as a temporary initiative or a theological position. We won't truly develop social justice muscle memory until we start thinking about it as an on-going, everyday practice that is intrinsic to who we are and what we believe." Ryan Bonfiglio
- **The Kind of Leaders We Need** - TMC facilitator Katie Nakamura Rengers directs this piece at the Episcopal church, but it certainly applies across the board. Missional leadership isn't a profession; it's a full bodied and soul-ed leap. It can't be preached, it must be led by example.
- **Church Beyond Buildings** - "What would it mean to reimagine the church today from the view of tabernacle theology rather than temple theology?" Ryan Bonfiglio
- **Outside In: Long-term pandemic lessons about context, social location, and ministering from the margins.** - "Many faith communities across our network who historically inhabit the margins of society have disproportionately suffered from the multiple crises of the past year, and yet they have also navigated much of these crises with much greater resilience, adaptiveness, and institutional capacity." Adam Mixon & Adam Borneman
- **You Will Be My Witnesses: A Conversation with Gabby Cudjoe Wilkes** - Program Curator Jennifer Watley Maxell and Content Curator Adam Mixon talk with the Rev. Dr. Gabby Cudjoe Wilkes (Double Love Experience, Brooklyn) about Pentecost, the challenge of online and in-person community, and the vitality of being together.

what we believe about God will tell us what we believe about people; and what we believe about people will tell us what kinds of communities and societies we believe we should strive to create.

—Brenda Salter McNeil—

"The point is the present moment with the living God who is with us, beckoning us to communion. The God who speaks to us now calls us into the risk of hearing a new word, a word that orients us toward the unanticipated and the unprecedented where the reconciling God is active."

Willie James Jennings